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# JOHANNES GLOGOVIENSIS' CONCEPT OF CONSTRUCTION[*]

The extensive writings of Johannes Glogoviensis (1445–1507)[1], a well--known lecturer of Cracow University at the end of the 15th century and the early 16th century, include among others two grammar textbooks: *Declaratio Donati minoris de octo partibus orationis*[2] and *Exercitium secundae partis Alexandri*[3]. Both works were commentaries in the form of *questiones*: *Declaratio* referred to *Ars minor* by the Roman grammarian Aelius Donatus (4th/5th c. AD), whereas *Exercitium* discussed the second part of *Doctrinale*, a versified grammar treatise, by Alexander de Villa Dei (12th/13th c.). These commentaries were written in the spirit of speculative grammar, philosophical grammar, also called the modist grammar, since its basic term was *modus significandi* – the mode of signifying. Speculative grammars flourished in West European universities at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th century. The tradition of these grammars survived in the teaching programs of many universities, particularly German ones[4]; although in a secondary, non-creative form. The interest in this approach

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[1] For biographical data and references on Glogoviensis, cf. *700 lat myśli polskiej. Filozofia i myśl społeczna XIII–XV wieku*, J. Domański (ed.), Warszawa 1978, pp. 382–383.

[2] Its publications while the author still lived included those in 1500 in Lepizig, 1503 in Cracow and 1505 and 1506 in Leipzig. Information on those and later editions was provided in the article: K. Krauze-Błachowicz, *'Declaratio Donati minoris' by Jan of Głogów – 'Prologus' and 'Quaestio prima'*, "Acta Mediaevalia" 2002, p. 427–433.

[3] Published in 1500 in Leipzig; in 1504, 1510, 1516 and 1517 in Cracow; and in 1518 in Vienna.

[4] T. Heath, *Logical Grammar, Grammatical Logic, and Humanism in Three German Universities*, "Studies in the Renaissance" 18/1971/, p. 11.

at Cracow University very distinctly increased in the third quarter of the 15th century, and persisted even up to the 1530s[5].

Both "Donatus" and "Alexander" had for centuries been the basic items of the initial university curriculum. The tradition of commentaries on these two authors' works was just as many centuries old. One of the most popular 15th-century commentaries on *Doctrinale* in Germany was *Glosa notabilis* by Gerhard of Züpthen who lectured at Cologne University. It was repeatedly reprinted after its first Cologne edition in 1488[6] and it was well known in Cracow, where it was republished in 1525[7]. In many places, Johannes Glogoviensis' *Exercitium secundae partis Alexandri* resembles *Glosa notabilis*; still, its distinctly different nature can be seen in its terminology and choice of arguments. In both these works, the basic modist authority was Thomas of Erfurt, called the *auctor modorum significandi.*

Syntax is the subject of the second part of *Doctrinale.* The Middle Ages adopted the concept of construction – the basic concept of syntax – from *Institutiones grammaticae* by Priscianus (6th c. AD). However, the Roman grammarian had not developed it in a systematic manner. Starting as early as the 12th century, the medieval scholars undertook this task. The modists also dealt with the issues of construction. Entire works and their chapters were entitled *De constructione.* It is in the second part of *Doctrinale* that a fragment on construction can be separated. In Glogovienis' work, it can be found exactly under the heading *De constructione.* It is to this part of Johannes Glogoviensis' commentary that we will address several comments.

Johannes Glogoviensis gives three concepts of construction which emerge from his reading of earlier grammarians' writings. Its first meaning, the origin of which the grammarians traced back to Aristotle's *Hermeneutics*, is as follows: "construction is a combination (*combinatio*) of words the purpose of which is to cause the listener to understand"[8]. As regards the second definition of construction – the definition which he himself calls the proper one – Glogoviensis refers us to the definition by Thomas of Erfurt, which was as follows: "the construction is a combination of constructibles

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[5] C. Mielczarski, *Między gramatyką scholastyczną a humanistyczną. Komentarz Jana Sommerfelda Starszego do traktatu gramatycznego Eberharda Hiszpańskiego*, Ph. D. dissertation at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Science, 1989, p. 77.

[6] T. Heath, op. cit., p. 13.

[7] M. Cytowska, *Od Aleksandra do Alwara*, Wrocław 1968, p. 102.

[8] Johannes Glogoviensis, Exercitium in secundum partem Alexandri, Kraków 1517, f.71r: "combinatio dictionum ad invicem ad constituendum aliquem sensum audienti".

made up of the modes of signifying, caused by the intellect and devised for the purpose of expressing a compound concept of the mind"[9].

Johannes Glogoviensis does not quote Thomas' definition; still, he claims that it can be inferred from it that "the construction dictates the congruous (*congrua*) order of words and their mutual proportion (*proportio*)"[10]. We will return to this conclusion shortly, to discuss it at greater length. The third definition of construction – the one which is the most proper one from the point of view of the author of the work commented upon, i.e. Alexander de Villa Dei – is the classical definition of sentence, which dates back as far as Priscianus' definition: "the construction is a congruous order of words designed to transmit a complete thought"[11]. Glogoviensis, who supports the modist concept of Thomas of Erfurt, does not regard the third approach as a proper one, since the construction does not need to be the cause of a complete sentence. As the Cracow scholar says, there are, indeed, perfect and imperfect constructions (*perfecta et imperfecta*), i.e. complete and incomplete ones (*totalis et partialis*). While criticizing Alexander from the modist point of view, Glogoviensis is not aware that he does not fully observe the rules imposed by the modists. His concept that the construction indicates the "congruous order" (*congrua ordinatio*), both in the manner of expression and the content, reflects the influence of traditional, pre-modist school grammar. According to the modists' view, it was characteristic of the construction to be a combination of two elements of a construction, called constructibles (*constructibilia*), whereas the function of the combination *per se* did not determine its congruity. Constructibles could combine to produce a congruous or incongruous construction: "Just as the construction requires the union of constructibles in absolute terms, so too congruity requires the union of constructibles, not just any but the proper one"[12]. The postulate for the congruity of the construction survived in traditional grammar, where since its very beginning the construction had been identified with the con-

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[9] Thomas of Erfurt, *Grammatica speculativa*, ed. & transl. G. L. Bursill-Hall, London 1972, p. 279.

[10] Johannes Glogoviensis, op. cit., f. 71r: "constructio dicit congruum ordinem dictionum adinvicem et proportionem dictionum".

[11] Ibidem: "ordinatio dictionum congrua sententiam perfectam demonstrans; cf. *Priscianus, Institutionam grammaticarum libri XVIII*, (ed.) M. Hertz, vol. 1, Leipzig 1855 (= *Grammatici Latini*, ed. H. Keil, vol. 2), II, 15, p. 53: "oratio est ordinum dictionum congrua sententiam prefectam demonstrans".

[12] Thomas of Erfurt, Grammatica Speculativa, (ed.) G. L. Bursill-Hall, London 1972, p. 308: "sicut constructio requirit constructibilium unionem absolute, sic congruitas requirit constructibilium unionem, non quamcumque sed debitam.".

struction of a sentence[13]. The modists replaced the old concept of *ordinatio* by that of *unio.* This was a change not only in the mode of signifying. For many early grammarians, "construction" was a concept equivalent to the concept of "constructed utterance". In contrast, for the modists, "construction" was a "property of an utterance" (*passio sermonis*)[14], a form which combined two elements into a whole.

When describing the theoretical assumptions of grammar, Glogoviensis adopts, in principle, the postulate that it should consist of two elements[15]. Just as many other grammarians, he does not manage to avoid the expression "oratio" in the meaning of "utterance" or that of "sentence" with reference to the construction. Still, his manner of expression indicates his efforts to distinguish between the construction and the utterance; indeed, he uses the definition: "the construction is the cause of an utterance".

In accordance with the order of the lecture of Thomas of Erfurt, which Glogoviensis follows, the construction is transitive, intransitive, reciprocal and retransitive. Johannes Glogoviensis describes these constructions by means of the model introduced into grammar by Johannes Balbi de Janua (c. 1280)[16]. The transitive, reciprocal and retransitive constructions resemble, respectively, rectilinear, circular and compound motion. The intransitive construction corresponds to rest. What may seem to us to be slightly naive visualization is in fact one of the attempts to describe the problem of construction in terms of Aristotle's physics[17], the influence of which became visible in the modists' theory, albeit formulated in different ways than that of Johannes Balbi de Janua. Indeed, in their doctrine the modists combined the Aristotelian motif with a grammatical idea which originated from the early medieval concept of *regimen*, which had been unknown to the ancient grammarians, i.e. with the idea of dependency (*dependentia*)[18]. Glogovien-

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[13] Defined by means of the words "ordinatio ... congrua...".

[14] Cf. Thomas of Erfurt, op. cit., p. 272.

[15] Cf. Johannes Glogoviensis, *Declaratio Donati minoris*, Lepizig 1506, f.B2v.

[16] In his work entitled *Catholicon*, cf. M. A. Covington, *Syntactic Theory in the High Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1984, p. 79. C. H. Kneepkens, *On Medieval Syntactic Thought with Special Reference to the Notion of Construction*, "Histoire, Epistémologie, Langage" 12/2 (1990), p. 155.

[17] Thus, in the transitive construction, the action or sensation is shifted from the thing determined by the subject to the thing determined by the adjunct. In the reciprocal construction, starting from the subject, the action is re-directed to the same subject from which it started. The retransitive construction constitutes a combination of the previous two descriptions. In the intransitive construction, the action and sensation do not go beyond the acting subject. Cf. Johannes Glogoviensis, *Exercitium...*, f. 71r.

[18] The lecture on the construction based on the concept of dependency can be found in: Thomas of Erfurt, Diasynthetica, Idea 2000, translated by K. Krauze-Błachowicz.

sis drew on modist theory when describing the transitive construction: The first constructible depends on the adjunct, as in the example: "I deliver a lecture", where "I deliver" is the first constructible and "a lecture" is the second constructible which terminates the dependency of the verb[19]. Using such an understanding of the transitive construction, he conducts a demonstration to show that the reciprocal construction is the transitive construction. The entire demonstration, drawing on the notional scheme of Thomas of Erfurt[20], is based on the syntactic dependency of the constructibles on each other; it does not refer to the concept of "the thing determined" through the particular components of the utterance. In this way, Glogoviensis supported the modist solution to the problem which troubled the medieval grammarians, most of whom would traditionally adopt the "semantic" definition of the reciprocal construction, indicating that both elements referred to the same "thing determined". Based on such a definition, it could be regarded as the intransitive construction, where, in accordance with the "traditionalist" definition, both constructibles refer to the same thing[21]. For example, in the sentence "Socrates runs", both elements refer to the same thing – Socrates.

Johannes Glogoviensis also represents the modist approach regarding the issues of congruity (*congruitas*) and completeness (*perfectio*) of the construction. The congruity[22] of the construction is the mutual match of the "accidental respective modes of signifying" of parts of speech. The respective modes of signifying are the properties of the parts of speech which are responsible for their performance of syntactic functions. Indeed, each part of speech is equipped with essential and accidental modes of signifying. The essential modes of signifying can be general[23] – common to several parts of speech – or they can be special[24], too. The latter serve to distinguish parts of speech from one another. The accidental modes of signifying are such properties of them as number, gender and tense. The respective ones are those that affect the syntactic correctness of an utterance, i.e. its congruity or, rather, its consistency. E.g. the tense is not a respective mode,

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[19] Johannes Glogoviensis, ibidem, f.71v.: Est autem constructible primum in constructione quod dependet ad obliquam ut lego lectionem est constructibile primum quod dependet ad lectionem et lectionem constructibile secundum quod terminat dependentiam verbi".

[20] Cf. Thomas of Erfurt, op. cit., p. 180.

[21] Cf. Footnote 17.

[22] Which, with some caution, may be represented by the contemporary term "grammaticality".

[23] *Generales*, which can also be translated as "generic".

[24] *Speciales*, or "specific", cf. the preceding Footnote,

since the utterances "Socrates runs" and "Socrates ran" are not different in terms of congruity. When "Socrates runs" is replaced by "Socrates run", the latter utterance is inconsistent (incongruous). It can be seen that the number is an accidental respective mode of signifying, due to which parts of speech produce congruous or incongruous syntactic constructions[25]. To use the language of the modists (i.e. also that of Johannes Glogoviensis, who followed them in this respect), the mutual consistency of respective modes of signifying determines whether a construction is congruous or incongruous[26].

According to Glogoviensis, the complete construction is such a construction as, due to the correct combination of the constructibles, leads to the expression of a complete thought, i.e. it leads of the formation of a complete sentence in the mind of the listener[27].

Both congruity and completeness may be such according to sense or according to understanding. The former case occurs when both of the indispensable components of a construction are expressed by words, e.g. "I am reading"; the latter, when the entire construction is expressed by one component of it only and then it is said "Reading". The listener has to complement this expression by adding "I am" in his or her mind[28].

In introducing the issues relating to the constructions "ad sensum" and "ad intelectum" in his commentary, Glogoviensis demonstrates his interest in this problem. In contrast, other commentators, such as Gerhard of Züpthen, neglect this subject as of no significance at this point of a commentary on *Doctrinale*. Thus, either the author had a natural predilection to deal with it or it was a permanent subject which was not omitted in the teaching in Cracow. After all, this was an essential issue which had by then troubled philosophical grammarians for several centuries. It was the problem of how to cope theoretically with expressions which were not grammatical, but still fully understandable for the users of the language[29].

It can be seen that, as regards the concept of construction, Johannes Glogoviensis' views took shape under the influence of the thought of Thomas of Erfurt. Still, in interpreting a text by a classical modist author, who

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[25] Johannes Glogoviensis, *Exercitium*, f. 4v.

[26] Ibidem, f. 72r: "Congruitas est proprietas vel passio sermonis ex modorum significandi respectivorum conformitate ad aliquam speciem constructionis requisitorum derelicta".

[27] Ibidem. Thomas of Erfurt's lecture on the complete construction is much more complex and subtler. Cf. *Thomas of Erfurt*, op. cit., pp. 191–194.

[28] Johannes Glogoviensis, ibidem; *Thomas of Erfurt*, ibidem.

[29] The book by I. Rosier, *La parole comme act*, Paris 1994, is for the most part concerned with these issues.

Thomas of Efrurt undoubtedly was, Johannes Glogoviensis could not resist other influences characteristic of a certain permanent medieval didactic tradition of grammar. However, they did not veil the entire image of his understanding of syntax, the ambition of which was to gain the status of a theoretical science – one which would deal with the theoretical concept of construction and its components connected by appropriate modes of signifying and whose correctness might be evaluated without having to refer to the semantic contents of utterances.

Translated by *Jerzy Bałdyga*