John Buridan and Jerónimo Pardo on the Notion of Propositio

PALOMA PÉREZ-ILZARBE*

Summary: The first section of this article offers a reconstruction of Buridan's theory of propositions, along the following lines: on the syntactic plane, propositions obtain a special type of unity from the presence of a copula; on the semantic plane, the fact that a proposition does not have any specific signficate (different from the signficate of terms), does not eliminate the distinction between propositions and terms: the copula performs an act of "saying", in virtue of which propositions can be true or false. The second section summarises Pardo's theory of propositions, showing how in this case a Buridian starting point led to a result very different from that which Buridan reached.

The best place to start in trying to reach an understanding of the medieval notion of the proposition is the basic contrast between the simple and the complex: propositions are a kind of complex expression (oratio). But, because they are complex expressions of a certain kind, one can legitimately ask how propositions differ from other kinds of complex expressions. In the present paper I shall argue that John Buridan (c.1292-c.1360)* attributed a specific character to propositions that distinguished them from terms (even from complex terms), and I shall try to discover the precise nature of this specific character, together with the commitments Buridan has to make in order to maintain this.

* I wish to thank Jennifer Ashworth, Jaime Nubiola, Angel d'Ors, and Stephen Read, and also the participants in the conference "John Buridan and Beyond", for their helpful comments on previous versions of this article. I am also grateful to Jack Zupko for kindly providing me with the text I needed from his edition of the Quaestiones in libros de Anima (tertia lectura).


2. The most recent bibliography of and about Buridan is that by Fabienne Pironet ("Bibliographie spéciale sur Jean Buridan", available online at: http://mapageweb.umontreal.ca/pironet/).


To better illuminate some aspects of Buridan's theory, I will contrast it with the ideas of the Spanish logician Jerónimo Pardo (†1502) on the same topic.4

I shall base my analysis of Buridan's theory on texts from the Commentary on the Metaphysics (In Met), the Summulae (Summ, particularly treatises I and IV) and the Sophismata (Soph). As subsidiary sources I will also refer to texts from the Commentary on the Physics (Quaest Phys), the Commentary on the De anima (Quaest de Anima), the Quaestiones Elenchorum (Quaest Elench), the Quaestiones Longae super Librum Peri Hermeneias (Super Perih), the Quaestiones in Libros Priorum Analyticorum (Quaest Priorum), and the Consequentiae (Conseq). As for Pardo's theory, I include as an Appendix a transcription of the relevant pages of his Medulla dyalectices (MD).

1. Buridan's theory

1.1 Syntactic analysis: kinds of complexity

Before approaching Buridan's discussion of propositions, it is important to bear in mind that Buridan's main treatises about the proposition concern primarily the mental proposition, and can only be applied to spoken or written propositions by extension.6 In his commentary on the Summulae, Buridan explicitly disagrees with Peter of Spain, who (following Aristotle)7 had defined the proposition as a kind of vox.8 Buridan prefers (also following Aristotle)9 to distinguish three kinds of orations (mental, spoken, and written),10 and he introduces the necessary modifications to adapt Peter of Spain's ideas to this threefold division.

According to Buridan, the basic syntactic structure of every mental proposition is that it is made up of three principal parts: subject, copula, and predicate. Correcting Peter of Spain's description of a categorical proposition as a composite of two principal parts, the subject and the predicate,11 Buridan asserts that the copula is also a principal part of every categorical proposition (making three parts rather than two).12 This three-part structure holds for all mental propositions, even if they are signified by a spoken proposition that appears to have a different structure. For example, adjectival verbs conceal a structure of copula-plus-predicate, so that the spoken phrase 'Homo currit' must be analysed, in Buridan's view, as 'Homo est curiens', and even the verb 'est' when occurring as second adjacent can be broken down into a copula and predicate, so 'Homo est' becomes 'Homo est ens'.13 The key point is whether Buridan recognises this structure as a special type of unit, or whether the three elements are simply linked together as a mere list of

4. For more information on Pardo, see Pérez-Izarbe 1999.
5. This treatise was partly edited by J. Pinborg (1976a: 82-88), and Ria van der Leq is preparing the critical edition (available on her website: http://www.phil.uu.nl/~leq). She is part of an international team (the Buridan Society) which is working on critical editions of all the treatises (on this publishing project, see the introductions to the editions which have already appeared, included in the bibliography below).
8. Peter of Spain, Tractatus I, 6 and 7.
9. Peri Hermeneias 1, 16a 3-4.
10. Summ I, 1, 6: "Ad evidentiam dictorum et dicendorum quod voces significativa in-complexae sunt termini orationum, dicenda sunt aliqua de terminis significativis et orationibus modicum disgregando. Sciemdum est ergo quod triplex pestest distingui oratio et triplex terminus vel dictio, prout tangitur in principio libri Peri Hermeneias, scilicet mentalis, vocalis et scripta."
11. Peter of Spain, Tractatus, 1. 7.
12. Summ I, 3, 2: "Ad secundum dubitationem dicendum est quod illa copula vere est pars principalis categoricae, quia sine illa non potest esse categorica propositio et habet se per modum formae ad subjectum et praedicatum, et forma est principalis pars compositi, ideo bene suppletur secundum clausulum vel tertiam dicentes quod propositio categorica est illa quae habet subjectum et praedicatum et copulam principales partes sui." Q. L. super Perith I, 7: "... de propositione cathegorica, cuius principales partes sunt subjectum et predicatum et copula." See also Maierö's contribution to this volume, at and around pp. 35-38, 68-70.
13. Summ I, 3, 2: "Tertia clausula exposit dictum descriptionem propositionis categoricae exemplificando de ipso propositione 'homo currit', in qua hoc nomen 'homo' est subjectum et hoc verbum 'currit' est praedicatom. Circa quod est notandum, sicut statim inquit auctor, quod verum non est praedicatum proprium loquendo, sed copula praedicati cum subjecto vel implicans in se copulum cum praedicato. Nam hoc verbum 'est' tertio adiacens est copula et quod sequitur est praedicatum, sed hoc verbum 'est' secundo adiacens, ut cum dico 'homo est', vel etiam quotlibet aliud verbum implicit in se copulum cum praedicato vel cum parte principaliori praedicati. Ideo ad accipendum subjectum, praedicatum et copulam tale verbum debet resoluti in hoc verbum 'est' tertium adiacens, si propositio sit de inesse et de praesenti, et in participium illius verbi, ut 'homo currit' dicit 'homo est curiens'. Similiter 'homo est' dicit 'homo est ens'."
of combination effected by the mental copula 'est' or 'non est' is special: it is an act of affirming or denying one concept of another.\textsuperscript{17} This understanding of the role of the copula is in agreement with one of the traditional definitions (of Aristotelian origins)\textsuperscript{18} of the proposition as an expression in which "something is said of something", and seems to point towards a kind of unity specific to propositions which makes them something more than a mere list of terms.

Among the various types of combinations of terms, however, there is a group of very special ones: the constructions involving accusative and infinitive together, such as 'hominem esse album'. They seem to share the structure of propositions (subject, copula, predicate), but, Buridan says, they are not propositions in the true sense: the mere fact that under certain conditions a complex of this kind, taken materially, can stand for a proposition does not mean that it \textit{is} a proposition.\textsuperscript{19} The non-propositional nature of these complexes is due, it seems, to the fact that the infinitive verb acts not as a copula (and therefore does not state something about something), but as a noun. The proof of this is that the construction with infinitive and accusative can be converted into a construction with participle and nominative, in which the similarity with propositions fades: for example, according to Buridan 'hominem currire' is reducible to 'homo curreus'.\textsuperscript{20}

On the syntactic level, therefore, Buridan recognises that propositions constitute a special type of combination (different from other combinations of terms such as 'homo albus' and even 'hominem esse album'), \textit{a complexio distans} in which there is a copula that performs a special act of "saying". The question now is whether this special kind of

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{In Met} IV. 14: "Dico ergo quod sapit intellectum est duplex complexio conceptuum: una potest vocari distans, alia indistans. Distans vocatur quando in propositione predicamentum complexitur cum subjecto mediante copula, et hoc potest fieri affirmativo vel negativo, ut 'homo est animal', 'homo non est animal'. Sed complexio indistans vocatur quando adiectivum complexitur cum substantivo sine copula mediana, et etiam potest fieri affirmativo aut negativo, ut 'homo albus', 'homo non albus'." \textit{In Met} VI, 6: "Indistans est prout determinatium complexitur cum suo determinabilium sine copula verbalis mediana, ut si dicam 'animal rationale', 'homo albus.' Quaest Elenc. 17.3.2: "Non tamen complexus complexione distante, quod fit mediante hoc verbo 'est', sed complexio indistans, ut si dicerem 'animal rationale', 'homo albus.' Quaest Priorum I, 12 (cited in Reina 1959: 409 note 10): "Sed notandum est quod aliqua complectitur ad invicem [...] mediante hoc verbo 'est', et talis complexio vocatur distans." On the distinction \textit{distans-indistans}, see Nuchelmans 1980a: 31-33.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Summ} IV, 2.3: "Iliae copulae 'est' et 'non est' significant diversos modos complectendi terminos mentales in formando propositiones mentales, et isti 'complexi-complexi' sunt concepts complexivi pertinentes ad secundum operationem intellectus, prout ists addit super primam operationem."

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Summ} IV, 2.3: "Et etsi etiam ipsae dictiones 'et', 'vel', 'si', 'ergo' et huiusmodi designant concepts complexivi plurium propositionum simul vel terminorum invicem in mente et nihil ulterior ad extra."

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Summ} I, 3.2: "Proposito autem mentalis consistit in complectione conceptuum; id est supponitur conceptus simplices in mente, et super hos addit conceptum simplicem complectivum quo intellectus affirmat vel negat unum illorum conceptuum de re aliqua."" \textit{Cf. Prior Analytics I, 1, 24a 16; Poli Hiermencias 4, 17a 21; Posterior Analytics I, 2, 72a 14.}

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Quaest Phys} I, 18: "Secundo conclusio est quod 'generare' vel 'benefacere' vel 'Deum creare' vel 'Socratem secare lignum' et sic de alis non est una proposicio. Verum est tamen quod aliqve tales orationes infinitivi modi supponunt materialiter pro aliqua propositionibus, ut si dicas 'Deum creare est propositionem affirmativam, sic enim ista oratio 'Deum creare' supponit pro ista propositione 'Deus crearet'. See also: \textit{In Met} IV, 6 and V, 7; \textit{Conseq} II, 7; and \textit{Summ} IV, 3.2 and VIII, 2.1.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Soph} II, concl 3: "Nam sicut hominem currere, si est, est homo curres, et hominem esse album, si est, est homo albus, etsi hominem esse estinum, si est, est homo asinus existens." See also \textit{In Met} IV, 10.
1.2 Semantic analysis

In my opinion, a proper semantic analysis of propositions cannot be carried out unless a clear distinction is made between two planes on which the relationship between language and reality unfolds: signification, on the one hand, and verification, on the other. In addition, a third intermediate level, the level of supposition, will be developed to bridge the gap between the two.

1.2.1 Signification

Signification is a property of terms: in Buridan’s theory, vocal terms are imposed to signify the concrete individuals in his ontology. It may be useful to recall here the distinction that Buridan draws between two types of signification for all vocal signs: first, they immediately signify the concepts by means of which they were imposed to signify (significatio apud mentem); and second, they indirectly signify (by means of these concepts) the things which are known by the corresponding concepts (significatio ad extra). When we use a term, we signify (ad extra) by it all the concrete individuals that it is imposed to signify: not only existent individuals, but also past and future, and even merely possible ones.

But we are now dealing with combinations of terms. Complex terms are not themselves imposed to signify, but are able to signify through the signification of their parts. In Buridan’s view, any complex term signifies the same as its parts signify separately (‘homo albus’ signifies men and white things). Thus, in some sense, considered as a combina-

23. *Soph II* concl. 5: “Immo propositio imposita non est secundum se totam simul ad significandum, sed secundum terminos eius secundum quos intellectus componit affirmative vel negative sua virtutem.”
24. *Summ IV*, 2.3: “Alius autem sunt voces significativa quae ultra illas conceptus non significant per se res alienas illas conceptus conceptas, sicut sunt copulae et negationes et signa distributiva.” See also n. 16 above.
27. *Summ I*, 1.6: “Sed oratio mentalis non amplitius dicur oratio quia significat ultra in re aliena orationem, sed quia est complexio plurium conceptuum in anima [...]. Sed statim tu quaeris: si in rebus significantibus vel re significatis non sit aliqua complexio, quid ergo significat oratio mentalis qua scilicet intellectus dicit Deus esse Deum vel Deum non esse Deum? Respondeo quod nihil ad extra plus vel aliud significat una dictarum orationum qua est. Nequid enim significat aliud quam Deum ad extra; sed aliud modo significat affirmativa et aliud modo negativa, et illi modi sunt in anima illi conceptus complexi qui secunda operatio intellectus addiit supra simplices conceptus, qui designatur per illas copulas vocales ‘est’ vel ‘non est’.”

This is what Spade calls the “additive principle”, which is also attributed to Ockham in Spade 1975: 58. Although Buridan does not explicitly formulate the principle, it is evident that he admits it in various places: *In Met IV*, 14; *QL super Perih I*, 2; *Soph I* concl. 8 and 11, II concl. 5.
bilia made popular in Paris by Gregory of Rimini,\textsuperscript{28} are the “things” signified by a proposition.\textsuperscript{29}

Now, although a proposition can be said to signify the same things that are signified by its categorematic parts, propositions are not specifically designed to signify things (this task is already performed by the terms, and, strictly speaking, only by them). Rather, propositions are designed to accomplish something different: to perform an act of a higher level, i.e. to say something about something by means of the copula.\textsuperscript{30} This special function of propositions endows them with a new property that is not present on the level of the terms: the capacity to be true or false. Although the vocal propositions ‘Deus est’ and ‘Deus non est’ do not signify \textit{ad extra} anything different from God himself, each of them adds something to the signification of the terms: they signify \textit{apud mentem} different ways of thinking of God; and precisely this difference is the reason why they have a different truth value.\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{29} On the one hand, Buridan holds that Gregory of Rimini’s \textit{complex significabile} are absurd and inadmissible “entities” (\textit{Quaest Phys I}, 18; \textit{In Met V}, 7 and VI, 8). On the other hand, Buridan maintains that there is no need to propose any special “entity” that is the meaning of the propositions, since anything can be signified in different ways, by simple or complex expressions (\textit{In Met V}, 7; \textit{Quaest Phys I}, 18; \textit{Soph I}).

\textsuperscript{30} The interest which Buridan shows in the problem of determining the subject of a categorical proposition (for example, in the case of propositions with oblique terms) is proof of his concern with “saying”: according to the accepted definitions of ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’ as “illud de quo aliquod dicitur” and “quod dicitur de alio” respectively, the problem of determining the subject of a categorical proposition seems to be a question of determining what is said of what in each case. See \textit{Summ I}, 3.3, \textit{Summ IV}, 2.6, \textit{Super Peri I}, 6, and also Karger 1984.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{In Met IV}, 14: “modo de complicionis distante dico quod iste propositiones vocales: ‘Deus est ens’, ‘Deus non est ens’, habent oppositas significaciones, iste significatur propositiones mentales diversas et oppositas, unam veram et alteram falsam. Sed propositiones mentales correspondentes istis predictis vocalibus non amplius ad extra significant, vel representant alius res, immo quicquid ego intelligi per illam mentalem ‘Deus est’, illud idem intelligi et nihil plus per istam ‘Deus non est’, quoniam per utramque propositionem nihil intelligi nisi Deum et esse vel ens. Sed tamen illa quod ego intelligi, ego alio modo intelligi per propositionem affirmativam et alio modo per propositionem negativam, quoniam per istam propositionem ‘Deus est Deus’ ego intelligi Deum secundum conceptum complexum et complexionem compositum.

In my view, in Buridan’s theory the two perspectives that give rise to the two classic definitions of the proposition are brought together: the one that we have seen, i.e. a statement that says something about something, as well as the traditional definition (also Aristotelian in its inspiration, but formulated by Boethius),\textsuperscript{32} i.e. a statement that signifies something true or false. It is precisely because the proposition says something about something that it has the property of being true or false.

1.2.2. \textit{Debita correspondentia in re}

At this point, one might object that ‘homo rationalis’ and ‘homo hinnibilis’, for example, also have different “truth values”. In fact, Buridan sometimes applies the terms ‘true’ and ‘false’ to non-propositional complexes. This is the reason why Gabriel Nuchelmans maintains that Buridan reduces the difference between \textit{complexiones distantes} (like the proposition ‘Homo est albus’) and \textit{complexiones indistantes} (like the complex term ‘homo albus’) to such an extent that he “tends to treat a mental \textit{propositio} as a complicated act of thinking of a thing and the corresponding vocal \textit{propositio} as a referring expression”.\textsuperscript{33}

In fact, Buridan draws a distinction between the \textit{complexiones indistantes} that have a \textit{debita correspondentia in re} (for example, ‘homo rationalis’) and those that do not have such a \textit{correspondentia} (for example, ‘homo hinnibilis’). Although there are indeed passages in which complex terms of this type are called by Buridan ‘true’ or ‘false’,\textsuperscript{34} in my view these words should be understood in an analogous

\textit{Sed secundum istam propositionem ‘Deus non est Deus’, ego intelligi Deum secundum complexionem divisam. Et tunc complexionem compositum esse in re debita correspondentia, scilicet est pro quo subiectum et predicatum supponunt, et complexionis divisivae non est in re correspondentia debita, ideo illa complexio apud mentem est falsa.”

\textsuperscript{32} Cfr. \textit{Peri Hermeneias} 4, 17a 3-4; \textit{De Diferentias Topica} (Patrologia Latina 64, 1174B 7).

\textsuperscript{33} Nuchelmans 1980a: 245.

possibility of success or failure of the referential function of terms, and this is what he calls debita correspondentia in re, and sometimes "truth".

In contrast, Buridan does not consider propositions to be "referring expressions". This is because a proposition as a whole, taken personally, cannot suppose for anything: no term can suppose unless it is the subject or predicate of a proposition, but no proposition, taken personally, can be the subject or predicate of another proposition. In addition, a further proof of the distinction between referring expressions and propositions is the relationship of the latter to assert and dissent. In Buridan's view, propositions are the only type of linguistic unit that can be met with assert or dissent.

Propositions are not referring expressions. But, even so, it is possible to investigate some kind of "fit" between propositions and reality. When a proposition does "fit", it is said to be true; when it does not, it is said to be false.

1.2.3. Verification

Just as propositions are not imposed to signify as a whole, so they are linked to reality not directly, but via the medium of the semantic properties of their terms. More specifically, the relevant semantic property is, according to Buridan, not signification, but supposition. It is true that

ille non supponit pro omnibus hominibus, sed solum pro albis, quia per conceptum albi sibi coniunctum restringitur. Nec conceptus albi supponit pro omnibus albis, sed restringitur per conceptum hominis ad supponendum solum pro illis albis qui sunt homines. [...] Octava conclusio sequitur, siclicet quod aliquid conceptus complexus facius subjectum vel praedicatum in propositione mentali pro nullo supponit [...]. Possum enim formare conceptum asini et conceptum risibilis simul per modum determinationis et determinabilis [...]. Et tamen ille conceptus complexus pro nullo supponit, quia conceptus risibilis prohibet ne supponant pro alius quam pro risibilibus, ideo non potest supponere pro asinis. Et conceptus asini prohibet ne supponant pro alius quam pro asinis, ideo non potest supponere pro risibilibus.

38. Summ IV, 1, 4: "Quia nullus terminus proprio locuo supponit, nisi subjectum et praedicatum propositionis, ut suppono."

39. Quest de Anima (tertia lectura) III, 12: "Notandum est quod ad simplicem conceptum, vel etiam ad complexum non per modum enuntiatiois, nullus sequitur asessus vel dissensus. Sed ad propositionem formatam potest sequi asensus vel dissensus [...]. Ideo sepe restringuntur haec nominis 'verum' vel 'falsum' ad judicium assentiva vel dissentiva, aut ad conceptus ad quos inveni sunt consequi asensus vel dissensus. Cum erant sunt propositiones mentales."
a proposition is able to say something about something precisely by means of the ability of its terms to signify. But, at the same time, a proposition surpasses the mere signification of its terms. This is the reason why the different attempts to account for truth in terms of signification do not work, as Buridan shows in the second chapter of his *Sophisma*. "Saying" does not amount to adding up significates, nor to signifying a new thing.

Rather, a proposition involves a different type of intellectual operation. As we have seen, the copula is the "complexive act" by means of which the intellect affirms or denies something about something. The act of affirming, as Buridan states, is an act of identifying something with something, the act of denying an act of distinguishing something from something. According to the syncategorematic nature of the copula, the proposition does not signify an identity, but it makes an equation. This is why propositions demand a different type of link to reality: verification cannot be reduced to signification. This special nature of the "fit" between propositions and reality results in a concrete method for determining the truth or falsity of a given proposition. As is well known, Buridan substitutes some new truth conditions based on supposition for the traditional rules based on signification. As far as verification is concerned, supposition acts as an intermediary between propositions and reality. For something to be identical with something, the things have to be real, and the link to real things is a matter of supposition. Thus, to say that real things verify the proposition 'A est B' is tantamount to saying that real things are such that the subject and predicate of the proposition suppose for the same things.

However, this way of expressing truth conditions ("supposit for the same things") is an oversimplified way of formulating the issues, and may lead us to misinterpret Buridan's theory. To avoid misunderstandings, Buridan insists that there cannot be a single way of formulating truth conditions that would be valid for all propositions. On the one hand, there is the special problem raised by self-referential propositions (insolubilia); for these to be true, identity of supposita is not enough. On the other hand, as far as non-self-referential propositions are concerned, the basic structure of the subject-copula-predicate can be modified by different syncategoremata, which of course do not alter only the outward appearance of the proposition, but also modify what the proposition says about things. If the simple 'A est B' (or 'A non est B') is according to Buridan an identification (or a distinction), the presence of the different quantifiers responds to the possibility not of simply identifying A with B, but of specifying how many of things A can be identified with how many of things B. When something more specific is said about things, it would be expected that the truth conditions of each proposition would also be more specific. For this reason, Buridan has to indicate which supposita of the subject must be identified with which supposita of the predicate so that the categorical propositions of each of the basic types are true or false. Thus, instead of accepting a general formulation of truth conditions valid for all propositions, Buridan offers, in the second chapter of his *Sophisma*, the set of rules that determine the truth/falsity conditions (based on supposition) for the basic forms of categorical proposition.

40. Soph II: "Idem valet dicere 'A est B' et dicere 'A idem est quod B', sicut etiam dicere 'A non est B' valet idem dicere quod A non est idem quod B."

41. Soph II: "Et sic videtur nihil quod in assignandis causis veritatem et falsitatem non sufficit in ad significaciones terminorum, sed in ad suppositiones."

42. Soph II: "Decima conclusio est quod ad veritatem categoricam affirmativam requiritur quod termini, scilicet subiectum et prae dicatum, supponant pro eodem vel eidem. Et forte quia hoc non est conclusio sed principium et indemonstrabilis, vel si est conclusio, ipsa est propinqua principio indemonstrabili, tamen in libro Posteriorum apparet quod aliquando principia indemonstrabilia indigent bene aliqua declaratio vel exempli vel induciva aut huiusmodi, ideo dictam desimam conclusionem ego sic declaro. Certum est quod in hac propositione: 'A est B' iste terminus 'A' vel pro nullo supponit vel supponit pro A, et ita de 'B'. [...] Deinde etiam manifestum est quod dicendo 'A est B', posito quod non sint termini ampliati ad praedicatum vel futurum, idem valet dicere 'A est B' et dicere 'A idem est quod B'. Sicut etiam dicere 'A non est B' valet idem dicere quod A non est idem quod B. Et tamen si est verum quod A est idem quod B, oportet quod isti termini 'A' et 'B' supponant pro eodem, quia 'A' pro A et 'B' pro B, quod quidem A ponitur idem esse quod B. Et ita similiter est de praeterito vel futuro."

43. Buridan devotes the eighth chapter of his *Sophisma* to this subject, and there is a wealth of literature on this. Some examples are: Hughes 1982; Pirronet 1993; Prior 1962; Sirridge 1978; Spade 1978.

44. Soph II: "ideo recolligendo ponitur ista decimaquarta conclusio, quod omnis propositionis particularis affirmativa vera ex eo est vera quia subiectum et praedicatum supponunt pro eodem vel eidem. Et omnis universalis affirmativa vera ex eo est vera quia pro quocumque vel pro quibuscumque subiectum supponit, pro eodem vel pro eidem praedicatum supponit. Et omnis particularis affirmativa falsa ex eo est falsa quia subiectum et praedicatum pro nullo eodem supponunt nec pro eisdem. Et universalis affirmativa falsa ex eo est falsa quia non pro omni illo nec pro omnibus pro quo vel pro quibus subiectum supponit praedicatum. Et omnis particularis negativa vera ex eo est vera ex quo universalis affirmativa abi contradicitoria est falsa; et dic-
As was the case on the level of signification, it is once again clear that Buridan's handling of verification does not hold him to any special ontological commitment: to account for the truth of a proposition, all he needs to accept are the individual supposita of subject and predicate. More specifically, in consonance with his rejection of the complex signification as the significates of propositions, Buridan rejects anything like "factual" or "states of affairs" as truthmakers of propositions: that is, the ita esse in re (or non ita esse in re) in the traditional definition of truth. 45 On the one hand, the individual things signified by the categoric terms are the only truthmakers admissible. 46 On the other hand, in many cases no truthmaker is needed: when the truth/falsity conditions involve a non-identity of supposita, the condition might be met if there were no suppositum at all, because then there is obviously nothing with which anything can be identified. For the truth of a negative proposition, as for the falsity of an affirmative, no real cause is required. 47

Once again, it seems to me that this stance towards truthmakers reflects Buridan's attitude concerning the specific character of propositions. Propositions are "about" things, but do not simply "mirror" things. The asymmetry that can be found in Buridan's treatment of true affirmative propositions and false negative ones on the one hand, and the false affirmative and true negative propositions on the other, is a proof that verification is not a simple relationship of mapping. The possibility of being compared with reality in a way that is not simply a quest for correspondence arises out of the radically different nature of propositions as opposed to terms.

2. Pardo's theory

Leaving aside some interesting topics, such as the reception of Buridan's theory by his students in Paris, 48 or how it spread through European universities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 49 I shall jump to the very end of the fifteenth century, when Buridan came back into fashion at the University of Paris (where Buridanism was vigorously reintroduced by Thomas Bricot, after the repeal, in 1481, of the decree passed by Louis XI banning the teaching of nominalist ideas). 50 Around 1500, one of the nominalists in Paris, the Spaniard Jerónimo Pardo, declared himself to be a follower of Buridan, yet he betrayed the spirit of Buridan's ideas. I would like to summarise Pardo's theory, and to
contrast his points with the main theses that I have attributed to Buridan.

In the first chapter of his Medulla dyalecticæ (1500, 1505), Jerónimo Pardo discusses the problem “of the truth and falsity of propositions”. To approach this problem, since he believes that truth and falsity should be based on signification, he examines three famous theories about the signification of propositions: that of Gregory of Rimini, which he considers erroneous; that of Buridan, which he says is the correct view; and that of Pierre d’Ailly, which he examines only with regard to the aspects which might come into conflict with Buridan’s theory (in order to defend the latter from possible objections). However, when Pardo tries to base truth and falsity on signification, Buridan’s theory proves insufficient, and Pardo decides to enrich it with certain modifications, thereby, I submit effectively changing the essence of Buridan’s semantics of propositions.

The strong point of Buridan’s theory is, in Pardo’s view, his refusal to accept extraneous entities as significates of propositions: the proposition can have no significate beyond the individual things signified by its terms. The weak point of the theory, on the other hand, is that it does not permit an explanation of truth as a function of signification. Buridan was aware of this, but Pardo wants precisely this type of an explanation, so he adds to the Buridianian ontology some “relative modes of being” (the different ways in which things may be related: modus se habendi), which in some sense are not different from the related things, but which in some other sense are the added aspect of reality that acts as specific significate and ground for the truth and falsity of propositions. The great difference between Pardo and Buridan is that Pardo does not believe in the autonomous activity of the intellect, but rather interprets the phrase “intellectus movetur a re” as the demand for a strict parallelism between language and reality. As a result, a) in contrast to the ontological economy implied by the compositional nature of language, Pardo ends up by proposing a specific significate for each linguistic entity (which makes it difficult to distinguish between propositions and terms, because both have a “referent” in reality); and b) abandoning the autonomy of the semantic plane of verification, Pardo adheres to the idea that truthmakers are rigorously needed for every proposition (which makes it difficult to distinguish between signification and verification, because every proposition has a real correlate which is at the same time its significate and the cause of its truth or falsity).

Pardo’s theory can be summarised as follows. Mental propositions are special acts of the intellect: by means of a proposition, the intellect conceives the same things that are conceived by the catenomonic terms, but (due to the synomonic nature of the copula) it conceives them in some way (aliqualiter). Since (in Pardo’s opinion) the intellectual act must be caused by reality, for the intellect to be able to form an affirmative proposition (so conceiving things affirmatively) there must be in reality an affirmative way of being (the way in which the things signified by subject and predicate are affirmatively related); and for the intellect to be able to form a negative proposition (so conceiving things negatively) there must be in reality a negative way of being (the way in which the things signified by subject and predicate are negatively related). Thus, although strictly speaking the significate of a proposition can be nothing other than the things signified by the catenomonic terms, the meaningfulness of propositions requires cer-

51. MD, 1ra-7m.
52. MD, 5ra-7ra. (A part of this text is included in the Appendix, and a preliminary edition of the whole first chapter is available on my website: http://sophia.unaves/pizarbe/medulla.html).
53. MD, 2va: “Alius est modus dicendi [Buridanus] qui licet verus multas tamen oppugnationes patitur, ut contra veritatem plerumque contingere solet. Pro quo ponitur taliis conclusionis significabilia seu significatum propositionis non distinguatur a significato superi terminorum. Ut ista propositione ‘homo est animal’ significat hominem esse animal. Tunc dicit quod hominem esse animal non distinguatur ab homine et animali seu ab illis que significantur per istos terminos ‘homo’ et ‘animal’.”
54. See Appendix. A.1 and A.5a.
55. Appendix B.1.d.
56. MD, 17ra: “Non sequitur: cognosco Socratem, ergo cognosco Socratem unitive in ordine ad seipsum; nam per noticium cuius subordinatur iste terminus ‘Socratem’ cognosco Socratem et tamen non cognosco Socratem unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et ex hoc videtur apparentia quaedam, quod ille modus se habendi unitive non omnino yeripificetur cum Socrate, ex eo quod stat aliquem cognoscer Socratem et tamen non cognoscit quod Socrates se habet unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et istud argumentum possit applicari universaliter de omnibus modis se habendi unus ad aliud, probando esse aliquam distinctionem inter rem et modum se habendi (sed hoc omittit quia non est presentis inquisitionis).”
57. Appendix A.4.b.
tain “ways of being related” as the real correlate for each proposition.\textsuperscript{59} On the other hand, propositions, in addition to being meaningful, can be true or false, and these properties also require, in Pardo’s opinion, some real correlates: for the intellect to be able to conceive things truly, these things that must be affirmatively/negatively related in re must also be truly related; and for the intellect to be able to conceive things falsely, these things that must be affirmatively/negatively related in re must also be falsely related. For this reason, Pardo posits “relative modalities” in re, prior to any act of the intellect, as the real ground for every propositional modality.\textsuperscript{60} Since the intellect’s potentiality is infinite, Pardo admits that there are infinite “modes of being related”, although these modes are not really (non realiter) different from the related things themselves.\textsuperscript{61}

Thus, for every proposition (affirmative, negative, present, past, modal, and so on), and for every propositional modality (truth, falsity, possibility, contingency, and so on), Pardo postulates in reality, as a foundation, not the individual things themselves, but those individual things related in different ways (affirmatively, negatively, etc.), and the different ways in which these relationships exist (truly, falsely, etc.). It seems that individual things “on their own” are not able to account for propositional semantics. The result is something as far removed from Buridan’s theory as a theory in which:

a) The difference between propositions and terms is dissolved: given that there is a real correlate for every proposition, it seems that in Pardo’s theory the reduction of propositions to referring expressions does take place. For example, the proposition ‘Homo est asinus’ would be a complicated way of naming men and donkeys insofar as they are affirmatively related (since in reality, in some way, “there are” men and donkeys related affirmatively although falsely).\textsuperscript{62} Buridan is capable of escaping from this reduction through the important role that he ascribes to the copula, and therefore, the semantics of “saying” as opposed to “signifying”.

b) The semantic evaluation of propositions is reduced to a referential relation, which seems to dilute the distinction between true and false propositions. Both ‘Homo est asinus’ and ‘Homo non est asinus’ have their real correlate in Pardo’s theory, which is the cause of their respective falsity and truth: men affirmatively related to donkeys in a false way, and men negatively related to donkeys in a true way. In Buridan, there is no such referentialism of truth and falsity, since he explicitly rejects the need for truthmakers for many kinds of proposition.

c) Because of all this, Pardo’s theory runs the risk of taking on undesirable ontological commitments. It seems that the requirement that language and reality should be parallel turns his theory into a disguised version of the complexe significabile theory that he criticises so heavily. The propositions ‘Homo est asinus’ and ‘Homo non est asinus’ demand, as a foundation for their semantic properties, a more complex reality than the terms ‘homo’ and ‘asinus’. Buridan, by contrast, only requires the individual things for which these terms supposit; what is more, sometimes he does not need them to supposit for anything at all. What he does require, though, is the acknowledgement of the independence of the intellect with regard to reality.

3. Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that Buridan is capable of maintaining that propositions have a specific character, without being obliged to take on any undesirable ontological commitment. What distinguishes a proposition from a mere list of terms is the fact that it contains a copula, and it can therefore be true or false. But on the one hand, the syncategoramic act of saying something about something does not require any object to be signified other than the individual things signified by the subject and predicate, whereas, on the other, the truth/falsity conditions do not require any real thing other than the individual things for which the subject and predicate supposit. In contrast, Pardo’s theory of propositions requires in re some “modes of being related” (as the ground for the meaningfulness of propositions), and also some “relative modalities” (as the ground for their capacity for being true or false).

It would be interesting to explore whether Buridan’s nominalism would be compromised if he were to admit a deeper structure for these individual things (which could help to explain, for example, the nature of essential and accidental predication).\textsuperscript{63} But what I have tried to show

\textsuperscript{59} Appendix, A.5.b.e.
\textsuperscript{60} Appendix, A.5.a.c.d.f.
\textsuperscript{61} Appendix B.1.d.
\textsuperscript{62} Appendix A.5.e.
\textsuperscript{63} On Buridan’s ontology, see: Scott 1966; Normore 1985; Klima 1999; Klima’s contribution to this volume.
here is that Buridan’s theory of propositions is rich enough to avoid an assimilation of propositions to terms, and consequently, a referentialist semantics of the proposition. By concentrating on signification and ignoring the special nature of predication and verification, one might easily fall into accepting an assimilation of this kind. In my opinion, although this charge may be levelled at some “Buridanians”, Buridan himself cannot be accused of it.

Appendix

Jerónimo Pardo, Medulla dyalecticae (Paris, 1505): cap 1, 5va-6rb.

A. <Responsio ad quintum>
1. [f. 5va] Sed quod necesse sit et veritatem et falsitatem, et necessitatem et contingentiam, possibilis et impossibilis ex parte significati propositionis sumi, quod negabat unus doctor, ostenditur maxime de necessitate et impossibilitate sic: propositionis non dicitur necessaria vel impossibilis per intrinsecam denominacionem secundum formalem necessitatem vel impossibilitatem seu entitatis, quia ipsa formaliter est res contingens; dicitur ergo necessaria vel impossibilis per extrinsecam denominacionem, et non nisi quia ei correspondet aliquid intelligibile et necessarium vel impossibile pro suo per se significato.

2. Cuius oppositum probatum est de aliquibus propositionibus quae sunt necessariae quibus non correspondet tamquam significatione nisi aliquid intelligibile contingens. Etiam probatum est quod nulli propositioni impossibili correspondet aliquid intelligibile impossibile tamquam eius per se significatum.

3. a) Ad quod respondet alius doctor [Andreas de Novocastro] quod per propositiones illas que sunt necessarie, de quibus probatum est quod non significatur per eas nisi res contingens, apprehenditur quoddam quasi intelligibile necessarium in proportione et figura vel forma loquendi, quia intellectus fertur super objecta intelligibilibus quasi sibi corresponderet tale intelligibile necessarium significabile complexum, sed non est ita secundum veritatem et proprietatem rei (sicut intellectus apprehendendo universaliter videtur per conceptum communem apprehendere aliquid universale intelligibile extra animam, et tamen non est ita in re).

b) Unde declarat doctor iste subtiliter causam erroris quam habet primus modus dicendi, quia sicut respectu rerum singularium forma-

mus conceptus individuales et specificos et generales, ideo ex hoc alioqui sunt ymaginati huismodi varietati conceptuum correspondere extra animam proportionabiliter <varietatem> de istic modis objectorum intelligibilium, quorum unum esset singulare et inferius, aliud minus commune, aliud magis commune, et inquisiverunt quid sunt et ubi sunt; ita in proposito, quia de rebus existentibus et possibilibus apprehensiones varias formamus, quasdam incomplectas et quasdam complexas, et harum quasdam affirmativas et quasdam negativas, et quasdam veras et quasdam falsas, quasdam contingentes et quasdam necessaries, quasdam possibles et quasdam impossibles, ex hoc ymaginati sunt quod huismodi diversitatis apprehensionum correspondent proportionabiliter differentia intelligibilium obiective terminantium. Et quia non potuerunt salvere esse incomplexe significabilia, posuerunt ista esse quorumdam intelligibilium complexe significabilium, sed non ita est secundum veritatem et rei proprietatem, sed tantum secundum similitudinem et modum intelligendi, intelligimus enim varie et res dicuntur variari quasi esset talis diversitas in re.

4. a) Sed adhuc iste doctor non videtur satisfacere, quia, ut dicit, per tales propositiones necessariorum aut ctiam impossibilium solum apprehenditur aliquid intelligibile quasi necessarium, et non quod ita sit in re, sed tantum secundum quandam figuram et modum loquendi; infero ergo etiam tales propositiones secundum rei veritatem non debent dici necessarie vel impossibile, sed tantum secundum figuram et modum loquendi. Quia, ut argumentatum est, propositioni non dicitur necessaria vel impossibilis per denominationem intrinsecam, sed tantum per denominationem extrinsecam a suo significato. Sed, per ipsum, suum significatum non dicitur necessarium secundum veritatem, sed tantum secundum similitudinem et figuram, et ita non sufficienter assignat rationem necessitatis, contingentie, possibilitatis vel impossibilitatis propositionum.

b) Item, sic arguo: aliter concipitur res aliqua per propositionem necessariorum, aliter per propositionem contingentem, et aliter per propositionem impossibilem, et illa alicetas 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 (et non capio ly ‘ut’ causaliter, ita quod causa quare res aliter se habet sit quia cognoscitur per talem noticiam). Et confirmatur, quia seclusa omni operatione intellectus quero an necesse sit ita esse taliter qualiter significabatur per istam ‘Sortes possibilior est albus’ aut non. Si dicatur quod non, que-
ratur unde sumit illa propositio suam necessitatem quando est. Si dicatur quod sic, ergo aliqua necessitas est in re significata propter quam res apprehensae secundum talem necessitatem dictur necessaria.

5. a) Dico ergo, salvo meliori judicio, quod a re sumenda est veritas et falsitas, possibilitas et impossibilitas, necessitas et contingentia, ita quod in re seclusa omni operatione intellectus reperitur veritas vel falsitas, necessitas vel contingentia, possibilitas vel impossibilitas. Ad quod deducendum ponam talem distinctionem: duplex est necessitas, scilicet, absoluta et simplicitas dicta, alia est necessitas relativa; seu aliquid dictur necessarium dupliciter, scilicet, absoluta et relativa. Similiter, de contingentia dicendum est quod est duplex, absoluta et relativa; et per forma impossibilitas dicenda est duplex, absoluta et relativa.

b) Exemplum: circumscripta omni operatione intellectus homo et asinus sunt res diverse (hoc cuilibet est manifestum). Si ergo sunt res diverse, habent quandam divisionem inter se, propter quam diversitatem intellectus potest cognoscere hominem non esse asinum. Est ergo prius in re divisi quam in intellectu, immo ille actus cognoscendi hoc nomen 'divisionis' propter res ab eo representatas sumptis, ideo homo relative dictur ad asinum negative seu divisivo. Ideo negative in re importata per istam propositionem 'homo non est asinus' est homo negative se habens in ordine ad asinum, quae negatione noticia illa qua cognoscitum homo negative in ordine ad asinum habet quod dicatur negatio. Et hoc videtur dicere commentum Methaphisice communto octavo, dicens quod vera affirmativa significat compo [f. 6ra] sitionem in entibus, et vera negativa divisionem in entibus.

c) Et homo similiter in ordine ad asinum se habet negative, non solum negative sed vere negative, et ideo est veritas relativa in re, puta ipse asinus relative se habens in ordine ad hominem.

d) Et vere est amplius necessitas relativa, nam homo non solum negative et vere refertur ad asinum, sed etiam relative necessario, ita quod homo est quid necessarium necessitate relativa in ordine ad asinum negative, homo enim necessario non est asinus, licet non sit quid necessarium necessitate absoluta (illud enim dictur necessarium necessitate absoluta quod non potest non existere in rerum natura). Homo igitur et asinus habent necessitatem relativam in re, a qua necessitate proposition habet quod dicatur necessaria.

e) Et si queras an illa res que est homo se habeat relative affirmative ad asinum, respondeto: homo se habet relative affirmative ad asinum, sed non relative vere sed relative false, ita quod est ponenda falsitas re-
ponatur quod nullus sit homo neque asinus, tunc nulla est veritas relativa, quia neque homo neque asinus.

ii) Respondeo: homo et asinus sunt veritas relativa, sic intelligendo: quod homo et asinus referuntur adinvicem vere negative, quod est dicere quod homo non est asinus, cum enim dico ‘homo non est asinus’, ly ‘est’ subordinatur uni conceptui quo concipiuntur homo et asini [-f. 6rb]-nus relative, puta utinam negative, et sic se habent negative, ideo copula modum illum relationem dat intelligere (de quo in sequenti capitulo), et ita de aliis propositionibus discuendum est. Nec profecto in hac magna difficoltate verba et rigor logices in modo loquendi est tantum acieindus quantum sententia.

d) Sed ulterior instaretur, quia capta ista propositione ‘omne ens est Deus’ ipsa non esset possibilis, quod est falsum. Consequentia tamen probatur, quia per eam significatur asinus secundum quod referatur ad Deum affirmativa, et taliter referitur impossibiliter, ergo ab illa impossibilitate illa propositio debet denominari impossibilis.

ii) Respondeo: illa propositio simpliciter denominatur possibilis, quia licet per eam tunc significetur asinus ut se habet relative affirmativa ad Deum (significatione accepta ex acceptione terminorum), tamen positio quod solus Deus sit non significabitur asinus ut relative ad Deum se habens (significatione accepta ex acceptione terminorum, penes quam significacionem sumitur possibilitas vel impossibilitas propositionum, ut declaratur postea).

B. Ad rationes:

1. a) Ad primam respondeo quod propositio vera recte sic diffinitor: propositio vera est que significat taliter qualiter est, et accipitur ‘qualiter est’ large, ut se extendit ad significatum propositionis de presenti, praeterito et futuro (quia de hoc postea fict mentio), et in secunda diffinizione per ly ‘qualiter est’ explicatur modus se habendi unius extremi vere ad alterum. Ideo, ad formam argomenti cum dicitur quod ista propositio ‘homo est asinus’ esset vera, negatur, et ratio est quia non significat taliter qualiter est, significat enim hominem et asinum affirmativa et non est vere, quia illi affirmationi unius extremi ad alterum extremum non correspondent veritas relativa in ordine ad idem extremum.

b) i) Et si dicas: bene sequitur ista ‘homo est asinus’ significat hominem et asinum affirmativa, et affirmativa se habet homo in ordine ad asinum, ergo significat taliter qualiter est.

ii) Respondeo: ut dictum est, per ly ‘qualiter esse’ intelligo vere esse.

Et ideo ad pleniorem diffinitionis predicte explanationem dicendum est quod propositio vera est que significat taliter esse qualiter vere est, intelligendo copulative, ita quod sensus sit quod significat alqualiter esse et taliter vere est.

c) i) Et ideo ista ‘homo est asinus’ est falsa, quia significat hominem et asinum affirmativa, et non taliter vere est veritate relativa correspondentiae affirmationi, unde per illos modos ‘verum’ et ‘falsum’ significant veritas et falsitas relativa. Ideo hoc resolvendo, si querratur quare ista est falsa ‘homo est asinus’, respondeo quod ideo quia significat hominem affirmativa in ordine ad asinum qualiter non vere est, ymo false.

d) Be propositio falsa possit sic diffiniri: propositio falsa est que significat taliter qualiter false est, id est, significat alqualiter et taliter false est. Ideo ista est vera ‘homo false est asinus’ quia significat quod homo false se habet ad asinum et taliter vere est.

d) Ideo patet quod ad asinum relative false se habere ad hominem sequitur quod vere relative asinus false se habet ad hominem, neque est inveniens aliquid 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.

Bibliography

Primary Literature


John Buridan, In Metaphysicen Aristotelis quaestiones arquissimae Joannis Buridani, Paris 1518 (pt. I with incorrect date of original publication of
Secondary Literature


Nuchelmanns, G. 1980a. Late Scholastic and Humanist Theories of the Proposition. Amsterdam: North Holland.


