PARALLEL AND DIVERSE DETERMINATION REVISITED: A REPLY TO RASTALL[*]

Barry Heselwood

Having read Paul Rastall's (1997/2008) reply to my article (Heselwood, 1995/2008) concerning Jan Mulder's parallel and diverse determination distinction, I would like to counter his objections to my criticism of the distinction, and explain why I am not persuaded that my arguments are, as Rastall claims, "ill-founded and self-contradictory"(Rastall, 1997: 127 = 2008: 1). I conclude this reply by agreeing that Rastall may be justified in arguing for retention of the distinction, but not without changing its formulation – in which case it becomes in fact a different distinction. I hope to show that it is on interpretation of how Mulder formulates the distinction that the disagreement between Rastall and myself ultimately hinges.

Rastall appears to agree with my statement that "it is impossible to establish the membership of any class for which there are no logical limits" (Heselwood, 1995: 22 = 2008: 5) when he says that "it cannot be known with certainty either that indefinitely large classes are identical or that they are disjunct" (Rastall, 1997: 128 = 2008: 2). He adds that "Mulder would never suppose that it could" (ibid.). If indeed Mulder would never suppose that it could, why has he repeatedly emphasised the importance of the identity of classes as the refuting condition for a hypothesis of parallel determination? More than once in his writings Mulder says that in fact it is the *only* refuting condition. I shall repeat some of the quotes from my original article to substantiate this:

> "In the case of "diverse" determination, the relation between one of the peripheral entities and the nucleus, and that of at least one other of the peripheral entities and the nucleus, is different. That is, the hypothesis that the relations are not different is refuted. But *it can only be refuted if the classes of items that can stand in the two, or more, peripheral positions in question are the same*" (Mulder, 1989: 279, my italics).

> "There is diverse determination *if and only if* at least two of the classes are the same, and parallel determination *only if all classes are different*" (Mulder, 1989: 295, my italics).

> "In the case of parallel determination, the hypothesis that there is no diversity in determination remains unrefuted, *precisely because the position classes are different*" (Mulder, 1989: 175, my italics).

---

[*] This article was originally submitted to *La Linguistique* in 1998 in response to Rastall (1997) but not published. I have updated it slightly and added references to Heselwood (2008) where the reformulation of the parallel versus diverse determination distinction proposed in this paper is applied to an analysis of English initial clusters, and to Dickins (1998) which also discusses the problem. My original paper and Rastall's response were both reprinted in *Linguistica* ONLINE, see references.

> "We have parallel determination if it remains unrefuted, and only diverse determination if the hypothesis of parallel determination is refuted *by producing two identical peripheral classes*" (Mulder, 1989: 280, my italics).

These statements are quite clear and consistent with one another, and not at all consistent with Rastall's claim that Mulder would never suppose that the composition of an indefinitely large class can be known. Note that position classes having members in common is not enough for refutation of parallel determination – the position classes must be the same. My whole argument against the distinction as Mulder presents it is based entirely on this point – I have no other objection to the distinction, nor have I expressed any. In my view, Rastall fails to appreciate the importance Mulder has placed on the composition of position classes in his treatment of the distinction between the two kinds of determination. In his discussion of parallel and diverse determination, Dickins (1998: 69-71) is in agreement with me that the distinction as Mulder presents it must be abandoned.

In a move which I think is quite justified, but in no way damaging to my argument, Rastall shifts the focus of the distinction away from the question of identity of classes to the notion of distinctive function. He claims, for instance, that the fact that *John likes Mary* and *Mary likes John* have different distinctive functions refutes a hypothesis of parallel determination. This may be true, but it is not the procedure that Mulder advocates. In order to refute the hypothesis we would, according to my reading of Mulder, have to establish all and only the members of the subject position class and all and only the members of the object position class and show the two classes to be identical.

There are, however, indications here and there in Mulder's writings – but no more than indications – that he may not actually wish to make identity of classes *essential* as a refuting condition for a hypothesis of parallel determination. In my original article I did not address this; I should perhaps have done so. The following two quotes are in this respect at variance with the quotes given above:

> "*Typical* for diverse determination is that the peripheral items involved are equivalent as to the positions in which they can occur" (Mulder, 1980: 155, my italics).

> "in cases of parallel determination the position classes of the peripheral constituents are different (though they may have some members in common), whereas in diverse determination they are *basically the same*" (Mulder, 1989: 174-175, my italics).

It seems here that it is only *typical*, not criterial, to find identity of classes in cases of diverse determination; this leaves unanswered the question as to what then *is* criterial. And what are we to make of the notion "basically the same"? Is Mulder suggesting that if we judge the classes to be *similar enough* then we can say we have refuted parallel determination? Surely when we talk about "same" or "different" in functional linguistics we cannot have notions like "basically the same" or "similar enough" without introducing an unacceptable arbitrariness. If "basically the same" is not to be construed in this way then it must be interpreted to the effect that the composition of the classes is indeed non-criterial. Although not consistent with those statements that point unequivocally to the criteriality of identity of classes (and therefore contradicted by them), these statements suggest that something else may lie at the heart of the matter, and Rastall is I believe correct in identifying this as distinctive function.

I am happy to concede that the terms parallel and diverse determination can, and perhaps should, be maintained as distinct applicable notions providing the distinction is not made to depend on identity vs. non-identity of peripheral position classes. I think I have in my original article convincingly shown that it is methodologically unsound to make it do so, and in this reply I believe I have clearly shown that Mulder does in fact do so. Dispensing with the criterion of class composition means that the distinction becomes a matter of

      1) the permutability or otherwise of items in peripheral positions

      2) the distinctiveness or otherwise of the permutation of such items.

In *the blue vase*, *the* and *blue* cannot permute – at least the hypothesis that they cannot remains unrefuted; this can be called a case of parallel determination. In Rastall's example *the other two men*, *other* and *two* can permute but the two permutations, as he points out, have the same distinctive function; this can also be called a case of parallel determination. In *John likes Mary*, *John* and *Mary* can permute but this time the two permutations do NOT have the same distinctive function; this can be called a case of diverse determination regardless of whether the two position classes have the same set of members.

As a solution to the problem of criteria for distinguishing between the two kinds of determination, this avoids the methodological objection to the criterion of the identity of classes, and allows us to account for the communicational difference between *John likes Mary* and *Mary likes John* in terms of a correlation of the permutation of the peripheral constituent signa with a difference in the distinctive function of the matrix signum.

Reformulating the distinction in these terms is useful for phonological as well as grammatical analysis, and can be applied, for example, to the difference between properties of certain clusters in English and in Greek. In English initial clusters the phonemes are not permutable and are therefore instances of parallel determination; in Greek, however, the initial cluster /sp-/ is permutable – e.g. *spiti* 'house' and *psomi* 'bread' – in which case we have a functionally ordered cluster and diverse determination. In Heselwood (2008) I contend that there can be simultaneous bundles of phonemes, called *phonothemes*, set up to account for clusters that cannot be shown to be functionally ordered, and that the constituent phonemes of a phonotheme determine the nucleus of the phonotagm in parallel because they do so from the same phonotactic position.

References

DICKINS, James (1998) *Extended axiomatic linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

HESELWOOD, Barry (1995) Against Mulder's parallel *vs* diverse determination distinction. *La Linguistique* 31/1, 17-26. Reprinted in *Linguistica* ONLINE, <http://www.phil.muni.cz/linguistica/art/heselwood/hes-002.pdf> (2008).

HESELWOOD, Barry (2008) Simultaneous phonemes in English. *Linguistica* ONLINE, <http://www.phil.muni.cz/linguistica/art/heselwood/hes-001.pdf>

MULDER, Jan W. F. (1980) On the representation of syntactic structures. In Jan W. F. Mulder & Sándor.G. J. Hervey, *The strategy of linguistics*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press. 152-160.

MULDER, Jan W. F. (1989) *Foundations of axiomatic linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

RASTALL, Paul (1997) Mulder's parallel and diverse determination distinction: a reply to Heselwood. *La Linguistique* 33/1, 127-9. Reprinted in *Linguistica* ONLINE, <http://www.phil.muni.cz/linguistica/art/rastall/ras-002.pdf> (2008).