

# The “Promisimus”

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*Summary:* The paper examines the “Promisimus”, an unedited 12th-century grammatical text that has never been studied in its own right. After a discussion of the text’s possible place and date of origin, quotations from the text are used to highlight a number of the significant features of the “Promisimus”. These features include its use of both classical and medieval quotations, and of comparative linguistics, and the relationship between the “Promisimus” and later speculative grammar.

In 1950 the late Richard Hunt wrote his article on the grammars from the school of Ralph of Beauvais, who was active in the second half of the twelfth century and has left us a commentary on Donatus (ed. Kneepkens 1982) and glosses on Ovid and Lucan (ed. Kneepkens 1991). Since Hunt’s article appeared, one of the anonymous commentaries from this school, the large but fragmentary commentary on Priscian Major (I.1-VII.87, VIII.28-71) called “Promisimus”, has been studied for specific, partial points by De Rijk, Kneepkens, and Rosier. In this paper I shall discuss the “Promisimus” in its own right.

I am preparing a (partial) edition of the “Promisimus”, with the help of Hunt’s extensive (but not complete), partly handwritten transcription. In this paper I shall concentrate the discussion on the following points.

- 1) Was the “Promisimus” with any likelihood connected with Rheims and written in the 1170s?
- 2) In what way does the “Promisimus” mark the end of an era in its efforts to teach Latin by the help of an abundance of classical and medieval quotations (Hunt 1950: 29-32) and references to French?
- 3) Is the “Promisimus” in any sense more “pre-modistic” than e.g. Robert of Paris in its use of *modus significandi*?
- 4) If we agree with Maierù (1990: 73) that the triad *res, intellectus, vox* mentioned in key passages in the “Promisimus” represents *in nuce* the later doctrine of *modi essendi, intelligendi, significandi* in speculative grammar, is the appearance of this triad in the “Promisimus” a feature unique to it or is it

rather a sign of a certain conservatism in the “Promisimus”, i.e. an adherence to the older *Glosule* tradition?

I shall deal with these questions in the order above, and without undue repetition of earlier research, for which I refer to the pioneering studies by Richard W. Hunt, L. M. de Rijk, C. H. Kneepkens, and Irène Rosier listed in the bibliography.

### 1. Was the “Promisimus” Connected with Rheims?

Our commentary is outstanding among contemporary grammars in its abundant explicit references to such masters as Abelard, Gilbert of Poitiers and the Porretani, William of Conches, Petrus Helias and his school, Manegaldus, as well as to theologians like Petrus Manducator (*alias* Comestor), Bishop Maurice of Paris and many others. This array of names would seem to indicate a thorough familiarity with the many Parisian schools. In fact, only the school of the Parvipontani is not explicitly referred to, which led Richard Hunt to the tentative suggestion (Hunt 1950: 18) that the anonymous master, directly dependent on Ralph of Beauvais, might himself belong to the school of the Petit Pont. Such an allegiance on the part of this pragmatic, lively commentator would be most welcome, since it would align him with both Adam of Balsham and Alexander Nequam, who belonged to that school, and who have both left us most interesting grammatical-lexical works detailing the practical uses of grammar – recently edited (Tony Hunt 1991), but formerly studied by Richard Hunt himself (R. Hunt 1984).

However, there are signs of affiliations with schools outside Paris too: a Master Stephen of Rheims is mentioned five times, (fol. 36vb, 41rb, 65va, 71vb, 73ra; Hunt 1950: 49-50), along with a tantalizing notice of an instrument of torture, shaped as a stag, “which is still there in the court of the bishop of Rheims”:

1a) EQUULEUS. Quidam dicunt quod sit diminutiuum uoce et non significatione et dicunt quod significat genus tormenti \uel/ quod sit tor[a]mentum ad modum equi factum, quod stabat in templo deorum, sicut ceruus adhuc est in curia Remensis episcopi. (fol.60rb ad Prisc.III.43, GL II: 114.20).

We can make sense of this reference to what can be seen by his contemporaries in Rheims in two ways. Either it belongs to the

kind of information our grammarian gathered from a wealth of sources with his keen eye for anecdotes and *curiosa*. Or, he or his students were acquainted with Rheims. Most annoyingly, there is a similar notice about a Parisian locality:

1b) unde etiam adhuc ‘Termes’ dicitur locus quidam Parisius, quia ibi fuerunt balnea. (fol.77va ad Prisc.VI.55, GL II: 240.7, Hunt 1950: 18).

Both references use the expression ‘adhuc’, as if the author endorses the truth of the existence of both the Roman Baths in Paris and the stag in the bishop’s court in Rheims. The only difference between the two remarks is that the stag is there to be seen in a very definite spot right inside the bishop’s own official building in Rheims, while the Roman Baths in Paris, the ‘Termes’, is (only) a name of a locality. Unless one offers a third explanation, namely that it is an extraneous gloss, which by scribal error has found its way into the text, I would say that there is slightly more in favour of an affiliation with the school of Rheims, famous in its day (Williams 1964) and noted for cultivating the study of the classical authors. Thus, Joseph of Exeter composed the Trojan Epic, *Dares Phrygii Ilias*, around 1189 when he taught in Rheims (Joseph Iscanius I: 221). Twelfth-century grammar abounds in references to Paris – not so to Rheims and to master Stephen of Rheims.

This, however, does not lead us to the identity of the author, who reports the lectures of an anonymous master agreeing on most points – but not all (Hunt 1950: 45-48) – with the teaching of Ralph of Beauvais.<sup>1</sup>

Hunt (1950: 18) dated the “Promisimus” to the last quarter of the twelfth century because it mentions Maurice who was bishop of Paris 1168-1196. This accords well with another curious reference – not mentioned by Hunt – which may be to the King of France, Louis VII, who ruled 1137-1180 and was the son of Louis VI le Gros (filius Grossi):

<sup>1</sup> Hunt (1950: 2) is hardly right that the last quire of the “Promisimus”, fol. 80-88 on book VIII, might be by a different author, since the manner of commenting and the explicit reliance on Ralph of Beauvais continues, cf. text 4a. De Rijk’s suggestion that the author was Robert Blund (De Rijk 1967: 255) has been shown to be wrong by Hunt (Hunt 1982: 12) and Kneepkens (Kneepkens 1987: I: 384).

1c) AD ALIQUID DICTUM. Hoc nomen a dialecticis dicitur relatiuum quod copulat proprietatem inherentem alicui respectu alterius proprietatis que inest alii respectu prioris, ut 'dominus' copulat dominium respectu seruitutis, que inest seruo; et iste relationes sese mutuo exigunt, unde unum dicitur in alio intelligi, et unum interemptum dicitur aliud interimere, id est si nulli conueniat unum nec reliquum. Falsum est.

Dicitur enim: "Filius Grossi regis regnat in Sicilia" et "iste est similis patri suo" et "uerum differt a falso". Ideo dicimus quod unum designatum per unum relatiuum potest esse, etsi non sit reliquum. (fol.50va ad Prisc. II.28, GL II: 60.19).

De Rijk preferred the period 1150-1175 (de Rijk 1967: 255), while I would venture the 1170s, after Maurice became bishop in 1168 but while Louis VII was still king (if Louis VII was indeed the one meant by this cryptic reference to "filius Grossi" in Sicily). The many explicit references to masters, including Petrus Manducator (who died 1179) and the Porretani (Hunt 1950: 44, 51-52) seem to me also to favour the 1170s. A later date would be difficult to maintain, since doctrinally the "Promisimus" sides with William of Conches and Petrus Helias, who wrote in the 1120s-1140s, and since it does not cover all the newest grammatical doctrines, which we e.g. find in Robert of Paris' syntactical *Summa* (Kneepkens 1987: I 143) from the 1160s. A certain conservatism in comparison to Robert may perhaps also be accounted for by the doctrinal dependence of the "Promisimus" on the humanist tradition of Ralph of Beauvais (cf. *Liber Tylan*: XVIII) and, even more so, by the different format of Robert's succinct, syntactical *Summa* and this lengthy and broadly designed, literal commentary on Priscian Maior.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Literary and French Examples

The second question, concerning the wealth of literary examples, hinges on the author's dependence on Ralph of Beauvais – himself keen on literature to such an extent that he was ridiculed as a *senex elementarius* by Peter of Blois (Hunt 1950: 12). To this hu-

<sup>2</sup> Hunt was worried over the reference, fol. 49va, to the German Emperors' signature as "Dei Gratia imperator et semper Augustus", mentioning the Emperor L.<?>. This would be Lotharius, 1125-1137. Could the L.<othar> be a scribal error for F.<riederichus>? The Emperor Friederich Barbarossa, who reigned 1152-1190, used the formula very often, while Lothar only twice, cf. Ottenbach/Hirsch 1957: 170.2; 191.27 (for the years 1136, 1137).

manist strain we should add an unusually broad set of references to French and to local pronunciation, which are also found to a lesser degree in William of Conches and the anonymous “Quoniam opificen” (cf. Fredborg 1990: 55), e.g.:

2a) ‘Eurardus’, ‘Ebrardus’, ‘Euerardus’ non est nomen Latinum sed barbarum, et de barbaris non curat regula Latina, fol.33ra (cf. “Quoniam Opificen” in Fredborg 1990: 55).

2b) GINNECEUM (= gynaeceum)..., unde Gallice dicitur “hec mulier vadit ‘in genes” id est in officium mulierum. (fol.52vb ad Prisc.II.46, GL II: 71.9).

2c) ‘fidicula’ diminiutium et istud tractum est a Gallico, uel econuerso, quia Gallicus dicit ‘viele’ et maxima affinitas est inter v et f. (fol.59ra ad Prisc.III.30, GL II: 105.15).

2d) CENSUALIS quod ad censum pertinet. Secundum hanc regulam dici debet: a ‘res’ ‘ralis’, unde M<agister> R<adulphus> Bel<uacensis> deridendo eos semper dicebat “hoc dicunt li rales (ralet *ms*)”. Dicimus quod e interpositum causa euphonie. (fol.63va ad Prisc.IV.23, GL II: 131.10).

2e) IN HIS ERGO. Quia hec indeclinabilia habent omnia casualia officia, ergo habent realem casum et non uocalem, quare dicuntur monoptota. Et hoc est: CASUS FIERI (significet *ms*) NON VOCIS. Vel secundum usum possumus dicere ‘nequam’ aptotum, id est nullius casus et relatiue monoptotum, secundum quod casus /fol.74vb/ dicitur terminatio discretiua alicuius casualis officii. ITAQUE. Quia declinantur sensu et non uoce apponimus articulos ad distinguenda casualia officia quibus Gallici habundant sed Teutonici egent. (fol.74va-b ad Prisc. V.71, GL II: 184.23).

Cf.: Sicut nominatiuo “hic magister”, ‘hic’ non ibi significationem uel consignificationem aliquam habet, sed tantum ex materia uocis discernit genus et casum et numerum et non in ui pronominis ponitur, sed improprie transfertur a sua significatione. Similiter in articulis Gallicis ubi dicitur puero: Ubi ponitur ‘li’, cuius casus? et respondetur “nominatiui!”, et Ubi dicitur ‘de’? et respondetur “genitiui!” et sic casus distinguit articulus Gallicus ex sola uocis materia (fol.49rb ad Prisc.II.24, GL II: 58.4).

2f) GRECI AUTEM. Non solum in huiusmodi constructione (viz. absolute ablatiue) solent ponere \participii/ (Grece *a.c.*) genitiuum, sed etiam uerbum infinitiui modi loco participii, quia infinitiuus est <cum> genitiuo quod in Gallico patet “causa legendi” ‘de lire’ est infinitiuus. (fol.75va ad Prisc.V.81, GL II: 191.7).

2g) TRACTAVERO pro tractabo. Nota quod subiunctiuus habet consignificationem temporis compositam ex preterito et futuro quod patet interpretatione Gallica “cum tractavero” cum “io auerai \futurum/ traitie \preteritum/”. (fol.75va ad Prisc.VI.1, GL II: 194.13. Cf Aelfric, Tony Hunt 1991: 112,115).

2h) QUE IN SPECIES. Quia Longobardis graue est pronuntiare ‘c’ ante ‘i’, ne uideretur per hoc nomen ‘species’ aliud dixisse, addit ID EST IN PARTES. Similiter quidam Blesi pronuntiant ‘intensio’ pro ‘intentio’, quia graue est eis pronuntiare ‘t’, et ideo fit error. (fol.46rb ad Prisc.II.15, GL II: 53.30).

As is clear from the few examples given here – I have deliberately omitted merely lexical elucidations of the type ‘calx’ = la chaux (fol. 69va) which are rather frequent – the “Promisimus” follows Priscian’s own fast and loose method of comparison between Greek and Latin. This is not the case only in lexical but also in grammatical phenomena, as the use of cases (genitive, example 2e) and moods (infinitive in certain constructions, 2f) shows. Though our author does not accept a general grammar for all languages (2a), it is clear that he considers certain phonetic features to be of a general nature (2c) and the general function of moods and cases to be valid in the comparative description of languages.

### 3. Modus significandi

Generally speaking, the 12th c. grammarian used the terminology *modus significandi* in the not-very-technical meaning of “a special way of signifying”. According to this usage you might, with Petrus Helias and Robert of Paris, distinguish the seven or eight parts of speech, or – in a non-technical fashion – indicate a special meaning added by a particular accident of some part of speech.<sup>3</sup>

An example of that is the discussion of the various tenses and cases in the “Promisimus”:

3a) TEMPUS ACCIDIT VERBO... Propter hoc Priscianus illius distinctionis reddit rationem dicens quoniam non distinguit tempora propter naturam et essentiam temporis, sed per modos significandi quos habet uerbum ad distinctionem humanarum accionum, quarum quedam sunt (inter *ms*) presentes, quedam preterite et alie future. Verbum enim habet tres modos significandi, quos habet uerbum ad significandum accionem modo ut presentem, modo ut preteritam, modo ut futuram. (fol.83va ad Prisc.VIII.39, GL II: 405.21).

AN C<O>EPERINT QUIDEM NECDUM TAMEN PERFECTA id est nominantes modum significandi quem (quam *ms*) habet uerbum ex eo quod significat ac-

<sup>3</sup> *Modus significandi* used about wordclasses, cf. Petrus Helias: 182.40-43; 189.94-95; 881-882; Robert of Paris: 193.15-18; 233.8; 321.30. It has also been used for the specific meaning of a specific type of word by Petrus Hispanus, *Summa*: 19, cf. Rosier 1995: 137-139, and by Hugotio, teacher of Robert of Paris, cf. Pinborg 1967: 34-35; Kneepkens 1987 I: 310.

tionem uel passionem iam inchoatam et nondum ad finem perductam preteritum imperfectum, PRETERITUM VERO PERFECTUM nominantes tempus IN QUO RES PERFECTA, id est modus significandi quem habet uerbum ex eo quod significat actionem uel passionem inchoatam et ad finem ductam, PRETERITUM PLUSQUAMPERFECTUM nominamus tempus IN QUO RES OSTENDITUR IAM PRIDEM PERFECTA id est modus significandi quem habet uerbum ex eo quod significat actionem uel passionem multo ante preteritam. (fol.83vb ad Prisc. VIII.39, GL II: 405.21-406.1).

3b) CASUS EST...Que autem sit causa inuentionis dictionum in diuersis casibus non dicit actor nec ad plenum quid sit casus diffinit. Unde hoc supplendum esse existimo.

Causa igitur inuentionis dictionum in diuersis casibus fuit diuersus modus significandi rem. Quando<que> enim significamus rem ut que supponitur locutioni, id est ut agentem uel patientem, quandoque ut cuius est aliquid, scilicet ut ea a qua aliquid possidetur, et aliis pluribus modis, que omnes diuersitates si una uoce casuali designarentur fieret confusio. Propter talem confusionem uitandam inuenti sunt diuersi casus, ut diuersitas significandi rem distinguatur per casuum diuersitatem. Casus autem est proprietas uocis cadendi in alium casum uel cadendi ab alio casu in eadem dictione. Proprietas cadendi in alium casum nominatio conuenit, cadendi ab alio obliquis.

Potest autem et aliter casus diffiniri: Casus est proprietas contracta partim ex uariatione terminationis, partim ex modo significandi, id est ex officio casuali in casuali dictione per quam scilicet proprietatem cognoscitur utrum res ut agens designetur aut ut cuius est aliquid uel aliquo aliorum modorum, qui per diuersitatem casuum distinguuntur.

Ideo autem dico contracta ex uariatione terminationis et officii, quia nec sola terminatio sufficit ad casus discernendos, nec solum officium, cum sepe diuersi casus eandem habeant terminationem, ut 'muse' genitiui casus est et datiu. (fol.74rb ad Prisc.V.68, GL II: 183.20).

Within the individual cases, the case-functions may cover several *modi significandi*:

3c) MULTAS QUOQUE. Quia ablatiuus est numerale, sermocinale, materiale, sed modum attribuit prepositionibus sibi adiunctis, ut "†finis† est de numero illorum", ablatiuus ibi numerale est et modum significandi taliter attribuit prepositioni. Item "de Sorte loquor" sermocinaliter. Item "hoc est de ferro" materiale. Has et alias multas significationes \modos significandi/ habet ablatiuus et etiam alii casus. (fol.74vb ad Prisc.V.73, GL II: 186.4).

Nowhere did the 12th c. grammarians classify these *modi significandi* as either essential or accidental, as they typically are in pre-modistic texts like that of Jordanus (Jordanus: 76) and Ps-Kilwardby (passim).

The special features of the individual parts of speech, the *acci-*

*dentia*, are accounted for, systematically, in other ways, as either properties or as additional, secondary meanings (as the noun's number and gender, and the verb's tense, mood, number, and *forma*; Fredborg 1973: 32) or subdivided into vocal accidents distinguishable by the endings and non-vocal accidents, in the older *Glosule* tradition.

Ralph of Beauvais (*Glose*: 21.18-22) and his school preferred the older distinction and disliked William of Conches' terminology 'secondary meaning'. Moreover, Ralph of Beauvais and his school preferred the view that such accidents indicate variation in linguistic form as a linguistic property of that part of speech, since signification holds between a word and an extralinguistic thing, while grammatical accidents are functions and common properties particular to a part of speech:

3d) In gramatica dicitur numerus quedam proprietas dictionis appellantis res quibus inest numerus uel rem cui inest numeri principium...nota autem quod quidam dicunt numerum esse secundariam nominis significationem, ...sed nos hoc non dicimus. (fol.70va ad Prisc.V.46, GL II: 172.1).

cf.: Sed notandum quod quidam dicunt ea esse secundarias nominum significationes, et ita numerus non est proprietas, sed secundaria nominis significatio, alii uero proprietates nominum, quibus consentit M<agister>. (fol.48va ad Prisc.II.22, GL II: 57.8; cf. Hunt 1950: 35, Kneepkens 1995: 243).

3e) Aliter enim accipitur hoc nomen 'numerus' cum dicitur significare numerum dictio, aliter cum dicitur numerus accidere (accidit *ms*) nomini uel alii parti orationis. Cum enim <dictio> dicitur significare uel consignificare numerum, est sensus: Dictio significat unitatem uel alium numerum, scilicet pluralitatem. Dictio enim singularis uel pluralis numeri consignificat proprietatem non suam sed rem, ut dictio singularis numeri consignificat unitatem, sed non singularitatem.

Cum dicitur numerus accidere nomini, est sensus: Talis proprietas discernendi, scilicet utrum de una an de pluribus agatur per nomen, accidit nomini.

Similiter aliter accipitur 'tempus' cum dicitur tempus accidere uerbo, et aliter cum dicitur uerbum consignificare tempus. Cum dicitur "uerbum consignificat tempus" id est talem morulam, ut in uerbo manifestius dicetur. Cum dicitur "tempus accidit uerbo", [non] est sensus: Talis proprietas accidit uerbo. (fol.70va ad Prisc. V.46, GL II: 172.1).

Furthermore, Ralph of Beauvais stressed that the accidents of the parts of speech, mentioned in the definition of the parts of speech, are put there for syntactical considerations (Ralph, *Glose*: xxi-xxii, 19.4, p.65 note a; Hunt 1950: 15). The "Promisimus" follows Ralph, not so much in dividing the accidents into special *accidentia constructiva* – as did Robert of Paris when dealing with gen-



der, number, person, case, and tense (Robert of Paris: 280.10-12; 136.19; 141.28-29, cf. Kneepkens 1987: I 348-350) – as in establishing a list of accidents which could accommodate the different definitions of the wordclasses by Aristotle, Donatus, and Priscian:

3f) M<agister> Ra<dolphus>: Ratio hec est quod gramatici non omnes proprietates accidentales nominum \uel aliarum partium orationis/ inter accidentia earum ponere uoluerunt, sed illas tantum (tamen *ms*) quas iudicauerunt posse ualere ad earum constructionem et ad discernendum quomodo et qualiter ponenda sunt in locutione. Unde et quia diuerse iudicabant super hoc, diuerse accidentia enumerabant. Contingit aliquando quod uterque dissentientium bonam habet considerationem, sed alter altero meliorem.

Quod autem significare “sine tempore” non ualeat ad constructionem nominum discernendam patet, cum eodem modo significet omne nomen sine tempore (cf. P. Helias: 195.14). Sed “cum (in *a.c.*) tempore” ualet in uerbis, quia quod<dam> uerbum significat presens, aliud preteritum, aliud futurum.

Pretermisita est declinatio quia non ualet ad constructionem discernendam. Siue enim nomen cum alio nomine coniungatur quod sit eiusdem declinationis cum eo uel diuerse nihil refert. Sed in numero uel genere non sic. Etiam declinatio per casum discernitur.

Sed diceret aliquis: Figura et species non ualent ad constructionem discernendam, immo quia dictio composita quandoque ex ui unius componentium regit aliquem casum, quandoque uero ex ui alterius componentium alium, ut ‘do’ exigit datiuum, ‘circum’ uero accusatiuum, ‘circumdat’ quod est ex ambobus quandoque acusatiuum, ut “circumdat illum clamide”, quandoque datiuum, ut “circumdat illi clamidem” ... Similiter et de specie: ‘miseret’ construitur genitiuo et acusatiuo, ‘commisertum’ quod ex eo deriuatur similiter. (fol. 48vb ad Prisc.II.22, GL II: 57.8).

3g) ACCIDUNT IGITUR. In enumeratione accidentium nominis premitit speciem quia pertinet ad originem ipsius, secundo loco de genere quod secundum significationem consideratur, tercio de numero et non de figura quia dictiones in eodem numero exigunt coniungi et non in eadem figura; de figura uero ante casum quia pluribus conuenit figura quam casus, scilicet aduerbiis et uerbis. Sed hac ratione debuisset preponi numero quia uniuersalius est eo. Non! Quia licet figura aliquibus conueniat quibus non numerus, tamen paucis, et numerus magis ad constructionem discernendam ualet quam figura. (fol.49ra ad Prisc.II.22, GL II: 57.8).

3h) Genus autem in hoc loco dicitur quedam proprietas nominis, scilicet aptitudo discernendi sexum circa rem appellatam uel habendi similem constructionem cum discernentibus. Hec proprietas dicitur accidere nomini, quia preter principalem significationem nominis circa ipsum attenditur genus nec in eius diffinitione comprehenditur, et hoc accidens est ualde necessarium ad nominis constructionem cognoscendam. (fol.65va ad Prisc. V.1, GL II: 141.1).

Two things, then, are pivotal with regard to being counted as an accident of a part of speech. First of all an accident is a general

grammatical or semantic property to be found in most words belonging to that part of speech. Secondly, it has some particular syntactical value in the construction of a grammatically correct and clear sentence. That adjectives admit degrees of comparison (“long, longer, longest”) has sufficient syntactical value to be interesting as an accident to Donatus (*Ars Maior*, GL IV: 374.15), but covers too few of the words belonging to its wordclass in Priscian’s view (fol.48vb).

In rare cases, the syntactic construction runs counter to the general signification of that particular wordclass, e.g. in the accusative of direction ‘Romam’, meaning ‘to Rome’ which is construed as an adverb but signifies as a noun, while, conversely, “bini” meaning ‘in pairs’ has the signification of an adverb, but enters the sentence construed as a noun (fol. 51rb).

#### 4. Res - intellectus - vox

How, then, you may well ask, can I – with Maierù – believe that the grammarian, *in casu* the author of the “Promisimus”, has in any way moved in the direction of what was to become Speculative Grammar? First of all, because whichever small moves the “Promisimus” makes, they are always intended to describe grammatical phenomena functionally, as we have seen in the treatment of the grammatical accidents of the parts of speech (cf. Rosier 1994: 85, Rosier/De Libera 1992: 130, 133).

Secondly, because the triad of terms *res - intellectus - vox* is not just mentioned once or at a few random places, it is used to structure and account for the definition of *vox*, *syllaba*, and *dictio* respectively (fol. 24ra, fol. 42rb, and 45va; cf. Hunt 1950: 7, 10, and 32; de Rijk 1967 p.112, 239; Fredborg 1973: 13, n.12). Richard Hunt was himself the first to draw attention to this speculative feature, calling it the germ of the later *modi essendi*, *modi intelligendi*, *modi significandi*. With the greater number of texts now available to us, it is clear that the grammarians from the second half of the century considered the linking of *res - intellectus - vox* crucial.

Even though the author of the “Promisimus” does not develop the part played by *intellectus* as rigorously as we find in the Porretan grammar (*Glosule Porretane super Priscianum Minorem*: 27-32) or indeed the “Ars Meliduna” (De Rijk 1967: 295); it is interesting to see how *intellectus* is used by both Ralph of Beauvais (*Glose*: 32.29)

and the “Promisimus” to explain some of the tricky, logical puzzles, as when we use the present tense in propositions:

4a) (fol.82va) PRESENS, PRETERITUM, FUTURUM....Queritur autem quod tempus consignificetur uerbo presenti. Quidam dicunt quod tempus illud in quo profertur, ut ‘lego’. Unde si ita est in re ut uerbo dicitur, uerum (uero *ms*) tunc dicitur; si falsum, falsum. Quod si ita est, nunquam aliquis ueraciter potest /fol.82vb/ dicere ‘dormio’ uel ‘taceo’ uel ‘bibō’ uel ‘non loquor’. (cf. P. Helias, *Summa*: 487.8-11).

[quod] Dicunt alii quod uerbum presens consignificat illud tempus in quo incipit proferri. Unde uere possumus dicere ‘taceo’ uel ‘bibō’ uel ‘non loquor’ et similia, quia etsi non tacebat quando [quando] dicit hoc, tamen tacebat quando incepit hoc dicere....( cf. P. Helias, *Summa*: 487.12-19).

Propter hoc sunt quidam qui dicunt quod uerbum presens consignificat tempus in quo res sua agitur... (cf. P. Helias *Summa*: 487.20-22).

Alii dicunt quod uerbum consignificat presens tempus ita quod nullum [in]determinate, sed sicut confusum. (cf. P. Helias, *Summa*: 487.23-24).

M<agister> P<etrus> H<elias> dicit quod uerbum non significat presens tempus [quod] sed [adhuc] <aliquid> in presenti tempore (tempus *ms*), ita tamen quod nec in hoc presenti nec in alio (= P. Helias, *Summa*: 487.25-28).

Alii dicunt quod uerbum consignificet tempus quod statim preteriit ante prolationem in quo ipsum profertur et hoc quare (queritur *ms*) non possit esse postea dicemus.

M<agister> R<adulphus> dicit quod omne uerbum siue sit presens siue preteritum siue futurum, consignificat illud tempus quod concipit intellectus ad quem manifestandum illa oratio profertur, in qua ipsum uerbum ponitur, ut si modo intellegam (intellecta *ms*) So<rtem> disputare, si mox ad hunc intellectum manifestandum proferam orationem habentem uerbum presens, illud uerbum significabit (-bat *ms*) illud presens in quo intellectum concepi. Ideo dixi “mox”, quod si modo concipere<m> presens So<rtem> legere et cras proferrem: “So<rtes> legit” uel aliquo interuallo facto, hoc uerbum ‘lego’ non consignificaret illud presens in quo illum intellectum concepimus, cum tamen intellectum ad memoriam reducerem.

Et dicitur uerbum hoc modo significare presens tempus, non quia (quam *ms*) consignificet tempus *quod presens* quando uerbum profertur, sed quia consignificat tempus *ut presens*, quia est presens quando illum intellectum concepimus, qui significatur per orationem in qua ponitur ipsum uerbum.

Et notandum quod uerbum positum in [in] diuersis propositionibus, ut in propositione sillogismi et assumptione et conclusione feruntur ad idem tempus ad quod fertur uerbum prime propositionis... In hoc omnes conueniunt, sed diuersas inde assignant rationes.

Quid<am> dicunt quod disputator disponit argumentationem in animo suo antequam eam proferat, et sic in uno intellectu illa argumentatio concipitur. Quod falsum est, quia argumentator quando<que> mendicat propositiones. Ideo dicimus quod ita instituerunt gramatici ut omnia uerba argumentationis ad idem tempus referantur (referuntur *ms*), quod notat aduersatio in sillogismo, in aliis argumentationibus hoc notat signum concludendi, scilicet ‘ergo’, et in consequentis (potentia scilicet *ms*) uerbum antecedentis et consequentis ad idem tempus applicatur, quia aliter esset false...

/fol.83ra/... Preterea nota quod sine omni interrogatione potest ueraciter dici “ego bibo” quia postquam (iterum *ms*) bibit aliquis potest concipere istum intellectum se bibere, ad quem (quam *ms*) manifestandum mox profertur hec oratio “ego bibo”; et hoc uerbum ‘bibo’ ibi consignificat presens tempus non quod illud sit presens, quia iam preterit, sed consignificat illud ut (non *ms*) presens.

Et non solum preteritum tempus significatur ut presens sed etiam futurum quandoque significatur ut presens, et “Ogigio cum victor Marte redisset” (Stat. *Theb.* VI.609) ‘redisset’ ibi consignificat futurum tempus quasi preteritum. (fol.82va-83ra ad Prisc. VIII.38, GL II: 405.8; cf. Ralph, *Glose.* 31.31-32.32)

4b) COMPARATIVUM...Causam inuentionis:... Intellectus quandoque concipit rem ut existentem, qualiter significatur albedo hoc nomine ‘albedo’, quandoque concipit ut adiacentem alicui qualiter significatur per ‘album’, quandoque concipit adiacentem et cum augmento indeterminato qualiter significatur <per> [ut] ‘albior’, quandoque ut adiacentem cum augmento determinato et maximo qualiter significatur <ur> per ‘albissimus’. Quia ergo una et eadem res tot modis significatur, inuenerunt ergo uoces diuersas quibus rem significarent. (fol.54va ad Prisc. III.1, GL II p.83.1; cf. Ralph, *Glose.* 8.9-16).

The format of the analysis here is dialectical rather than purely grammatical, even if it must be noted that on the whole the author of the “Promisimus” is uninterested in the truth value of a grammatically correct sentence as such (Kneepkens 1987: I 56-57, 513). Furthermore, as we can see, our author copied a good part of the discussion from Ralph of Beauvais and Petrus Helias.

Petrus Helias himself had most of it from William of Conches (cf. Petrus Helias: 487 app.) However, if we check William of Conches here, we find that he rounded off this discussion of the present tense with the remark that he thought the discussion extraneous to grammar: “Positis igitur diuersorum sententiis et obiectionibus, eligat lector quod uoluerit; non enim multum pertinet hoc ad regulam huius artis.” (Ms Paris BN 15130, fol.60rb).

However, Ralph of Beauvais is at work here too. Ralph, a student of Abelard, not only ridiculed the realists – as we have seen in text 2d above – but belonged to a group of anti-realists, who were partisans of a particular version of the “status-theory” (*Glose.* 21.7, cf. *Liber Tytan:* X), also adopted by the “Promisimus” (fol.49vb). Ralph further discusses the difference between “real present tense” and “locutionary present tense”, where the level of reality corresponds to “*tempus quod presens*”, the level of the *dictum propositionis* corresponds to “*tempus ut presens*” in the “Promisimus” (text 4a above).

Ralph, *Glose* 32.26-30: Fortasse uerbum itaque presentis temporis dicitur con-  
significare presens tempus, non quod significet *tempus quod est presens*, dum uer-  
bum profertur, sed quia significat tempus quod est *presens, dum concipitur* presens  
intellectus qui per prolationem presentatur. [Italics mine].

## Conclusion: The Conservatism of the “Promisimus”

As the above excerpts from the “Promisimus” show, even where the discussion is somewhat long-winded and repetitive, including lengthy quotations from our anonymous grammarian’s predecessors, there is plenty of speculative grammar in the “Promisimus”, even if it lacks a uniform terminological superstructure when dealing with Priscian. Tucked away in “pockets” of discussions, the author of the “Promisimus” addresses grammatical theories from quite diverse angles: a humanist one, generously quoting the classics; a comparative linguistic one when contrasting Latin with Greek and French; a theoretical one carefully restating the positions of predecessors and contemporaries; and, not least, a pedagogic one offering an unusually rich tapestry of lively examples and counterexamples from which the author’s students could select – exactly as Priscian had done himself.

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