

Alexander BAUMGARTEN\*

## Doctrinal remarks on Godescalc of Nepomuk's Prologue to the Sentences commentary

**Abstract:** The article discusses the doctrinal aspects of Godescalc of Nepomuk's Prologue to the Sentences commentary that is preserved in a manuscript (Krakow, BJ, 1499). The central idea of my intervention is an interpretation of the Cistercian's position in the debate about the *complexe significabile* and the hermeneutic turn of the Cistercian theology in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is in this context that I analyze the originality of this author in relation to his sources: Henry of Ghent, Adam of Wodeham and Gregory of Rimini.

**Keywords:** Godescalc of Nepomuk, Cistercian theology, Sentences commentaries, *complexe significabile*, hermeneutics

Paris, 1367. The Cistercian monk Godescalc of Nepomuk<sup>1</sup> presents his commentary on Peter Lombard's Book of Sentences as the main subject in the study of theology at Collège des Bernardins in Paris. As a result of this course, he obtained the title of *magister theologiae*. He dies shortly after, probably at a very young age. James of Eltville, *magister Sententiarum* at the same university in 1369, and who was close to him, cites him and confirms he is no longer alive. As part of the university practice, his commentary was copied and disseminated. Unfortunately, only one copy survived and it has some lacunae: manuscript 1499 of the Jagiellońska Library in Krakow. To this exemplar we could have added at least one other that was mentioned in the bibliographies written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Turin, but this library burned in 1904 and a good part of its collections were destroyed. Throughout this article I am exclusively dedicated to the doctrinal analysis of his Prologue.

Godescalc's commentary might tell striking things to the today's reader: that theology is a science we can exercise through a special human disposition, that its nature is purely hermeneutic, that the tradition of the Christian community reserves the right to interpret the Bible. We add to this three pieces of information: (1) Godescalc expands, follows and sometimes criticizes, among others, Gregory of Rimini, who commented on the Sentences in Paris in 1340-1342; the latter's commentary has a strong Augustinian and Anselmian turn; (2) younger colleagues of Godescalc that

---

\* "Babeş-Bolyai" University Cluj-Napoca, Romania; email: alexbaum7@gmail.com

share a common intellectual ground with him migrate to central European universities (James of Eltville), some of them becoming founders of the university in Vienna (especially Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl); (3) after the Council of Trent, the Counter-Reformation definitively removes the university practice of commentaries on the Sentences and replaces it with the study of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa*. The ambiguities in the history of ideas make it very difficult to say what became of Godescalc's ideas starting with his efforts to support the Scripture's priority, to defend and give nobility- as we will show- to theology and the university seen as a place for professional interpreters. These three events in the intellectual history emphasize the importance of editing and interpreting Godescalc of Nepomuk's commentary on the Sentences, and that means to rediscover him in the contemporary culture.

The Prologue comprises four *quaestiones*, each with its own introduction into the limits of pro and contra of the debate. The first *quaestio* discusses the hermeneutic condition of theology, thus accomplishing the Augustinian agenda to orient the theological culture towards the interpretation of Scripture. The introduction to this *quaestio* refers to the very well known quotation from *De trinitate*, XIV, 1, where the "theological science" does not convert the divine mystery into full knowledge, but rather provides the arguments that produce and strengthen faith. It is on this "weak" form (weak compared to the beatific knowledge) that the distinction between *science* in itself and *scientific disposition* is founded in both Gregory of Rimini and Godescalc. Therefore, Godescalc sees the theological principles as belonging exclusively to the Biblical text, which makes him reiterate Henry of Ghent's criticism of the Thomistic theory of subalternation. As such, theology is an interpretation of Scripture or a demonstration that starts with propositions taken as principles. The narrative character (*narratorie* – §. 39, confirmed in §. 34) of the sacred text does not produce a deductive science of theology, but a scientific disposition based on the assent (the term is already in §. 11) to the Scripture, but which also produces an assent (§. 42) to the principles of the Scripture through the conclusions of theology. The Scripture, on the other hand, as a given divine document: (1) requires theological procedure due to the fact that the first meaning of all its propositions belongs to the Holy Spirit, which does not suggest that these meanings were necessarily literal while they were being inspired (§. 36); (2) intrinsically authorizes interpretation because it usually contains demonstrative connections that can only be identified between its propositions (§. 50), and because the position authorized by Christ in the New Testament (compared to the Old Testament) is that of the interpreter, where Christ is basically a theologian (§. 51); (3) puts the Christian in the historical position of the interpreter (same §. 51), because what is for Christ a theological conclusion becomes a principle in the history of Christianity (§. 53). But this position is

also modified by history either because the use of citations from pagan literature disappears with the pagans that deserve to be converted by the *moderni* (§. 31 and §. 32), or because the first Christian centuries bring forth credible events, like the symbol and legitimacy of popes (At the beginning of *quaestio* 2, a. 1, §. 5-15; 6-12 come from Ockham's Dialogues). It must be mentioned that the fact that at a time when the term "*moderni*" usually refers to the "*antiqui*" theologians like Thomas and Albert, here it is used to refer to the patristic literature. If we can identify here the three functions of Scripture, they can be related to the quality of the theological discourse: it is hermeneutic to the point where theology acts like any other science, except the fact that its principles are not inserted in the human mind by the natural light, but by the established text and in a textual form. This is what gives autonomy to the theological discourse compared to any other science: (1) there is no theology as part of philosophy (against a medieval tradition of "philosophers' theology"<sup>22</sup>); (2) the way other sciences build their truth is not hermeneutic (§. 58-60) and (3) theology provides a uniform repartition of the preceding faith in relation to the propositions of the Scripture because it interprets them (§. 45-47). The following article that resumes q. 2, a. 2 from Gregory's Prologue, clarifies the position of theology as a disposition that produces assent. It is disposition inasmuch as it belongs to the condition of the *viator* and produces assent if there is a preceding faith. But between the faith that is presumed and the one that is produced there is no contradiction, because the presumed faith is an assent that didn't eliminate the fear of the contrary, while theology produces "a firm disposition in relation to its object" (§. 98). This "adhesion without fear" (§. 96), as a product of theology, becomes in §.107 a reply to Avicenna's definition of opinion in *On the soul* I, 5, but also underlines the condition of "*habitus creditivus*" of theology (which was Gregory's contribution in the debate with Peter of Auriol).

The sources of this *quaestio* instruct our understanding of Godescalc's independence as a thinker: the second article owes greatly to Gregory, but the first two conclusions of the first article only contain a few passages from him that also reinforce the Scripture's condition as a principle in the scientific disposition of the theologian; Gregory didn't transform this condition in an exclusively historical and cultural one for the Christian. Moreover, Gregory presented these things as an application of the theory of the object of science that he developed in his Prologue, while Godescalc puts the primacy of Scripture in the role of principle. The exclusive character of theology in relation to other sciences (almost the entire third conclusion of the article) that is not found in Gregory, is taken from Chatton. Walter Chatton brought forth this principle against Ockham's opinion in the discussion about the object *versus* the subject of a theological science, without the hermeneutic turn that Godescalc refers to.

*Quaestio 2* contains Godescalc's epistemology. Its title might disorient the reader due to the words "Utrum *Deum esse*..." that indicate through the infinitive the *complexe significabile*, even though we can assume from the contents of the article (§. 2 si 109) that the author refers to this question *only* to find out if the proposition *Deum esse* is the object of the student in theology. Such a question brings back the debates between Ockham, Holkot, Chatton and Gregory of Rimini's reply. But Godescalc's position is a new one and it openly criticizes Gregory's theory. In this sense we can suspect a strategy that Godescalc created to present his *quaestio*: firstly, it surprises us that he ceases to discuss the concept of scientific disposition (*habitus scientificus* belonging to theology), and instead discusses the concept of science generally. Then, he indicates he does this in article 2, after explaining the object of theology in a "special sense" in the first article (instead of doing the contrary and presenting a general definition that could absorb the particular one). Lastly, it is also surprising that he exemplifies the theological proposition with the infinitive "*Deum esse*" for which he describes the privileged status that will determine the difference between theology and other sciences. These remarks can orient the reading of this *quaestio*, because in the first article we will see that Godescalc shows how the special condition of the proposition "*Deum esse*" makes of its referent "the first object in the category of the *complexe significabile* for the one who studies the sacred text" (§. 53). The second article that gives a general theory of science completely denies the value of the theory of *complexe significabile* (attributed by Godescalc to Gregory!); with this separation from Gregory, Godescalc develops a "mentalist" epistemology in the footsteps of Robert Holkot. How can we understand such a position? Can we see the change in vocabulary (*scientia* for *habitus scientificus*) as explaining the criticism of the *complexe significabile*, where this criticism doesn't apply to the entire doctrine, but rather only to its application in theology (as in article 1) and not in other sciences (as in article 2)? If such an interpretation is valid, then we are faced with an interesting case where Godescalc narrowed Gregory's theory exclusively to theology and declared it inapplicable to other sciences. By doing so, he legitimates Holkot's theory who declares the mental proposition as being the object of sciences. We are tempted to answer affirmatively to the last question based on the example in the proposition "*Deum esse*", but also on the possible relation between *quaestio 1* and 2.

Indeed, in the first article of this *quaestio*, Godescalc asserts the diversity of theology's objects that surpass the sphere of the Scripture and encompass the historical experience of Christianity (the symbol, pope's legitimacy, examples from Ockham's *Dialogues* in §. 7-8). These objects are not, of course, principles in theology that were reduced in *quaestio 1* to the propositions of the Scripture. In the sphere of "objects", says Godescalc,

the fact enunciated in a proposition with infinitive, like “*Deum esse*”, is primordial. He states these things while borrowing from Iohannes de Ripa’s *Conclusiones* (who commented on the Sentences a decade before Godescalc, but who continues to be a *magister theologiae* at Paris in 1367). He uses these propositions as conclusions and sometimes as corollaries. They speak about “*Deum esse*” as “the first truth in the absolute sense” and “the truth that is a *complexe significabile*” (§. 16, 37 sau 47). The privilege of this proposition to express “the truth in the absolute sense” is given by the fact that the predicate “has no correspondence with the subject” (§. 20). This means that the predicate only renders the internal nature of the subject, which for Godescalc means that “the divine essence understands that truth and not through the truth, but through the essence”. We can say the allusion is to the God of the Exodus, but the author doesn’t cite this passage, but continues to use Gregory’s terminology to build up to a surprising proposition: “God is” is the first *complexe significabile* – “*Deum esse est primum complexum significabile complexe*”. It is surprising because no *significabile* is a *complexum* for Gregory, meaning a proposition, but is something that can be signified by means of a proposition, *complexe*. However, “*Deum esse*” is a proposition and a *complexe significabile*, which means it both signifies and it is signified. For an explanation, we go back to §. 26: “the divine essence understands that truth” which is signified, and the student in theology as the one that signifies. Godescalc doesn’t explicitly say this, but he adds to §. 51 the fact that “the object of theology is not something that can be known or done outside God” (§. 54). This could also mean that in the sphere of theology (which, we already know, is a scientific disposition and works on the principles found in Scripture) the theory of the *complexe significabile* only stands because God is its guarantee, exactly what the proposition “*Deum esse*”<sup>3</sup> argues for, which is an object of knowledge in the absolute sense, surpassing even the principles of logic (according to §. 63-64 that declares this priority in the causal order established by the *complexe significabile*, the opposite can be considered). The privileged position of the proposition pinpoints to the fact that the divined knowledge is revealed (when we talk either about the Scripture or the possibility of a *notitia intuitiva*, as in q. 4).

Such a foundation for theology (and also a salvation for the basis of theology) of the *complexe significabile* leads in article 2 to a general theory of science. This covers the first 2 conclusions and is inspired by Robert Holkot’s theory of mental propositions from his Sentences commentary II, 2, 2 and Conferences, a.1. This theory says that the object of science is the mental proposition, not the vocal one, otherwise we would stumble upon the ambiguity given by the sound of words that mean different things in different languages and can no longer be objects of science (§. 73). On the other hand, the importance of mental propositions is proved by the fact

that they don't rely on experience (the example of the child who knows the milk is sweet, in §. 88, or the closed book whose meanings don't disappear when you close it, in §. 79).

Godescalc criticizes Gregory exactly from this perspective of the mental propositions seen as objects of science: because they are neither true, nor false, the theory of the *complexe significabile* cannot be verified (§. 84-86), they have no internal basis, and their possibility to be false doesn't have a "first fallacy" that could correspond to the "first truth". Moreover, conclusion 3 states that "any science has a complex or a proposition as its object, not a *complexe significabile*" (§. 94). We can understand this either in relation to the first two conclusions, in which case "*propositio*" would mean a mental proposition as found in Holkot, either strictly literal (*de virtute sermonis*), in which case it would invoke Ockham. Despite its literal sense, it is difficult to admit here a new gap between a general theory of knowledge (that supports the mental propositions) and an Ockhamist theory. It is therefore more reasonable to admit here that the entire article supported Holkot's position.

No matter how the things are in this last regard, the opposition between the two articles remains and this means that the narrowing in the application of the *complexe significabile* to theology is, for now, Godescalc's contribution.

*Quaestio* 3 starts with an article that shows a symmetry of composition in the Prologue: q. 1 discussed the value of Scripture as a source of theological principle and the hermeneutic orientation of theology, q. 2 brought epistemological arguments in this sense. Now, q. 3, a.1 goes back and puts the discussion in q. 1 in a new light in order to be completed by the rest of the Prologue with new arguments about the nature of will and the possibility of miracles. In this symmetrical scheme, q. 3, a.1 has a central role that articulates Godescalc's startling statement: the Christian community with an historical tradition and a theological education owes belief to the sacred text rather than to the Church (*magis fidem adhibere contentis in Sacra Scriptura quam Ecclesiae*: §. 36). Such a statement doesn't hold at Godescalc a reformist stake (his text doesn't say it); both his sources and his argumentation seem to support the theologian's dignity who has an university education, which, in fact, Godescalc is. We've already seen in q. 1 just how important is in establishing theology as a scientific disposition the fact that the propositions of Scripture are principles, not theological conclusions (with some exceptions that legitimated its interpretation). Godescalc repeats here this idea relying on a passage from Thomas of Argentina, a notorious figure of Augustinism and general of the Augustinian order before Rimini (§. 6). In Godescalc's view, such an authority gives legitimacy to the theology that produces conclusions "which are better known than the principles themselves" (§. 14), but only as long as we're

talking about *homo viator*, who can be recognized in the expression “*theologia nostra*” in §. 13. It is also noteworthy the fact that in §. 15 the first argument against the conclusions, rejected by Godescalc in §. 18, is taken from Gregory (he says that the theological discourse would incline towards principles, which already contradicts Godescalc), and this means Godescalc is situated here at a distance compared to the Augustinian author.

The central idea of the article is found in §. 21 under the name of “*magna difficultas*” and it introduces a division: for the recently converted, the Church can come before Scripture, but for the other Christians, it must be the opposite. Indeed, the Church can be efficient in the conversion because the newly converted might not know the importance of Scripture, but to Godescalc the dependence of Church on the Bible is something obvious and the likelihood that the historical circumstances might retreat the influence of the Holy Spirit from the Church is confirmed at least during the passions of Christ or the future Antichrist (§. 40). Even though the passage might elegantly avoid an allusion to the controversial papacy at Avignon, such an allusion would overburden the text. In fact, at the level of theoretical principles of his text, Godescalc supports his assertions on a selection of propositions from Henry of Ghent, *Summa*, art. IX-X, or their paraphrase, which renders them authority. However, Henry’s doctrine was not so sharp. In §. 29, Godescalc uses the first sentence of *Liber de causis* (“any first primary cause has a greater influence on the effect than a universal secondary cause”<sup>4</sup>), but it does so *apud* Henry; the latter used it in art. IX, q. 3, f. 72v only to prove God’s authority on the Scripture, while Godescalc employs it in a causal sequence (God, Scripture, Church and the Christian community) for which the sentence applies. In art. X, q. 1, f. 73v, Henry too talks about the right of those who already converted to make the primacy of Church come second after the primacy of Scripture, especially in times of crisis. But Henry’s text doesn’t say that this right would permanently put the Christian community above ecclesiastical decisions.

“Quoad primam igitur fidei generationem et susceptionem magis valet Ecclesiae auctoritas quam Scripturae (...). Ad fidem autem iam genitam confirmandam et corroborandam in fidei maxime valet auctoritas intellecta Sacrae Scripturae, cui fidelis adhaeret, etsi videret illos per quos fidem acceperat a fide resilire, et per impossibile totam ecclesiam in aliis a fide discedere.”<sup>5</sup>

What was for Henry an absurd example (*per impossibile*), for Godescalc becomes a rightful order that situated the Christian community that interprets the Scripture above the ecclesiastics. For this, Godescalc brings forth two arguments. First of all, because the converted Christians have a history debated in q. 1 and linked to the hermeneutic status of theology and which reappears here due to the fact that they don’t need to be converted

anymore since it is related to the original conversion of the entire Christian community. Second of all, because these Christians are competent in interpreting Scripture. The primacy of Scripture over the Church<sup>6</sup> only applies to them, as we are told in §. 56:

“Alioquin quilibet fidelis et noviter baptizatus adultus et qui numquam legit vel audivit Sacram Scripturam, recipiens symbolum credendum ab Ecclesia et habens illud principium, theologie posset concludere quemlibet articulum fidei et sic absque studio et notitia foret theologus, quod nullus sapiens diceret, ut puto” (Godescalc of Nepomuk, *Comm. in Sent., Prol.*, q. 3, a. 1, §. 56, *apud* Greg. Arim., *In I Sent., t. I Prol.*, q. 1, p. 22, l. 24 – p. 23, l. 2).

Of course, the text alludes to the academic competence of the theologian. However, it is surprising that it is copied from Gregory. Can we see this situation of a juxtaposition of implicit sources from Henry of Ghent with others from Gregory of Rimini as the sheltering of a scandalous idea under the authority of two consecrated and doctrinally indisputable authors? An affirmative answer could stand through the following argument: Gregory insists upon the necessity of the theologian's academic competence in front of the newly baptized adult who wishes to interpret the sacred text (allusion to Augustin, *De doctrina christiana, Prologue*, 17). Henry underlines a situation he declares absurd and purely hypothetical. Godescalc declares the situation of a rightful state and attributes it to the competent theologian, making thus both positions shift their meaning through the simple juxtaposition. For this reason, the meaning of Godescalc's words, even though they don't suggest an act of universal reform, are nonetheless a plea for university, theology and scientific disposition.

The next two articles that end q. 3 discuss the value of will joined by the miracle to produce assent to the article of faith beyond the limits of reason. They are not very systematic: the beginning of article 2 announces 3 conclusions, but we only see one (§. 58), and the title of the last article seems to be the same with the previous one. They do, however, contain the thread of a continuous argumentation: article 1 discusses the problem of the relation between nature and miracle, asserting the supremacy of an omnipotent God in the created nature that He surpasses through His decisions, but always according to the established receptiveness of this nature (§.77). This keeps the articles of faith from seeming irrational, even though their object is limited to the sphere of nature. The harmony where the limits of reason are not breached points to a primacy of will that corresponds to the miracle that surpasses the natural order. This article is in extreme debt to its sources: after using a massive chunk of text from Thomas of Aquinas, with a series of fragments from Holkot and Gregory, from §.78 to the end we see a long section copied from Henry of Ghent.



Henry's presence can be explained by the fact that he is one of the main medieval supporters of the primacy of will over reason. Holkot's presence is rather discrete and is only employed to invoke a counterargument (§. 73) or to show how the truth in the articles of faith could contradict the reasonable appearances (§. 75). Gregory is only used to prove the aptitude of nature to support divine miracles (especially §.77).

But the second and third articles are decisive in the argumentation of this *quaestio*: the compatibility between miracle, nature and the importance of will become in these articles a eulogy to reason (if in §. 60-61 any argument against faith can be rationally rejected, that means the rightful domain of the theologian, who is a specialist in the arguments, extends over all the polemics that the Christianity can possibly have; moreover, §. 79 declares as irrational any sentence against the Scripture). This rationality of faith that resulted from the combination between Thomas of Argentina, Holkot and Henry of Ghent makes way for the subject of article 3: if the assent can be given to faith by someone without a supernatural disposition (§. 94 and the following are taken from Durandus of Saint-Pourçain), however (§. 99) "the true or scientific knowledge" of the articles of faith cannot be obtained without the theologian's help.

This §. 99 is essential in Godescalc's arguments (he thus announces the link with the last *quaestio*; this is why we will come back to it) because it shows how taking from Durandus was enough to underline the importance that the theologian bears in the achievement of assent; but now Godescalc turns against Henry of Ghent (and thus joining Thomas of Argentina's criticism) and denies the fact that the theological "light", different from any other light, has validity<sup>7</sup>. The theologian doesn't seem to have anything characteristic other than the hermeneutic competence in Scripture and for achieving faith (in §. 106, still with Thomas) it suffices that the believers "know how to study theology". The last two conclusions project in the faculties of the non-believer that can be converted this sufficient condition of theology; even if the will is essential for the assent to the articles of faith, its simple use is not enough (and it wouldn't produce merit: §. 112), but the reason (meaning the use of arguments with theological competence) is, in fact, the one that joins the will (even it if stays the main reason for the assent: §. 125) to finally produce this assent. We take from here a concept of liberty where reason and servitude play a determinant role: "the more someone subjects himself to God, the more he makes use of a greater liberty" (§. 150).

In the last *quaestio* of the Prologue we can clearly see how Godescalc directed his discourse (and the selection of implicit sources) in order to clarify the importance of Scripture in the study of theology, to narrow the sphere of the complexe significabile, to support the primacy of the theologian's competence before the prelate's decision, and to introduce the

necessity for a theologian in the relation between the faculties of the spirit engaged in achieving assent. But why the previous §. 99 (that only had negative content, because it said that a person cannot reach the scientific truth of the faith only through his faculties, but he is required a supernatural gift) explicitly points towards the last *quaestio*, even though Godescalc had already denied (along with Thomas of Argentina) the Henry of Ghent's theory of the theological light that has a divine source? The answer might come from the analysis of this last part of the Prologue, even though Godescalc offers no clarification for this "supernatural gift", but he is rather content with just underlining its possibility. The structure of the last *quaestio* is atypical: it asks whether the *viator* as a *viator* holds the possibility of an evident knowledge of God. He first clarifies the terms (sheltered under Durandus' and Thomas' "orthodoxy"), then offers 3 conclusions (first taken from Wodeham, the second from Durandus, Thomas of Argentina, and Chatton and the third from Thomas only) in order to build a part with a single conclusion that answers the main question, where he follows Adam of Wodeham only in the arguments, not in the conclusion (§. 61) that appears to be Godescalc's original contribution. The combination of these sources helps Godescalc shelter under authorities a conclusion that only belongs to him and which was, in fact, announced in §. 99 from the previous *quaestio*, but which is not spelled out here, even if it is necessarily deduced. Actually, the arguments are as follows: in the introduction, Godescalc asserts the possibility that God can communicate the intuitive knowledge to the *viator* without changing his status (§. 3). In the part where he clarifies the terms, the evident knowledge is defined as the one through which "we assent to the known object without the will" (§. 5). If we link this statement to the previous *quaestio*, we can see that Godescalc has kept the reason as the first motor of the assent because it is not eliminated by the evident knowledge. But the human knowledge, be it evident or confused, can be (same §. 5) threefold: intuitive, abstractive and argumentative. The following sections of this *quaestio* prove it to be impossible that God offers a *viator* an evident intuitive knowledge or an evident abstractive one.

What the reader can do now is to deduce the only possibility left: Godescalc admits God can communicate to a *viator* an evident knowledge only through the argumentative method. This is what the last conclusion of the entire Prologue asserts (§. 61 which becomes the only one that directly answers to §. 99 of the previous *quaestio*): "the evident knowledge of the theological truths can be shared through the divine power to the *viator* etc". Therefore, only the theologian can have this privilege. The following arguments are taken from Wodeham, *Prologue*, q. 1, a. 2 and q. 2, a. 1 and do not indicate theology, but only talk about the possibility of a *notitia evidens* given by God to a *viator*. It is nonetheless true that Wodeham himself began his commentary on the Sentences by stating that someone who studies

theology can achieve this merit for the eternal life because such an evident knowledge is possible<sup>8</sup> (the same is said in the first question of the first distinction by James of Eltville, the younger Cistercian brother of Godescalc).

The discussion about the intuitive knowledge *vs.* the abstractive knowledge is a very common one in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and has its own history (Tachau 1988) that goes back to Scotus and Ockham, authors that we cannot discuss here. However, the introduction of the third type of knowledge, *argumentativa*, that corresponds to the theologian is interesting; it shows up in §. 5 because the relation between these types of knowledge and the faculties of the spirit shows how the man can build even the intuitions of the singular objects by means of species, and the sensitivity can also be *abstractiva*. In order to make a difference between the abstractive sensitive knowledge and the abstractive intellectual knowledge, Godescalc names the last one “argumentative”. If the first conclusion separates God’s knowledge from the achievement of the beatific status, the second conclusion (§. 36) explicitly denies the possibility for a *viator* to have an abstractive knowledge of God, the expression being taken largely, not specifically (argumentatively).

That Godescalc insists upon this aspect (and even notes it when he revises the manuscript) is a further argument for the elimination of the two possibilities so that only one can prevail. The arguments of this conclusion that eliminates the two types of knowledge is founded on the excellence of the object that surpasses the faculties and whose apparition cannot produce knowledge, but it overcomes it (if we may assert something possibly too freely for a researcher in the medieval culture, we would be tempted to think that a saturated phenomenon is not really a knowledge, but rather a simple perplexity). Godescalc’s *viator* remains in his own condition even when he thinks the divine (Pavel’s memory after the abduction is just an act of memory, therefore an abstraction with mundane instruments- our author says this in §. 46).

The broad view over these four *quaestiones* of the Prologue leads to a coherent fact: Godescalc of Nepomuk is interested in an authoritative use of some theories and fragments of consecrated authors that were his contemporaries, like Thomas of Argentina and Gregory of Rimini (rarely Durandus of Saint Pourçain); he makes use of a popular theology in Paris at that time that comes from Ockham’s successors (Chatton, Wodeham, Holkot), but he is often tempted to rely on the many theories of only one author from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Henry of Ghent (primacy of Scripture, theological light<sup>9</sup>, the importance of will), even though these theories are modified and even enriched by Godescalc.

The use of these authorities, of course, can also be seen as a defensive strategy against some ecclesiastical censures. Two decades separate him from other Cistercians (Johannes de Mirecourt, Pierre de Ceffons) whose

doctrinal positions restrained by censure might explain, for example, the structure in Godescalc's arguments<sup>10</sup>. But sometimes, the juxtaposition of authorities can render a new meaning to the doctrines he cites implicitly. By doing so, Godescalc builds a theory with various innovative aspects: (1) the primacy of Scripture as a source for the theological principles, (2) a status of the theologian trained in hermeneutics and who can formulate theological conclusions, (3) a narrowing to his abilities of the doctrine of complexe significabile, (4) a primacy of competent interpretation of Scripture for the Christian community that adopted the history of the Christian doctrine and education in the study of the text, (5) a doctrine of assent that differs from that of Gregory, in which reason and will go together, (6) admitting the possibility of the supernatural gift of the divine knowledge through the intellectual study.

By editing and studying Godescalc's Prologue, I was able to offer material for discussions and some possible explanations for a less known period in the history of ideas at the University of Paris. Through his courage and the subtlety of his ideas, our author seems to play a major role in this history. The most important subject, of course, refers to the value he attaches to the study of the sacred text; this can be linked to the theology in Vienna at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century through the younger German colleagues in Paris, among whom we find Godescalc, who could transmit it to the new academic environment<sup>11</sup>.

It would be an anachronism if we made suppositions about the role of this idea in the Reformation, over 150 years away from Godescalc, even more so because Godescalc's intention was not a reformist one, but he was rather defending a university guild and its professional status. It is possible he defends it in the context of a slow, but continuous drain of power from the University of Paris in relation to the Church after the events of 1277 that marked a moment of maximum influence of the Church<sup>12</sup>. The fact that this idea shows up in a synthesis of the Parisian Augustinian theology with the English influences in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as a documented historical fact. This small nucleus of recently gained information opens up a list of questions for which future researches might offer an answer. They aim at forming a complete picture of the sources in the entire commentary written by Godescalc and at understanding his positions in all his debates, and, at the same time, at studying the implicit sources that rely on Godescalc, which will only be possible after their editing. Moreover, there is a need for an answer to the itinerary of the Jagellonian manuscript, given its momentarily unknown date of entrance in Krakow and its readers.

All these are, of course, part of the medievalist's research agenda. But the opening of the Cistercian's work cannot halt here. At a quick glance, it is obvious it is also addressed to the non-medievalist; supporting a condition

of the human cultural history dictated by principles contained in a sacred text, Godescalc of Nepomuk can be legitimately included in the history of thinkers who talked about the hermeneutic-historical sciences in terms of an historical condition of the literary culture taken largely and who included in their discourse a venerable tradition of scholastics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All references of this study are to the volume: Godescalc de Nepomuk, 2016. The project of this edition is part of a larger project for studying and editing medieval Sentences commentaries that are yet unknown ("Thesis ERC, cod. 313339", IRHT-CNRS, Paris, <http://www.thesis-project.ro/>) that is associated with a national research grant that started in 2014 at "Babeş-Bolyai" University in the edition of James of Eltville's commentary on the Sentences (Grant CNCS, PN-II-ID-PCE-2012-4-0272, <http://www.jacobusdealtavilla.ro/>). These programs are coordinated by my colleague dr. Monica Brînzei (Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Paris) and have the merit of forming a team of young paleographers from Cluj who are specialized in various historical or doctrinal problem, in the manuscript tradition, in the writing and abbreviations of the Sentences commentaries of the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. I thank Monica Brînzei and the colleagues from the mentioned team for their numerous suggestions for this study.

<sup>2</sup> For "*theologia philosophorum*", see Alexander de Hales, *Summa theologica seu sic ab origine dicta "Summa fratris Alexandri"* I, q. 1, cap. 1, ed. Quarrachi (P. Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1924): "*prima philosophia, quae est theologia philosophorum, quae est de causa causarum*".

<sup>3</sup> The correspondence between §. 60 (that discusses the relation between "*Deum esse*" and the divine attributes) and the respective part from the entire commentary might have clarified the things, but unfortunately it's lost.

<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Aristotle, *Liber de causis*, ed. Adriaan Pattin O.M.I. in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 28 (1966), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Henricus de Gandavo, *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum* (Paris, 1520), X, 1, f. 73v.

<sup>6</sup> Henry too compared the authority of the theological science (*huius scientiae*- its object is the interpretation of Scripture) with the ecclesiastic authority.

<sup>7</sup> Even though Henry's theory is the one that is being criticized, the words "*clarus lumine fidei, obscurus lumine gloriae*" can also be found in Prosper of Reggio, OESA (commentator on the Sentences in Paris, between 1311 and 1314, according to S. Brown, "Duo candelabra Parisiensia: Prosper of Reggio in Emilia's Portrait of Enduring Presence of Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines regarding the Nature of Theological Study", in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277 / After the Condamnation of 1277*, ed. Aertsen, J. et al. [Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001], p. 320), and who could have been Thomas of Argentina's source.

<sup>8</sup> Grassi sees here Wodeham's original point of view. O. Grassi, "Il problema della conoscenza di Dio nel commento alle Sentenze di Adam Wodeham (Prologo e. q. 1)", *Medioevo* (1982): 43-136.

<sup>9</sup> Even though he criticizes it, his theory of the theologian's supernatural gift allows a subtle closeness to it.

<sup>10</sup> It would be difficult to see a protest of Godescalc's to the previous censures applied to his colleagues in Q.1, a. 1, §. 9, where he discusses the audacity in condemning someone in didn't understand the Scripture ("*Igitur temerarium esset condemnare ad ignem aliquem de quo non posset constare nisi cum temeritate quod ille erraret intelligendo Scripturas.*"), since the fragment talks about condemning someone to the stake. Maybe if we reduced the meaning of the stake to just burning the books we could read a discrete allusion to the Nicolaus d'Autrecourt.

<sup>11</sup> About the university environment in Vienna, see M. Brînzei, C. Schabel, "Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and the University of Vienna on the Eve of the Reformation", in *What is New in the New Universities? Learning in Central Europe in Later Middle Ages (1348-1500)*, ed. E. Jung (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) that will soon be published. Regarding the doctrinal relation between Godescalc and Johannes Hiltalingen de Basel and Iacobus de Altavilla, we will talk about it in an upcoming study.

<sup>12</sup> W. J. Courtenay, "The Parisian Faculty of Theology in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Century", in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277 / After the Condamnation of 1277*, ed. J. Aertsen et al. (Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), p. 237 sqq. talks about this decline that was enhanced after 1290 under the pressure of the French royalty's efforts to centralize the French Church and get it under the royal power and augmented by the fact that the Parisian theology moved from Île-de-France to Sorbonne; it was also confirmed by the fact that the anti-Ockham censure was rather adopted at the Faculty of arts.

## References

- Alexander de Hales. 1924. *Summa theologica seu sic ab origine dicta 'Summa fratris Alexandri'*. ed. Quarrachi: P. Collegii S. Bonaventura.
- Courtenay, W. J. 2001. "The Parisian Faculty of Theology in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Century". In *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277 / After the Condamnation of 1277*, edited by J. Aertsen et al., 230-247. Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Godescalc de Nepomuk. 2016. *Teologia ca dispoziție științifică (Prologul Comentarului la Cartea Sentințelor)*. Edited by Alexander Baumgarten. București: Polirom.
- Gregorius Ariminensis. 1982. *Lectura super Primum et Secundum Sententiarum*. Edited by D. Trapp, V. Marcolino, W. Eckermann, M. Santos Noya, W. Schultze, W. Simon, W. Urban, V. Vendland (*Spätmittelalter und Reformation Texte und Untersuchungen*, 6). t. I (Prolog., et dist. 1-6): 1981; t. II (dist. 7-17). Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Guillelmus de Ockham. 2016. *Dialogus*. Edited by J. Kilcullen, J. Scott, G. Knysh, V. Leppin, J. Ballweg, K. Ubl, S. Heinen. Accessed October 2, [www.britac.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/ockdial.html](http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/ockdial.html).
- Grassi, O. 1982. "Il problema della conoscenza di Dio nel commento alle Sentenze di Adam Wodeham (Prologo e. q. 1)". *Medioevo – rivista di storia della filosofia medievale* 8: 43-136.
- Henrici de Gandavo, *Summa (quaestiones ordinariae)*. Edited by G. A Wilson. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005.
- Henricus de Gandavo. 1520. *Summa quaestionum ordinariorum*. Paris: Badius.
- Liber de causis*. 1966. Edited by Adriaan Pattin O.M.I. In *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 28: 1-115.
- Brînzei, M., and Schabel, C. 2016. "Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and the University of Vienna on the Eve of the Reformation". In *What is New in the New Universities? Learning in Central Europe in Later Middle Ages (1348-1500)*, edited by E. Jung. Turnhout: Brepols (to be published).
- Brown, S. 2001. "Duo candelabra Parisiensia: Prosper of Reggio in Emilia's Portrait of Enduring Presence of Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines regarding the Nature of Theological Study". In *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277 / After the Condamnation of 1277*. Edited by Aertsen, J. et al, 320-356. Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Tachau, K. H. 1988. *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics (1250-1345)*. Leiden: Brill.