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The Comparative Conditional in Latin

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0. Introduction.¹ The construction at issue is the Latin manifestation of a form-meaning pairing that is readily identifiable cross linguistically, but has only recently captured the attention of linguistic theorists. Following McCawley (1988), I will call this construction the comparative conditional (CC). With respect to its semantic and syntactic properties, the Latin CC has much in common with the English sentence type exemplified by the proverb *The bigger they come, the harder they fall*. An example of the Latin construction is given in (1):

- (1) Quanto in pectore hanc rem meo magis
 how-much (AB) in heart (AB) this (A) matter (A) my (AB) more
 voluto, tanto mi aegritudo auctior est in
 (I) ponder that-much (AB) me (D) grief (N) greater (N) is in
 animo.
 spirit (AB)
 “The more I turn this matter over in my mind, the greater the grief is
 in my soul.”
 Plautus, *Captivi* 781-2

Like its English analog, the Latin CC expresses a relationship between an independent and dependent variable. Thus, sentence (1) can be paraphrased in the following manner: “any increase in the duration of deliberation yields a concomitant increase in the amount of grief experienced”. Syntactically, both CC constructions are biclausal, and contain a comparative phrase in each clause. The structure of the English CC has been of interest to proponents of a theory of grammar which recognizes the existence of grammatical constructions, and, in particular, formal idioms. Analysts like Fillmore (1987), Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988) and McCawley have been especially interested in the following issue: to what extent is the CC syntax derivable from more basic constructions, and to what extent are its component parts—and the manner in which they are combined—unique to this structural pattern? Each argues that the English CC inherits certain syntactic properties from those constructions which it resembles semantically. Hence, the CC, like conditional constructions, suppresses future *will* from its ‘protasis’. The CC also displays characteristics of comparative constructions (e.g., ordinary comparative morphology). A number also note, however, that (a) there is no established category label for the definite article in its function here as a degree marker, and (b) standard phrase-structure rules do not provide for the pairing of parallel clauses of this type. Thus, the English CC represents an extragrammatical structural pattern.

By contrast, I will argue, the syntax of the Latin CC is highly regular: the complex construction is assembled from component parts provided independently by the grammar. Thus, for example, the Latin CC appears to inherit its basic structure from the correlative template, whereby a subordinate clause introduced by a relative element is paired with a main clause containing a demonstrative element of the same lexical category. Some semantic properties of the Latin CC are also attributable to this general correlative construction. I maintain, however, that the

Latin CC represents a construction in its own right. The Latin CC cannot be reduced to the grammatical configurations from which it is built up—primarily because certain of these component parts do not have the interpretations with which they are associated elsewhere.

The semantic structure of the CC is idiosyncratic primarily because the construction imposes a special interpretation upon the paired comparative phrases [CompPhrases] within it. For our purposes, the CompPhrase consists of a morphologically comparative element—an adjective, adverb or quantity noun—and one of several ablative-case degree modifiers, e.g., *tanto auctior* (“the greater”) in sentence (1). The comparative element and its degree modifier need not be contiguous. The semantics of the CompPhrase is constructionally specific in two respects: (1) the CompPhrase has two alternate readings; (2) in one of these readings, the comparative form *per se* makes no discernible semantic contribution.

Within the CC, the CompPhrase may code a variable across a range of scalar values, or it may code a fixed point upon a scale. An example of the first interpretation is given in (1). Here, the CompPhrases *quanto magis* and *tanto auctior* each stand for a range of values on scales of duration and magnitude, respectively. The scales in question are established by the individual paired clauses. An example of the second interpretation is given in (2); the CompPhrases are shown in boldface:

- (2) Sed non statuendo felicitati modum,...**quanto altius**
 but not setting (AB) success (D) limit (A) how-much (AB) higher
 elatus erat **tanto foedius** conruit.
 lifted (N) (he) was that-much (AB) worse (he) fell
 “But by not setting a limit to his success, to the extent that he [M.
 Atilius] had risen high, he fell badly.”
 Livy 30.30

In (2), each of the CompPhrases codes a fixed point on the respective scales of height attained and downfall suffered.

The variable interpretation of the CompPhrase (1) is not unique to the CC; it is associated with the comparative outside of the CC. This use of the comparative involves a comparative standard that is not fixed. Hence, in both English and Latin, the comparative is a means of coding the accretion of a scalar property, as in (3):

- (3) a. He became sicker and sicker { *than before }
 b. We’re growing older.
 c. De Graecia cottidie magis et magis cogito.
 About Greece (AB) daily more and more (I) think
 “I think more and more about Greece each day.”
 Cicero, *ad Atticum* 14.18.4

By contrast, the constant interpretation of the CompPhrase (2) seems to owe nothing to the semantics of comparison. One might say that in such examples the morphological comparative does not represent a semantic comparative. An understanding of the range of functions of the comparative will not help a naive decoder (i.e., one ignorant of the CC construction *per se*) to interpret (2).

The two possible interpretations of the CompPhrase render the Latin CC polysemous. That is, the syntactic template—whose properties will be described

forthwith—can express either of two types of relationships between a pair of semantic scales: (a) a link between two variables, whose ranges are determined by the two scales, or (b) an equivalence between two fixed values on the two scales. Let us refer to the first reading as the variable reading; the second as the constant reading. Strictly speaking, neither reading is calculable from the meanings of constructional subparts. The association of the constant reading with the CC template appears particularly unsupported by the grammar at large, especially the grammar of comparison. The CC is then best regarded as a conventional pairing of syntactic form and meaning.

The remainder of this paper will be structured as follows: the next section will provide a brief overview of the syntax of the Latin CC, and the manner in which the subparts of this construction are licensed by related constructions; the third part will further describe the two readings of the CC, and the manner in which linguistic context might select a preferred reading; a concluding section will highlight the advantages of a construction-based approach to the semantic phenomena at issue.

1. Syntax. The syntactic properties of the CC are represented in figure 1, using some notational conventions of unification-based Construction Grammar (Fillmore and Kay 1991):

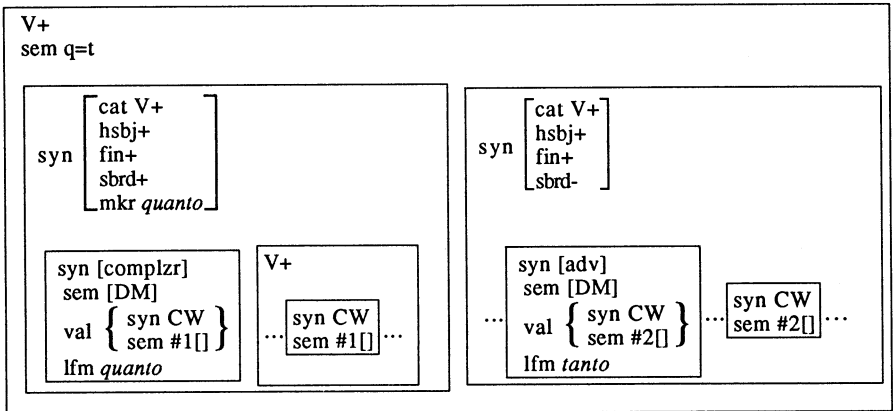


figure 1

As shown, the basic structure consists of a main and subordinate clause. The main clause is that containing the demonstrative degree-marker *tanto* (or sometimes *eo* or *hoc*). The subordinate clause contains the interrogative degree-marker *quanto* (the degree marker *quo* is also found). The subordinate status of this clause is demonstrated by such sentences as (4), in which the CC appears in indirect discourse:

- (4) Non est infitandum Hannibalem tanto praestitisse
 not is disputable (N) H. (A) that-much (AB) surpass (INF)
 ceteros imperatores prudentia (AB) quanto populus
 other (A) generals (A) prudence (AB) how-much (AB) people (N)

Romanus antecedant fortitudine cunctas nationes.

Roman (N) supersede (SBJ) strength (AB) all (A) nations (A)

“One cannot dispute that Hannibal surpassed other generals in prudence to the same degree that the Roman people supersede all other nations in strength.”

Cornelius Nepos 13.1

The verb *infitor* (“I dispute”) takes an accusative-infinitive sentential complement. Hence, *Hannibal*, the subject of the verb *praesto* (“I surpass”) appears in the accusative, while the verb appears in the infinitive form. It is generally true in Latin that subordinate clauses, including relative clauses and conditional protases, retain their finite form in indirect discourse, appearing in the subjunctive. As shown in (4), the verb of the *quanto*-bearing clause, *antecedo* (“I supersede”), appears in the present subjunctive. Sentence (4) also demonstrates that the main clause may precede the subordinate clause. Additionally, (4) illustrates the possibility of ellipsis within the CompPhrase. In Latin, certain scalar predicates, including those of the ‘surpass’ class, represent ‘notional comparatives’. As such, they may be directly modified by the degree marker, without the intercession of a comparative word. Such sentences as (4) represent fixed-value correlatives akin to (2).

Within the paired clauses, only one element has a fixed position: the degree marker *quanto*. In the subordinate clause, it must appear in initial position; *wh*-elements tend to be so constrained. By contrast, the degree modifier *tanto* may appear in clause-initial position (1-2), post-subject position (4), or clause-final position, as in (5):

- (5) **Quanto diutius abest, magis cupio tanto.**
 how-much (AB) longer (he) is-absent more (I) want that-much (AB)
 “The longer he is away, the more I long for [him].”
 Terence, *Heautontimoroumenos* 3.1.15

Quanto, it seems, performs a double duty: it functions both as a subordinating conjunction and as a degree modifier of the comparative element within the clause. The demonstrative degree marker has only the latter of these functions; it is hence found in all positions within the main clause, as indicated by the ellipses on either side of the *tanto* constituent. The valence requirements of both degree markers call for a comparative word (CW). The comparative word is freely ordered within each clause with respect to its degree marker; this is again indicated by ellipses flanking the comparative word. What I have called the CompPhrase—the degree marker plus comparative—represents a discontinuous constituent. The degree word and comparative word need not appear in tandem. Nonetheless, the language shows a preference for an ordering in which the comparative word immediately follows its degree modifier, and these degree modifiers appear in clause-initial position. This default pattern is exemplified in (6); CompPhrases are shown in boldface:

- (6) **Quo propius hostis accedebat, eo maior**
 how-much (AB) closer enemy (N) came that-much (AB) greater (N)
 caedes fugientum fiebat.
 slaughter (N) fugitives (G) became
 “The nearer the enemy approached, the greater the slaughter of fugitives became.”
 Livy 26.9

The syntax of the CC can be seen as derived from two more basic constructions: the correlative construction and the adverbially modified comparative. The correlative construction provides for the pairing of a subordinate and a main clause, in which the subordinate contains a relative element and the main clause a demonstrative element of the same lexical category—nominal, adjectival or adverbial. As in the CC, the relative element serves as a complementizer. Some examples of the general correlative construction are given in (7). The correlative words appear in boldface; the lexical category of the pair is also indicated:

- (7) a. **Tot** mala passus sum **quot** in
that-many misfortunes (A) suffered (N) (I) am so-many in
aethere sidera lucent.
sky (AB) constellations (N) shine.
“I have endured as many misfortunes as constellations shine
in the sky.”
Ovid, *Tristia* 1.5.47 (adverbial)
- b. **Tam** esse clemens tyrannus **quam** rex
that-much be mild (N) tyrant (N) so-much king (N)
importunus potest.
harsh (N) can
“A tyrant can be as mild as a king is harsh.”
Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.33.50 (adverbial)
- c. ...ut...**quales** simus **tales** esse videamur.
so which-kind (N) (we) are that-kind (N) be (we) seem
“...so that we might appear as we are.”
Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.13.44 (adjectival)
- d. Non habuit **tantam** rem familiarem Philus
not had that-great (A) thing (A) familiar (A) P. (N)
quantam Laelius
as-great (A) L. (N)
“Philus did not have as great a fortune as Laelius.”
Apuleius, *Apologia* 20 (adjectival)

The adjectival correlative counterparts of (7d) might look familiar; these are the adjectival equivalents of the paired degree-markers appearing in the CC. These adjectives are general indicators of magnitude. As modifiers, they agree in case, number and gender with the head noun. Used substantively, they can serve as degree markers, akin to *tam* or *quam* of (7b). As degree markers, they have the invariant ablative neuter singular form, *tanto*, etc. This use of a quantity adjective or noun is often called the ablative of measure. Additional examples of ablatives of this type are *multo* “by far” from *multus* (“many”) and *magno* “a great deal” from *magnus* (“great”). An ablative of measure must be accompanied by a comparative word. In this role, the ablative element indicates the degree to which the comparative target departs from a comparative standard. Example sentences are given in (8):

- (8) a. ...vir melior multo es quam ego...
man (N) better (N) many (AB) (you) are than I (N)
“You are a better man than I by far.”
Terence, *Adelphi* 705

- b. Nihilo erat ipse Cyclops quam aries
 nothing (AB) was himself (N) cyclops (N) than ram (N)
 prudentior.
 wiser (N)
 "The cyclops himself was no wiser than a ram."
 Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5.115

The CompPhrase within the CC is formed in accordance with the pattern exemplified in (8). The paired degree-markers themselves are provided by the correlative construction. The latter construction, as mentioned, also provides the biclausal syntax of the CC. Hence, the syntactic template shown in figure 1 is definable in terms of two more basic constructions: the ablative of measure and the correlative. This regular syntax does not, however, deprive the CC of its status as an independent construction. Certain semantic characteristics of the CC are attributable to those of its grammatical building blocks; some of these traits are not, and are properly regarded as idiomatic. We might now turn to those properties.

2. Semantics. As shown in (7), instances of the basic correlative construction can generally be translated via the English 'as...as construction'. In general, the correlative expresses equivalence between two (typically scalar) values assigned to two compared entities. The entities whose values are equated may be located on one scale or two distinct (although commensurate) scales.² Thus, for example, (7a) involves a single numerical scale: it asserts that the numerical value that can be assigned to the set of misfortunes is equal to that which can be assigned to the set of constellations. Sentence (7b) involves two scalar properties: it asserts that the degree of clemency attributable to a tyrant might equal the degree of harshness assignable to a king. In all sentences of this type, the standard of comparison is expressed by the relative-bearing subordinate clause.

The semantics of the general correlative provides the interpretive framework of the CC construction. As indicated by the topmost *sem* value of figure 1, the CC expresses an equivalence between the degrees expressed by the relative and demonstrative degree markers. One can regard the CC as a biscalar correlative of the type exemplified in (7b), in which degrees of two scalar properties are equated. Thus, for example, sentence (5) evokes a scalar model in which any value assignable to length of absence is equivalent to some value assignable to the acuteness of longing.

There is, however, more to be said about the semantics of the CC. Let us concentrate for now on the 'variable reading' of the construction exemplified in (5-6). There are a couple of respects in which this semantic structure departs from that of the general correlative. These departures can be regarded as instances in which the semantic specifications of the more specific construction override those of more basic related constructions (cf. McCawley 1988). Firstly, sentences like (5-6) do not equate two fixed values, but the whole range of values that can be assumed upon the two paired scales. Secondly, the CC expresses an implicational relationship between the scalar properties expressed by the two clauses. That is, any increase in one property causes a proportionate increase in the other: in (6), the degree of nearness of the enemy determines the magnitude of the slaughter. The independent variable, like a conditional protasis, is coded by the subordinate clause.

Conditional semantics must be attributed to the CC template as a whole—as an idiosyncratic property of the CC vis-à-vis the general correlative pattern. It does

stand to reason that the clause coding the comparative standard of the correlative should also code the protasis of a correlative conditional; both protases and comparative standards code background information with respect to a main assertion. However, if one attempted to decode the CC armed only with knowledge of the general correlative construction, one would not know that this correlative subtype has a conditional interpretation. Further, as mentioned earlier, that the CC should express a relationship between variables—rather than an equivalence between fixed values—is not a fact about the correlative, but must be attributed to the special semantics assumed by the CompPhrase within the CC.

Within the CC, the comparative necessarily expresses what I will call ‘moving-standard comparison’. English and Latin examples of this type of comparison are given in (3). In these cases, the comparative standard is necessarily unspecified, as shown by the starred continuations of (3a). The comparative standard is simply any lower value of the coded property with respect to whatever higher values are assumed over time. Such comparatives thus code the accretion of a scalar property, and function in this manner in the CC. Within the CC, the ablative of measure, *tanto* or *quanto*, accordingly codes the degree to which the comparative target departs from the moving standard. As pro-adverbs, these ablative correlative elements code not a particular degree of departure (great or little) but any degree of departure from this standard. It is important to note that although the moving-standard comparative is not unique to the CC, the fact that the comparative must have this specialized function within the CC is not *a priori* knowable. Thus, the semantics of the CC is unpredictable, insofar as it does not simply follow from the semantics of the correlative and adverbially modified comparative.

The semantic characterization of the CC provided does not extend to sentences like (2). These sentences display all of the syntactic trappings of the CC, but are interpreted in a manner that does not involve correlated scales. As mentioned earlier, such sentences as (2) appear to express an equivalence between two fixed degrees on two scales. Further examples of this ‘fixed-value’ reading are given in (9); CompPhrases are shown in boldface:

- (9) a. Duae Luceriam ferebant viae, altera...patens
two (N) L. (A) led roads (N), one (N) open (N)
apertaque, sed **quanto tutior, tanto**
broad-and (N) but so-much (AB) safer (N) that-much (AB)
fere **longior**. Altera, per furculas Caudinas
nearly longer (N) other (N) through forks (A) Caudine (A)
brevior.
shorter (N)
“Two roads led to Luceria—one open and broad. But that
one was almost as long as it was safe. The other one,
through the Caudine forks, was shorter.”
Livy 9.2
- b. Quantum ego dolui in Caesaris suavissimis litteris!
how I grieved in Caesar (G) most-moving (AB) letters (AB)
Quo erant suaviores litterae,
how-much (AB) were more-moving (N) letters (N)
eo maiorem dolorem illius ille
that-much (AB) greater (A) grief (N) that (G) that (N)
casus adferebat.
misfortune (N) brought

“How I grieved at Caesar’s extremely moving letter! To the extent that the letter was moving, the grief that his misfortune brought was great.”

Cicero, *Familiares*, Q.F. 3.1 §17

- c. Pompeius...revertit in Italiam...Plerique non sine exercitu
 P. (N) returned in I. (A) many (N) not without army (AB)
 venturum in urbem adfirmarunt...**Quo magis**
 would-come in city (A) had-claimed how-much (AB) more
 hoc homines timuerant, **eo**
 this (N) people (N) had-feared that-much (AB)
gratior civilis tanti imperatoris reditus
 more-gratifying (N) civil (G) such (G) leader (G) return (N)
 fuit.
 was
 “Pompey returned to Italy. Many had claimed that he would
 not come back without his army. To the extent that people
 had feared this, the return of such a leader as a civilian was
 gratifying.”
 Velleius 2.40.3

Semantically, these CC examples are reminiscent of biscalar correlative sentences like (7b), in which the degree markers *tam* and *quam* modify positive-degree scalar adjectives. As mentioned, sentence (7b) asserts that a tyrant and a king might be located at the same point on scales of clemency and harshness, respectively. Similarly, (9a), e.g., asserts that the road in question is located at the same point on the two scales of length and safety. The use of the comparative in (9) appears to be strictly pro forma; the ablative degree-marker requires a comparative word, but the comparative makes no obvious semantic contribution to these sentences. No comparative standards are apparently adduced in the interpretation of the paired CompPhrases of (9). In this reading, the CC again imposes a specialized interpretation on the CompPhrase. In this case, however, the CompPhrase is interpreted in a manner inconsistent with any of the semantic values that are otherwise attached to comparatives.^{3,4}

This situation, in which a construction imposes a highly idiosyncratic interpretation upon a comparative, is not unprecedented in Latin. Another such construction juxtaposes two descriptors of a given entity. The construction is used to assert that the entity ranks higher on one scale than on the other scale. Both properties are coded by adjectives in the comparative form. Examples are given in (10):

- (10) a. Longior quam latior acies erat.
 longer (N) than wider (N) ditch (N) was
 “The ditch was longer than it was wide.”
 Livy 32.38
- b. pestilentia minacior quam perniciosior
 pestilence (N) more-alarming (N) than more-dangerous
 “a pestilence more alarming than dangerous”
 Livy 4.52

The use of the comparative form to express that property serving as the *standard*

of comparison does not seem motivated with respect to the generally applicable semantics of comparison. Instead, a parallelism requirement of the template might supply this ‘extraneous comparative’. One must know this double-comparative construction in order to interpret the extra comparative as one might otherwise interpret a positive adjective. By the same token, one must grasp the CC construction in order to disregard, as it were, the semantic contributions of the comparative morphemes in deriving a given instance of the constant reading.

The lack of semantic motivation for the comparative in the constant reading of the CC might make such comparatives susceptible to replacement by the positive degree; there appear to be some instances of this semantic regularization in later authors. Livy and Tacitus occasionally use the positive degree in one or another of the paired clauses. An example from Livy is given in (11):

- (11) Romani ovantes ac gratulantes Horatium accipiunt, eo
 R (N) rejoicing and thanking H. (A) welcome that-much (AB)
 maiore cum gaudio quo **prope** metum
 greater (AB) with joy (AB) how-much (AB) near misfortune (A)
 res fuerat.
 matter (N) had-been
 “The Romans rejoicing and expressing thanks welcome Horatius,
 with joy great to the degree that the matter had come near to
 disaster.”
 Livy 1.25

In (11) we find the positive degree *prope* (“near”) rather than the expected comparative *propius* (“nearer”). This occasional use of the positive appears to be limited to those CC instances having the constant reading.⁵

It should be noted that the two readings of the CC exemplified in (1) and (2) are not wholly attributable to alternate interpretations of the CompPhrase. When the CC is used to assert an equivalence between fixed values it does not necessarily evoke a causal link between the scalar properties in question. Hence, (9a) simply asserts that road length and road safety are equal; it does not presuppose that safety determines length. Road length is simply a comparative standard, as per the correlative construction. Hence, the equivalency reading differs from the variable reading in that it is not necessarily a conditional interpretation. Typically, however, the equivalency reading does presuppose a general correlation between the scales in question. Thus, sentence (9b) presupposes that the degree of pathos expressed in a letter will determine the degree to which the reader is moved.

The difference between the two readings of the CC is schematized in figure 2. Here the paired scales are seen as a two-dimensional scalar model (Fillmore, Kay, and O’Connor 1988):

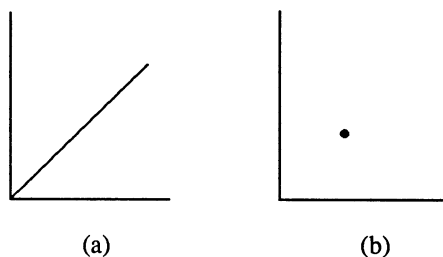


figure 2

In figure (2a), the graphed identity function represents the link between scalar variables: as there is an increase along one dimension of the model, there is an increase along another dimension. Figure (2b) represents the fixed-value reading; equivalent degrees of two scalar properties are represented by a single point equidistant from the origin along both dimensions. These readings are closely aligned; one might say that they differ only in the number of coordinates plotted within the scalar model. It seems reasonable that the two meanings should find expression in the same syntactic template. Diachronic evidence suggests that this template is ambiguous rather than vague with respect to these two readings in question. A search of CC examples within a computerized corpus⁶ yields no clear instances of the constant reading in early Latin. Examples like those in (9) appear to be absent from the works of Plautus and Terence, e.g. Granted, the supply of extant early Latin texts is not extraordinarily large. Nevertheless, this absence is suggestive. The constant reading might represent a semantic reanalysis of the linked-scales reading—a meaning extension which preserves the comparative syntax better suited for expressing the original reading.

The ambiguity of a CC sentence is typically resolvable via linguistic or extralinguistic context. Linguistic context includes verbal aspect. The instantiation of a range of scalar values typically requires acquisition of those values over time. The linked-variables reading often involves events having a durative character; thus, as in (6), the enemy gradually comes closer and casualties gradually mount up. In (2), by contrast, the perfective predicate *conruit* (“he fell”) has a point-event construal; only one value for the seriousness of the downfall, rather than a range of such values, can be attached to that unique event. Hence, the variable reading of (2) is ruled out. One should note, as does Fillmore (1987) that the CC in its variable reading is not limited to describing a protacted episode like that of (6). The CC in this use may express a generally valid correlation, or it may express a contingent prediction. Examples of these uses are given in (12a-b), respectively:

- (12) a. ...qui quidem quo severior est
 who (N) indeed how-much (AB) more-severe (N) is
 et tristior hoc illa quae dicuntur
 and sadder (N) that-much (AB) those (N) which (N) are-said
 salsiora videri solent
 wittier (N) appear tend
 “Indeed, the more severe and sad someone is, the more witty

the remarks that person makes tend to appear.”

Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.61.289

- b. Suos hortatur uti...quanto sibi in
his (A) (he) urges that how-much (AB) selves (D) in
proelio minus pepercissent, tanto tutiores
battle (AB) less (they) had-spared that-much (AB) safer (N)
fore.
will-be
“He urged his men that the less they had spared themselves
in battle, the safer they would be.”
Sallust, *De Bello Iugurthino* 107.1

In (12a), the increase along the linked scales of dolorousness and amusement value occurs as one scans an ordered set of raconteur-witticism pairings. In (12b), the increase along the dimensions of temerity and safety occurs as one considers the array of possible world-outcome pairings. Hence, while the constant reading is called for when a punctual event is evoked, the variable reading does not devolve upon the existence of a unique event of a durative character.

Extralinguistic context includes knowledge of what properties can be causally linked. The aspectual properties of (9a) do not disallow a variable interpretation: “the safer the road, the longer it became”. This reading, however, requires an unusual background assumption: the safety of the road influences its length. The nonconditional interpretation is thereby preferred in this instance.

3. Conclusion. The CC in Latin, like its English analog, represents a formal idiom. While its syntactic properties are regular, its semantic properties are idiosyncratic. Among these idiosyncracies is its polysemous interpretation. Although the meaning alternation in question arises in large measure from alternate readings of the paired comparative phrases, it is not reducible to an ambiguity of the comparative form *per se*. The ‘fixed value’ interpretation of the comparative is constructionally linked; it is present only within the CC (and perhaps also the double-comparative construction of (10)). The existence of polysemous syntactic templates is problematic for those syntactic theories in which constructional meanings arise solely through semantic composition: if the meaning of a grammatical construct is solely a function of the meaning of constructional subparts, no more than one meaning should be calculable for any complex expression. Constructional polysemy is not so troubling for those grammatical theories which license departures from strict semantic composition. Among these theories are Construction Grammar (Fillmore, Kay, and O’Connor 1988) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991). Within such theories, constructional polysemy is recognized as an appropriate object of theoretical inquiry. Langacker argues (1988: 3), “phenomena like...semantic extension are central to the proper analysis of [both] lexicon and grammar”. Goldberg (forthcoming) uses the CG framework in examining the network of senses associated with the English ditransitive. These frameworks represent the grammar as a repertoire of form-meaning pairings, lexical, phrasal and clausal. This repository contains formal idioms—syntactically complex constructs with which meanings must be associated holistically. These are cases in which the meaning of the syntactic construct is not calculable, but is instead conventional. Such constructions then express meanings in much the same way that words express meanings. Like words, they are “learned separately as individual whole facts about pieces of language” (Fillmore, Kay and

O'Connor (1988)). Just as speakers may recognize more or less tenuous derivational relationships among words, they may identify semantic and syntactic commonalities which link a given formal idiom to the grammar at large. The pervasive nature of lexical polysemy is commonly recognized (cf. Lakoff 1987). The recognition of a semantic kinship between words and formal idioms makes possible a principled account of constructional polysemy.

Notes

1 For valuable suggestions and criticisms, I would like to thank Charles Fillmore, Paul Kay, Jean-Pierre Koenig and Knud Lambrecht. *Errores praestare nemo illorum potest.*

2 In the version of scalar semantics assumed by Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor, scales do not exist independently of the elements ordered within them. That is, any given scale simply consists of entities ranked with respect to the degree to which they manifest a given property. I will assume here a slightly modified version of this view, in which scales consist of degrees to which numerical values may be assigned, and that such degrees may be regarded as 'loci' at which the ranked entities are placed.

3 There are instances of the fixed-value reading of the CC that do not involve this unmotivated use of the comparative. These are cases in which two fixed-standard comparatives are equated:

- (a) Quo pluris est...res publica quam consulatus
 how-much (AB) more (G) is republic (N) than consulship (N)
 aut praetura, eo maiore cura illam
 or praetorship (N) that-much (AB) greater (AB) care (AB) that (A)
 administrari quam haec peti debere
 be-administered than these (A) be-sought ought
 "By as much as the whole republic is greater than the consulship or
 the praetorship, that much greater care must be exercised in
 administering it than in seeking these offices."
 Sallust, *De Bello Iugurthino* 85.2

Here the CompPhrases *quo pluris* ("by how much more") and *eo maiore* ("by that much greater") are fixed-standard comparatives, as indicated by the presence of *quam*-clauses coding the standards of comparison. In this sentence, the degree of importance of the republic and the extent of administrative care thereby required are asserted to be equal. Each of these degrees is also asserted to be greater than that attained by a comparative standard. Thus, the degree of importance attached to the republic is greater than that attributable to political offices. Similarly, the equivalent degree of administrative care that must be exercised is greater (or ought to be greater) than the care with which political offices are sought. Sentences like (a) thus equate two compared values. The interpretation of (a) appears derivable from an integration of correlative and comparative semantics alone. By contrast, as argued, the two readings of the CC discussed are not so derivable. In the case of the linked-scales reading, a specialized form of comparison is invoked. In the case of the fixed-values reading (9), the comparative makes no clear semantic contribution.

These features of comparative interpretation are unique to the CC construction.

Some CC sentences may then be three-ways ambiguous. Without context, the CompPhrases of (b) may be interpreted as moving-standard comparatives, fixed-standard comparatives, or 'pro-forma comparatives' (i.e., those with no clear comparative target). Three translations of (b) are given, the first involving correlated scales, the second equation of comparatives (cf. (a)) and the third equation of 'noncompared' fixed values:

- (b) Quo plures erant, eo maior
 how-much (AB) more (N) (they) were that-much (AB) greater (N)
 caedes fuit
 slaughter (N) was
 1. "The more there were, the greater the slaughter became."
 2. "By how much more numerous they were than some other group,
 by that much greater their slaughter was than that of the other
 group."
 3. "The slaughter was as great as their number."
 Livy 2.51

The first reading can be discarded a priori, given the perfective verb *fuit* of the main clause. This verb form supplies an episodic construal of the massacre, rather than a view of its development over time. (The imperfective predicate *fiebat*, "was becoming", welcomes the linked-scales reading, as shown in (6).). Context must decide between the latter readings. In fact, context points to the second reading given. The context immediately preceding (b) is given in (c):

- (c) Capiti deinde eadem arte sunt qua
 Captured (N) finally same (AB) art (AB) (they) are which (AB)
 Fabios...praecipitaverunt in insidias....
 Fabii (A) (they) fell-headlong in ambush (A)
 "Finally they were captured by that same art by which they had
 captured the Fabii. They fell headlong into the ambush."

Hence, the comparatives of (b), *plures* and *maior*, have as comparative standards the number and severity of slaughter associated with the Fabii. Sentence (b) may accordingly be translated: "by how much more numerous they were than the Fabii had been, by that much greater was their slaughter". Thus, (b) has an interpretation analogous to that of (a)—the only difference being that in (b) the comparative standards are contextually supplied rather than expressed via *quam*-clauses.

4 It has been suggested that the comparative seen in sentences like (9) is that comparative which elsewhere codes a somewhat pronounced degree of a given property. Hence, the comparative *fortior* ("stronger") can be sometimes be translated as "rather strong". The standard of comparison in such instances is a norm for the scalar property in question. This reading of the comparative is also seen in English, in expressions like *the finer things* and *better suits*. It seems unlikely that this is the reading of the comparative evoked in (9). In (9b), for example, the comparative *suaviores* (lit. "more moving") cannot reasonably be interpreted as "rather moving"; the author has previously noted that the letter in

question is moving to a very high degree. Further, the 'rather X' comparative does not apparently welcome an ablative of measure. The CC comparatives of (9) are, of course, accompanied by such degree-markers.

5 Evidence of this sort is a little suspect: the replacement discussed is sporadic even within the works of a given author, and typically only one clause is affected (main or subordinate). Nonetheless, the replacement does not seem to apply to CC instances having the correlated-scales reading (at least not in Classical Latin).

6 The Packard corpus is a computerized data base containing all extant Latin texts.

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