Nicholas Drukken de Dacia
in Paris c. 1340

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Summary: Nicholas Drukken de Dacia was a master of the arts faculty in Paris c. 1340-1345. His commentary on the *Prior Analytics* contains valuable information about the doctrinal debate in this period, concerning e.g. nominalism (Ockham), the syllogism, and the theory of consequences.

A "Copenhagen School of Medieval Philosophy" would probably never have developed, if the founders of the Society for Danish Language and Literature had not formed the plan for a complete edition of the works preserved from the Danish scholastic authors, i.e. the *Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi*. The author I shall deal with, Nicholas Drukken de Dacia, and the Erfurt-manuscript containing his work were known already to the founders and thus formed part of the inspiration for the *Corpus*. Relatively much is known about Nicholas' life: he was licensed as a master of arts at the university of Paris on May 15th 1340; his *inceptio* took place in January 1341; he was proctor *(procurator)* of the English-German nation in 1342, 1343, 1344, and 1345 and rector of the university in 1344.[1] After 1345 he disappears from the documents in Paris, but he received various ecclesiastical benefices until 1355 when he is mentioned as *continuus commensalis* (household member) of cardinal Petrus de Croso of Auxerre.[2] This may indicate that he was a fellow of the Sorbonne, as suggested by William Courtenay and Katherine Tachau.[3] Documents from June 1357 inform us that Nicholas was dead by then.[4]

Nicholas has left us a commentary on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* which has the interesting beginning: "... *omissa recommendatione, quia lectura est cursoria*".[5] In other words: the book claims to derive

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1 Chart. Auct. 1894: 38,31-32; 44,43-44; 60,3; 60,16; 66,38; 78,35; 80,21; 68,11-14.
2 Dipl. Dan. 1966: nos. 368-369, pp. 303-305.
3 Courtenay & Tachau 1982: 88.
4 Dipl. Dan. 1967: nos. 42 & 46, pp. 41; 45-46.
5 Nicolaus Drukken, *APr.* qu. 1.

from a cursory reading, which was the job of a bachelor. This is remarkable, since we do not really know the difference between ordinary and cursory readings of a text. To judge from Nicholas' text it does not mean that cursory works are particularly short. His whole work is only slightly shorter than e.g. John Buridan's commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, and several of Nicholas' questions are longer than the corresponding ones in Buridan. Nicholas' commentary does not offer elementary help to understand Aristotle's text either. It consists of 40 questions discussing problems dealt with in Aristotle's text in roughly the same order, but the references to Aristotle are few and insignificant. Certainly they would not help a beginner to understand Aristotle's text. Further, Nicholas has no questions on book II of the *Prior Analytics*, and the work seems to be complete, since the text in the Erfurt-manuscript ends with an *explicit*. As far as I know all other existing commentaries contain questions on book II, though sometimes few. Now, book II is of a much more theoretical and general character than book I which exposes the technique that must be mastered in order to use a syllogism. Could it be, then, that cursory readings of the *Prior Analytics* did not include book II?

Remarkable features of Nicholas' work are the several extensive passages it contains parallel to passages in Ockham's *Summa Logicae*. This in spite of the fact that Nicholas was among the masters from the English-German nation who on October 19th 1341 signed a decision intended to be equivalent to a statute against the *secta Occanica* and its teaching.[6] In 22 questions (out of 40) I have found parallels with Ockham's *Summa Logicae*, and in at least 15 questions the parallels are so long or so close that the easiest explanation would be to assume that Nicholas had Ockham's *Summa Logicae* at hand when he composed his commentary. Ockham's name is never mentioned; the closest we come is the phrase: "... *duae conclusiones cuiusdam magistri*";[7] elsewhere Nicholas says *aliqui* or *multi* or nothing at all. Nicholas does not always agree with Ockham. It frequently happens that he cites Ockham's view and then adds e.g.: "This may be well said, but a more easy way would be ..." or: "However that may be, to me it seems better to say ..." Nicholas gives e.g. a rather long summary of Ockham's description of

6 Chart. Auct. 1894: 52,42-53,10.

7 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 17,49.

modal propositions, but he does not find Ockham's treatment convincing and therefore proposes a different one.[8] It should be stressed that he never criticises Ockham directly or sharply, but rather says: fine, but I would prefer... It is worth noting that Nicholas supports Ockham's view about supposition, particularly about *suppositio simplex*. In this connection he attacks Walter Burley's opinion rather strongly and by name.[9] How does this agree with the decision against the *secta Occanica* which Nicholas signed?[10]

What then about Nicholas and John Buridan? Here I have found parallel passages in 16 questions, but none of these forces us to assume that Nicholas has read Buridan's commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, and no parallel is extremely close. Three passages merit special attention. One shows that Nicholas knew Buridan's explanation of the *dici de omni*,[11] but others held that view besides Buridan. The second summarizes Buridan's opinion about what validates the *syllogismus expositorius*,[12] but again Buridan is not the only one to have supported that view. Thirdly Nicholas knows the definition of a valid consequence which Buridan uses,[13] but Buridan himself ascribes that definition to other authors *(alii)*.[14] We may think it incredible that Nicholas did not know Buridan's commentary on the *Prior Analytics* (later than 1327 and probably earlier than his *Consequences*, which is tentatively dated c. 1335 by Hubien),[15] but I do not think we can prove anything on this point.

It is possible to list almost as many parallels between the *Prior Analytics* of Nicholas and that of the so-called Pseudo-Scotus. Here I have found parallels in 12 questions, and these are as close as those with Buridan. But the Pseudo-Scotus is probably later than Nicholas, and the author's attitude on several points was clearly different from Nicholas'; he was, e.g. not a nominalist.

Buridan, then, hardly exerted an important influence upon Nicholas, but Nicholas was a firmly convinced nominalist, and he

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8   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 23,93sq.

9   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 33,29sq.

10   Cf. Courtenay & Tachau 1982.

11   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 5,63sq.

12   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 39,64-67.

13   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 6,69-71; 9,139-40.

14   Iohannes Buridanus, *Consequentiae* I,3, p. 22,48sq.

15   Iohannes Buridanus, *Consequentiae* p. 9.

hardly ever missed an opportunity to state it. This is the background for his strong opposition to Burley's description of *suppositio simplex*, where he argues that such a standpoint would demand that we ascribe real existence to universals, while only singulars have real existence.[16] The same attitude is expressed in several connections. One informative place is the question: *Utrum dici de omni sit dispositio subiecti vel dispositio praedicati* (qu. 5). This is a traditional question in the commentaries on the *Prior Analytics*, and at least since Albert the Great[17] the standard answer was that *esse in toto* is a disposition or condition of the subject, while the *dici de omni* is a disposition of the predicate. Nicholas has no time for that. Instead he uses the question to stress that the *dici de omni* is not a real existing entity *(res)*, be it an accident or quality or whatever, that belongs to or is added to either of the terms or to the proposition as a whole. There is, he says, no thing which such a proposition signifies besides the things which are signified by the terms in the propositions of the syllogism. Hence the *dici de omni* is nothing but a proposition in which we cannot pick out anything under *(sumere sub)* the subject about which the predicate cannot be predicated. Consequently the common saying that all valid syllogisms are governed by the *dici de omni* amounts to the demand that any valid syllogism must contain a universal premiss.[18] I do not know any author who describes the *dici de omni* as a kind of abstract entity which is "added to" the syllogism; not even Radulphus Brito, who might be expected to hold such an opinion. Further we may wonder: it is true, of course, that any valid syllogism must contain a universal premiss, but if this is all there is to the *dici de omni*, how can it be *the* basic rule on which the whole syllogistic is founded? And Nicholas makes it plain on several occasions that this is his opinion, as we shall see later.

Similar strong expressions of a nominalistic conviction are found in Nicholas' discussions of what a syllogistic figure and mood is[19] and in his dicussion of what the conversion of a proposition is.[20]

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16 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 33,29sq.
17 Albertus Magnus *APr.* I,I,c.7, p. 468a.
18 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 5,76-113.
19 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 5; 36; 37.
20 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 6.

Let me return to the syllogistic. A particular form of the syllogism is what the medievals called the *syllogismus expositorius*, i.e. a syllogism with a singular middle term. The curious name of this syllogism derives from its background in Aristotle's use of the method of *ekthesis*, in Latin *expositio*, to prove the validity of certain moods of the third syllogistic figure.[21] Whatever this controversial method consists in, it contains at least the procedure of picking out a singular under the terms in the syllogism. I don't know when the medievals formed the idea about such a syllogism, but there must have been some debate about it. Radulphus Brito (c. 1300) hesitates a good deal concerning it. He does not know if it is really a syllogism, because it frequently does not contain a universal premiss. Hence it is not governed by the *dici de omni*, but by the rule: any two things that are identical with one and the same third, are identical with each other *(quaecumque uni et eidem sunt eadem, illa inter se sunt eadem).*[22] According to Ockham certain "modern theologians" denied the validity of the expository syllogism, apparently because of problems it caused in statements about God.[23] Ockham does not think it worth the trouble to argue against this opinion, as it denies something which is self-evident and hence needs no proof. But he thinks that this syllogism can only occur in the third figure,[24] probably because Aristotle uses *ekthesis* only in the third figure. Buridan's most developed and interesting discussion of the expository syllogism is found in his *Consequences.*[25] Here Buridan bases this syllogism upon the same principle as Radulphus Brito, but he takes the further step of considering this principle as also validating syllogisms with universal or particular terms. About the traditional opinion that the *dici de omni* is the governing principle for all syllogisms Buridan says nothing in this discussion, though he does in his commentary on the *Prior Analytics.*[26] It seems to me that Buridan in his *Consequences* somehow considers a syllogism with singular terms to be more basic than other syllogisms. If this reading is true, Buridan may be on his way towards an opinion similar to the view expressed in our

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21   Aristoteles *APr.* I,6, 28a 24-26; I,2, 25a 15-17.

22   Radulphus Brito *APr.* I qu. 30, f. 307va-b.

23   Ockham, *Summa Logicae* II, 27,65sq.

24   Ockham, *Summa Logicae* III-1,16.

25   Iohannes Buridanus, *Consequentiae* III,4, pp. 84-85; 88-89.

26   Iohannes Buridanus *APr.* I qu. 6.

time by Paul Thom, who claims that Aristotle's syllogistic can be rephrased into an elegant system based upon the principle of *ek-thesis*.[27]

Nicholas' text reflects all these discussions. He rejects Ock-ham's view that the expository syllogism is only found in the third figure, and he lists the rules which must be observed for this syllogism in the other figures.[28] In one question he reports – apparently with approval – that some people *(aliqui)* claim that an expository syllogism cannot be denied, unless one denies "one's senses and experience" *(sensum et experientiam)*, so that nobody having a sound mind would deny it.[29] In another question Nicholas states that it is a plausible thought that such a syllogism "is made known to us by experience to our senses or intellect" *(notificatur per experientiam ad sensum vel ad intellectum)*. About the rule which Buridan supports Nicholas hesitates. He finds that it contributes little *(parum facit)* to the validity, but in any case it must be reformulated so that it becomes clear that it is a conditional rule about propositions and predicates. We should say: if any two predicates are verified of one and the same singular term, then they can be verified of each other. Once more we see the nominalist sticking out his head. In the end, however, Nicholas seems to prefer the standpoint that an expository syllogism is validated by the *dici de omni* like any other syllogism. In this respect it makes no difference whether a proposition has a singular or a universal subject-term. In neither case is it possible to pick out anything under the subject about which the predicate is not predicated; and this is all that is required.[30] Though I find Nicholas' solution less interesting than Buridan's, Nicholas' answer is a simple and convincing one.

Nicholas' text contains interesting dicussions about the definition of a valid consequence (qu. 4,7,9,14). In his opinion it is not the case that a consequence is valid because the antecedent cannot be true without the consequent being true. This view would entail that any true proposition would imply any other true one, like e.g. 'You are sitting. Therefore the person next to you is sit-

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27   Thom 1981: § 45, pp. 174-176.

28   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 39,26sq.

29   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 8,46sq.

30   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 39,64sq.

ting' or 'Socrates runs. Therefore God exists'.[31] By these examples Nicholas thinks that he has shown the absurdity of this opinion. He states instead that in any valid and formal consequence the antecedent signifies the significate of the consequent[32] or that the total significate of the consequent is the significate of the antecedent[33] or that the significates of the antecedent and the consequent are the same so that whatever is signified by the consequent must be signified by the antecedent; but not the other way around.[34] This inclusion of the significate of the consequent in the significate of the antecedent is what is called the form of a consequence *(forma consequentiae)*.[35] Therefore in every valid and formal consequence our intellect by knowing *(cognito)* the antecedent can infer the consequent by its natural judgement *(naturale iudicium)*.[36] This means that we cannot have a consequence consisting of two propositions with separate *(disparata)* significates, like: 'A man runs. Therefore a stick stands in the corner'.[37] Consequently Nicholas denies the well-known rules: 'From the impossible anything follows' and 'The necessary follows from anything'. Nicholas knows that these rules are frequently called material consequences, but since our intellect cannot understand or infer the consequent from the antecedent in such cases, they are invalid. Accordingly, only formal consequences are valid.[38] Finally Nicholas claims that his definition of valid consequence is precisely what the old logicians *(antiqui logici)* meant when they said that the consequent is included in or understood in the antecedent.[39] It is true, in fact, that such a manner of defining a valid consequence is found in several earlier medieval logicians, at least since Peter Abelard; and probably the idea derives from Boethius.[40] Nicholas, however, states the definition in a much more precise form than the earlier authors do. With them it is often unclear

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31   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 9,144sq; 9,164sq.
32   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 9,154; 14,120.
33   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 4,64-65; 7,118-19.
34   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 9,172-73.
35   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 14,127.
36   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 4,82-83; 7,111sq.; 9,173-74.
37   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 7,108sq.
38   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 9,164sq.; 14,115sq.
39   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 14,123sq.
40   Cf. Green-Pedersen 1981: 61-62. – Green-Pedersen 1984: 276-279.

what they really mean by "inclusion" etc. Further, it is plain how different Nicholas' concept of valid and formal consequence is from the modern truthfunctionally described concept of implication. Or to put the same in other words: Nicholas' idea of logical form is completely alien to what most modern authors of logic have in mind when they use this term.

In one place Nicholas seems to express the opinion that his definition of valid consequence implies or perhaps is equivalent to the definition which states that a consequence is valid if in no possible case the state of affairs can be as signified by the antecedent without being as signified by the consequent (*nullo casu possibili posito sic potest esse sicut significatur per antecedens, quin sic erit sicut significatur per consequens*).[41] I shall not discuss if Nicholas is right in judging this definition equivalent with his own – even to the degree that he uses it in two cases to determine the validity of certain consequences.[42] But this is the definition of a valid consequence which John Buridan uses,[43] though he ascribes it to other people (*alii*) and underlines that we must be careful to understand the expressions used in it correctly. It is difficult to decide if we should regard this as evidence of Nicholas' acquaintance with Buridan's writings or teaching. It deserves to be mentioned that Ockham's influence upon Nicholas' conception of valid consequence only concerns a few and in particular a single minor point.

It is interesting to notice that Nicholas once imagines that someone might ask him to give a proof of (*demonstrare/probare*) his definition of valid consequence.[44] His answer is that he cannot. But the possible opponent might be led to grasp the definition himself by considering that our intellect could not possibly infer the consequent from the antecedent, if the two have separate or disconnected (*disparata*) significates. If we were to hold that to be possible, we would have to take the standpoint that we can conclude anything from anything. The opinion that not everything can be proved, but something must simply be grasped or understood and thereby be seen to be true, is also expressed by Nicholas elsewhere. He explains that we cannot prove a description about the thing it de-

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41   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 9,138sq.
42   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 6,69sq.; 16,76sq.
43   Iohannes Buridanus, *APr.* I qu. 5;6. - *Consequentiae* I,3, p. 22.
44   Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 7,103sq.

scribes; the description can only be stated and seen to be true or adequate.[45] This view is very much in line with Nicholas' statement – mentioned above – that nobody of a sound mind could deny an expository syllogism, unless he would deny his senses and experience. Such a standpoint agrees very well with Nicholas' general nominalistic attitude, which in my eyes must take as its starting-point things that are simply experienced or grasped.

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45 Nicolaus Drukken *APr.* qu. 4,96sq.