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Genus causa speciei in the Glosulae in Priscianum maiorem:
An allusion to the material essence realism of William of Champeaux?

Anne Grondeux*

The topic of this paper is a brief quotation of Boethius that occurred in William of Champeaux's commentary on Book XVI of the *Ars Prisciani*, and has been transmitted by the voluminous *Glosulae in Priscianum maiorem*. I will present the passage in question and its sources (section 1), then Peter Abelard's opinion on the issue (section 2), and finally the commentaries on the same passage by William of Conches and Peter Helias (section 3).

1 The *Glosulae in Priscianum maiorem* ad XVI.3

The *Glosulae in Priscianum maiorem* (hereafter *GPma*) is a grammatical commentary, the greater part of which is attributed to William of Champeaux (†1121). It was elaborated on the basis of earlier notes, the traces of which appear here and there in his commentary (before 1100?–1110). First of all, it is useful to bear in mind the *stemma codicum* of the *GPma*, as established by Grondeux and Rosier-Catach (2011), and refined by Grondeux and Rosier-Catach (2017), while we were producing the critical edition of the *Notae Dunelmenses* (hereafter *ND*), another series of commentaries both by William and by his school in Châlons-en-Champagne. Produced later than the *GPma*, the *ND* often refer to this earlier commentary. The manuscripts containing the *GPma* are listed in

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the bibliography, and a stemma containing all known manuscripts is found in Figure 1.

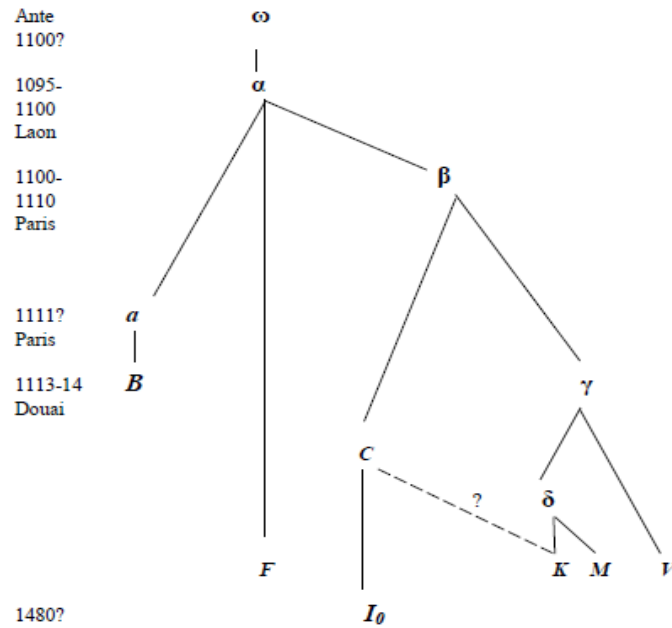


Figure 1. The genealogical relationships between the different manuscripts of *GPma*

The passage I want to deal with is in the commentary on Book XVI of Priscian’s *Ars grammatica*, which is devoted to the conjunction and deals with causal conjunctions in particular:

Effectionis ostenditur causa cum dico “MOVETVR, AMBVLAT ENIM”. Solet turbare quomodo “enim” ista coniunctio hic effectiua dicatur, cum “ambulat”, cui ipsa adiungitur, non effectus sed causa esse uideatur. Sed est uera ratio, Boetio in Hypotheticis eam ipsam attestante, *quatinus omne genus materialis causa est suae speciei*, quod si motus genus est et causa ambulationis, procul dubio ambulatio species est et effectus mouendi.

The cause of the realisation is indicated when I say “he is in motion, for he is walking.” It is generally considered disturbing that the conjunction “for”

here is said to be effective, since “he is walking,” to which it is attached, seems not to be an effect but a cause. But the reason is good, as Boethius attests in his *Hypothetical Syllogisms*: *since every genus is the material cause of its species*, if motion is the genus and cause of walking, then walking is without doubt a species and an effect of motion. (*GPma* ad XVI.3, 95.5; my emphasis)

William of Champeaux’s explanation is based on the connection he makes between two passages, one from Priscian:

Quidam tamen et has et continuatiuas inter species causalium posuerunt, quomodo et adiunctiuas et effectiuas, nec irrationabiliter; et continuationis enim et subcontinuationis et adiunctionis et effectiouis per has causa ostenditur reddi: continuationis, ut “si ambulat, mouetur”; subcontinuationis: “quia ambulat, mouetur”; adiunctionis: “ut moueatur, ambulat”; effectiouis: “mouetur, ambulat enim”. (Priscianus XVI.3 ; Hertz 1859, 94.25)

and the other from Boethius:

Causa enim speciei genus est, at qui dicit: “cum homo sit, animal est”, rectam ac necessariam consequentiam facit; per terminorum uero positionem talis consequentia non procedit. (Boethius 1969, p. 220, 67)

As is well known, Boethius’ *De syllogismis hypotheticis* (*SH*) is one of the treatises that he wrote alongside his work as a translator. The discovery by Suzanne Bobzien (2002, 300) of a Greek parallel suggests that both may have borrowed from the same Greek source. The first use of Boethius’ treatise in the West dates back only to Abbo of Fleury in the tenth century (ca. 975/985, ed. Schupp 1997). The treatise subsequently gave rise to a rich series of commentaries, a list of which is available on the website of Yukio Iwakuma.¹ The manuscripts containing commentaries on the *SH* are listed in the bibliography.

¹ <https://pric.unive.it/projects/logicalia-medievalia/home>

2 Abelard's View

Abelard's *Logica Ingredientibus* testifies to his interest in Boethius' treatise, since he commented on it, or at least intended to do so, but the fifth part of the *Logica Ingredientibus* has been lost. The *Logica Ingredientibus* consists of three complete commentaries on the *Isagoge*, *Categories*, and *De interpretatione*, a partial commentary on *De topicis differentiis*, and originally it seems to have contained also a commentary on *De hypotheticis syllogismis*. Its existence, or at least the project to write it, is attested by allusions made by Abelard himself:

LI Isag. 5, 100: de quibus in *Hypotheticis* disseremus.

LI Top. p. 325: quod in *Hypotheticis* nostris diligentius ostendemus.

Moreover, there is a literal quotation of Boethius' treatise in his *Logica Nostrorum petitioni sociorum*'. The *LNPS* is a commentary on the *Isagoge* preserved in ms. Lunel, BM 6, f. 8r–41r, written later than the *LI*. Previously attributed in its entirety to Abelard, it is now attributed only partially to him, but is still considered to reflect his teaching. The section dealing with universals is particularly close to his way of thinking (Tarlazzi 2018, 89; Marenbon 2013, 27–38). It is worth noting that the passage cited here is the only literal quotation of the *SH* ever made by Abelard:

LNPS p. 512, 30: Et in *Hypotheticis* dicitur: "Causa speciei genus est".

Moreover, the context in which the quotation appears is as important as the quotation itself. Indeed, as Caterina Tarlazzi has pointed out, the passage provides the set of arguments used by realist masters in defending their point of view.

De generibus et speciebus quaestiones enodare compellimur, quas <nec> ipse Porphyrius ausus est soluere, cum eas tamen tangendo ad earum inquisitionem accendat lectorem. ... Cum diuersi has diuersas diffinitiones

ad diuersa applicent, alii uidelicet ad res, alii uero ad intellectus, alii ad sermones, tamen unusquisque tuetur se auctoritate iudice.

Quandoquidem res uniuersales in pluribus locis reperitur quod sint, ut in eo loco, ubi [Boethius] Aristoteles dicit, quoniam haec rerum uniuersalia sunt etc. Et rursus Boethius in Diuisionibus: Rerum aliae superiores etc. Et non solummodo hic, sed etiam cum dicimus speciem constare ex genere et differentia, utpote hominem, ipsam rem, ex animalitate et rationalitate, sicut statuam ipsam ex aere et figura. Et in Hypotheticis dicitur: “Causa speciei genus est.” (LNPS 512.7–30, cf. Tarlazzi 2018, 90) (my emphasis)

Abelard therefore identifies the passage he quoted as an argument *ad res* (cf. Tarlazzi 2018, 90 n. 22).

The extract from the *GPma* quoted above must also be seen in the context of one of the commentaries on the *SH*, namely *SH3* in Iwakuma’s list, because this commentary elaborates in detail on the relationship between genus and species. According to *SH3*, superior things are the cause of the essence of inferior things (*superiora sunt causa essentiae inferiorum*), and this cause can be characterised precisely as a *material* one. I quote the passage from Yukio Iwakuma’s transcription which I checked against all three manuscripts that contain the passage, namely *M* 64v, *O* 87a, and *S* 107:

Non enim idcirco¹ (835C12). Hic probat a duplici toto quod animal non est idcirco² quia est homo³, sic: Quia non idcirco⁴ genus est quia est sua species, id est nullum genus existit gratia suae speciei⁵, ita quod illa species sit causa sui generis. |O87b Causa, dico, ut iam⁶ determinatum est. Ideo dico “ut iam determinatum est”⁷, quia species quodam modo est causa sui generis, scilicet⁸ talis causa quae posita ponat. Sed non est talis causa⁹ de qua iam determinatum est¹⁰, scilicet uel efficiens etc.

Sed fortasse¹¹ (835C13). Continuatio. Non idcirco¹² genus est quia¹³ est species¹⁴. Sed¹⁵ fortasse ducitur principium a genere, id est omne genus est causa suarum specierum. Quod dicit fortasse temperamentum est.

Et magis potest trahi causa essentiae¹⁶ ex uniuersalibus, id est ex¹⁷ superioribus quantum ad sua inferiora quam ex ipsius inferioribus quantum ad sua superiora. Superiora enim¹⁸ sunt causa essentiae inferiorum, sed

ipsa¹⁹ inferiora non sunt causa essentiae superiorum, ut patet in his exemplis, quod²⁰ idcirco sit homo quia est animal, id est animal est causa²¹ ipsius hominis, materialis scilicet²².

1. om. O – 2. iccirco O – 3. est homo tr. O – 4. iccirco O – 5. post speciei] id est add. M – 6. s.l. O – 7. ideo ... est s.l. O – 8. id est M – 9. quae ... causa] om. per hom. O 10. ideo dico ... determinatum est om. per hom. S – 11. post fortasse] ducitur principium a genere add. O – 12. iccirco O – 13. post quia] sua add. O – 14. est species tr. O – 15. om. S – 16. t. c. e.] c. e. t. M – 17. id est ex] et ex M id est O – 18. s. e.] id est s. O om. per hom. S – 19. om. S – 20. quia O – 21. est causa] tr. M – 22. om. OS

The fact that the extract espouses this view of the genus-species relationship is fully consonant with the hypothesis put forward by Iwakuma 2023, who proposed to attribute *SH3* to the school of William of Champeaux. I therefore venture the hypothesis that hearing either *GPma* ad XVI, or *SH3*, or both texts from William of Champeaux, led Abelard to regard *SH I*, III (p. 220, 67) as an argument *ad res*.

3 William of Conches and Peter Helias' Lectures on Priscian's Passage

I will now look at grammatical commentaries after the *GPma*, in order to see how the analyses provided by the *GPma* are received in the later tradition. Only two authors are considered, namely William of Conches and Peter Helias—the *Notae Dunelmenses* (III) do not comment on the passage, as its commentary on Book XVI focuses on sections not covered by the *GPma* (Grondeux and Rosier-Catach 2017, 75).

William of Conches (WC1) f. 81ra: Ad quod dicimus quod, ut meminit Boetius in *Ypoteticis Syllogismis*, omne genus *naturalis* causa est suae speciei, sed motus genus est ambulationis, procul dubio species est et effectus mouendi. (my emphasis)

Peter Helias p. 817.63: Sed quoniam motus genus est ambulationis, genus *autem* causa quedam est suarum specierum, satis rationabiliter ambulatio potest dici effectus quidam mouendi. (my emphasis)

Although it is obvious that both versions rely heavily on the *GPma*, the subtle changes made in the way they introduce the quotation are striking. In particular, it is worth noting that the quote is anonymised by Peter Helias, who writes only *autem*, as if the view expressed in the passage were common knowledge. What is certain is that neither author read Boethius' *SH* directly. Moreover, according to William of Conches, the genus no longer stands as a material cause, but as a natural cause of the species—a fact that is worth investigating.

<i>GPma</i> $\alpha = F$	<i>GPma</i> $\beta = I K M V$	WC1	PH
Boetio attestante in <i>Hypotheticis</i> eam ipsam, quatinus omne genus est causa speciei suae <i>materialis</i>	Boetio in <i>Hypotheticis</i> eam ipsam attestante, quatinus omne genus <i>materialis</i> causa est suae speciei	ut meminit Boetius in <i>Ypoteticis Syllogismis</i> , omne genus <i>naturalis</i> causa est suae speciei	... genus autem causa quedam est suarum specierum

Table 1. *GPma*, WC1 and PH on *causa materialis* vs. *naturalis*

Table 1 shows that the entire manuscript tradition of the *GPma* agrees on the expression *causa materialis*, and that William of Conches' *causa naturalis* does not rely literally on this passage. The comparison suggests that *naturalis* may have been a mere scribal error by William of Conches or a copyist, and that the understanding of the expression *causa materialis* was lost in his time.

Peter Helias' analysis of the passage raises a number of questions. For instance, was he working with William of Conches' *Glosulae* (WC1, earlier version), as Fredborg put forward (Fredborg 1973)? Or with the *GPma*, as Fredborg later suggested (Fredborg 2011, 479: "PH and WC ... must both have been working, independently so, with a copy of the *Glosulae* at their elbow")? Very interestingly, this analysis confirms both of Fredborg's intuitions, as we can see in Table 2. Just like the *GPma*, Peter Helias begins with *solet* and ends with *sufficit intueri*. But in the second cell of the column, the expression *quod contra effectiuarum*

proprietatem est is borrowed from William of Conches. In the third row, the words *Ad hoc ... respicimus* are common to both the *GPma* and William of Conches. The omission due to homoeoteleuton in mss. *KMV* (in the first cell of the *GPma* column) was probably already transmitted by their common ancestor. We thus face two possibilities:

- (1) WC1 has reconstructed an opposition thanks to its answer (*ad hoc ... respondebimus*).
- (2) Far more simply, WC1 was using ms. *C* in Chartres, which provides the full text.

<i>GPma</i>	William of Conches	Petrus Helias
Solet turbare quomodo “enim” ista coniunctio ... effectus mouendi.	Hic quaeritur quomodo ista coniunctio “enim” ... effectus mouendi.	Solet plerosque mouere quomodo ista coniunctio “enim” ... effectus mouendi.
Hoc concessio maior dubitationis cumulus accidit. Nam cum ambulatio species sit mouendi (<i>F I om. per hom. KMV</i>), erit necessaria oratio quae dicit “ambulat, mouetur enim”, cum effectio nullam necessitatem habere debeat.	Sed iterum uidetur “enim” ista coniunctio ibi notare necessitatem, quod est contra naturam effectiuarum, si coniungitur speciei ad quam necessario sequitur genus.	Quod si opponas de ambulatione ad motum necessariam consequentiam esse, quod contra effectiuarum proprietatem est,
Ad hoc autem breuiter respondebimus, quia licet ibi sit necessitas, minime tamen ad ipsam respicimus.		dicemus quod licet ibi sit necessitas minime tamen ad uim effective coniunctionis respiciendum est,
Hoc quoque solum quod per effectum causa probatur sufficit intueri.	Hoc solum sufficit intueri quod per effectum causa probatur.	sed hoc solum, quod per effectum ostenditur causa, quantum ad effective coniunctionis proprietatem, sufficit intueri.

Table 2. A comparison between *GPma*, William of Conches and Petrus Helias

To conclude, while commenting on Priscian's *Ars grammatica*, William of Champeaux made a brief reference to Boethius' *De hypotheticis syllogismis*. This reference shows his deep familiarity with Boethius' treatise, and may refer to his material essence realism. This seems to be confirmed by the attribution of *SH3* to William or his school, as proposed by Iwakuma 2023. The point seems to have been noticed by Abelard, who listed the passage among the arguments *ad res*, but it was quickly lost from view by later commentators of the *Ars Prisciani*.

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GPma

B Bruxelles, Bibl. royale 3921, f. 12r–20v (last lemma: II 22)

C Chartres, Bibl. mun. 209 (248) [†], f. 1–86v

F Paris, BnF, n.a.l. 1623, f. 1–56

K Köln, Dombibl. B. 201, f. 1ra–74rb

M Metz, Bibl. mun. 1224, f. 1ra–110rb

V Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat. 1486, f. 1ra–90vb

I₀ Incunable without Priscian's text, ed. by Guillaume Le Roy (?), Lyon/Venise (?), 1479–80

I Incunable (*I_I*) with Priscian's text, ed. Georgius Arrivabenus, Venise 1488

WC1

Guillaume de Conches, *Glosulae in Priscianum*, ms. Firenze, Bibl. Laur. San Marco 310.

SH

SH1 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, lat. fol. 624, f. 76rb–80vb

SH2 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14779, f. 67v–86v

SH2a München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14779, f. 86v

SH2b München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14779, f. 86v

- SH3 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14458, f. 59r–82r (*M*);
Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, 266 p. 78b–118a (*O*); Sankt
Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 134 p. 96bis–133 (*S*); München,
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14779, f. 66r–67r
- SH3a Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, 266 p. 118–119
- SH4 Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, 266 p. 264–276
- SH5 Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 910, f. 142v–143r
- SH6 Pommersfelden, Gräflich Schönbornschen Bibliothek, 16/2764, f.
2r–v + 4r–v
- SH7 Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 833 p. 26–30
- SH8 München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14779, f. 39r–41v
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