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**The Intersections of Theology, Language,
and Cognition in Medieval Tradition**

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EDITORIAL

The special issue of *Analiza i Egzystencja* entitled *The Intersections of Theology, Language, and Cognition in Medieval Tradition* features a diversity of approaches to debating theological and philosophical dilemmas in the late Middle Ages and offers a forum for cross-disciplinary research on medieval philosophy and theology. While scholars tended to cross disciplinary boundaries throughout the Middle Ages, interdisciplinary practices reached an apex of sophistication in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, promoting thematic and methodological entwinements. Admittedly, by combining analytical tools and terminology from disparate disciplines, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century authors crafted a methodological perspective that enabled them to describe and explore numerous issues from different angles, offering novel solutions to old problems. This approach was adopted in various fields of knowledge and proved most fruitful in theology, where it prompted a veritable cross-pollination of ideas. Especially inspiring were the intersections of theological, linguistic, and epistemological realms, as studied by several contributors to this issue.

This tactic is put under scrutiny in the paper by Matteo Maserati, who investigates how the terminology of negation influenced the theological and epistemological concepts of John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308). As Maserati rightly notes following Laurence Horn, philosophy tends to distinguish two approaches to negation—asymmetrical and symmetrical—with a preference for the asymmetricalist paradigm, which stresses the dependence of a negative element on its positive counterpart and has to a certain extent dominated the history of philosophy. Maserati cites four asymmetrical arguments adopted by Scotus, namely: “(i) negative expressions are not syntactically

independent, since they are the result of the application of a negative particle to other linguistic elements from which they remove something; (ii) negative assertions are not semantically independent, since their truth-value depends on the truth-values of other positive assertions; (iii) negative assertions are epistemically weaker than positive ones [...] (iv) negations are ontologically weak, since any negative property fails in bestowing any ontological perfection upon its subject.” Focusing on the issue of the possibility of knowing God, Maserati shows the effect of these arguments on Scotus’s epistemological and theological theories and their contribution to the two main strategies for proving the primacy of the positive element over the negative one.

Giacomo Fornasieri’s paper is accompanied by a semi-critical edition of Peter Auriol’s commentary on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1. Fornasieri explores the conceptualism of Peter Auriol (ca. 1280–1322), whom he portrays as a moderate conceptualist, and argues that Auriol’s theological commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* warrants granting universals “some ground in the extra-mental reality” and perceiving concepts as “fixed [...] in and by the extra-mental reality.” This ontological assumption has consequences for Auriol’s epistemological framework, and especially for the formation of concepts and the process of cognizing. By skillfully maneuvering among various elements of Auriol’s sometimes poorly reconcilable ontology and epistemology, Fornasieri identifies the common ground between Auriol’s theory of essential predication and his theory of connotation as involved in intellectual cognition. This leads him to conclude that “Auriol’s use of connotation is deeply intertwined with both his ontology and his epistemology. It is the meeting point between them.”

Another attempt undertaken by a medieval commentator to reconcile various theological issues is investigated by Łukasz Tomanek, who tackles interpretative puzzles concerning the possibility of knowing God and limits to human perception and cognition. Tomanek focuses on late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century commentaries on Averroes’s *De substantia orbis* to study their positions on divine attributes, such as infinite power, efficient and final causality, and the ability to create *ex nihilo*. By contrasting two interpretative lines developed in three commentaries, Tomanek probes the arguments and tactics employed to analyze the aforementioned theological issues, wherein he identifies two major modes which rely on: a) either referring to cognition acquired by the natural reason; b) or merging natural

philosophy with Catholic faith. The latter, as he concludes, promoted a more critical approach.

Limits to human cognition are also addressed by Riccardo Fedriga and Roberto Limonta, who convincingly show that any theory aiming to give an account of human cognitive faculties must take into consideration an array of crucial issues, including the imperfection of our epistemic apparatus, the (more or less defined) boundaries between the subject and the object of knowledge, and the tools for grouping and classifying entities of the known reality into classes or subcategories of thought. The paper by Fedriga and Limonta takes a closer look at the approaches adopted by William of Ockham (ca. 1287–1347) and Walter Chatton (ca. 1290–1343) in their studies on the causal treatment of human cognitive tools and their fallibility. Fedriga and Limonta test a pragmatical-social approach to fictional objects of thought, such as future contingents and prophecies.

Apart from theological works, late medieval commentaries on Aristotle's writings on physiology and psychology were a site where disciplines intersected, issues intertwined, and methods interlaced with each other. This framework is investigated by Claudia Appolloni, who analyzes the pragmatic theory of imposition and signification of words as formulated in an anonymous thirteenth-century commentary on *De anima*, accompanied by an edition of three questions from this commentary (contained in the codex of Prague, Metropolitan Chapter, M. 80, ff. 54vA–55vB). Appolloni delves into the realm where physiology (sound production and reception) crosses paths with pragmatics (theory of language, signs, and their usage) to show how medieval authors addressed the signification of words as related to vocal sounds production, auditory perception, institution of meanings, and language formation. She studies the outlooks of the anonymous author against the background of thirteenth-century pragmatic theories, including Roger Bacon's position (1214/1220–1292). By building a conceptual framework for the theory of "everyday imposition" as gleaned from the analyzed and edited anonymous questions, she provides persuasive evidence that the doctrinal content of the questions cannot be attributed to Bacon and its attribution still remains to be established.

Devoted to visual perception in general and to the concept of "middle color" in particular, the paper by Monika Mansfeld also testifies to late medieval authors' mastery in entwining issues from various disciplines. Mansfeld focuses on the definition and epistemological problems inherent in

the perception of the middle color as formulated in thirteenth-century commentaries on Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato*. She shows the impact of philological choices made by the medieval commentators (resulting from Aristotle's obscurity, as well as semantic and syntactic mistakes in Latin translations of the text) on philosophical methods for tackling physiological, epistemological, and semantic problems. She concludes that philological preferences of authors prompted a proliferation of solutions. Mansfeld points out a rich swathe of time when the debate on the middle color thrived just to pass into oblivion after William of Moerbeke's revision of the first translation of *De sensu et sensato*, which "marked the shift in the focus of research into some other problems and the interpretative tradition of the middle colour in the 13th century reached its end."

This issue evolved from the papers read at the international online conference *The Intersections of Theology, Language, and Cognition in Medieval Tradition and Beyond*, which was collaboratively organized by the University of Bologna and the Medical University of Łódź and held at the Department of Philosophy and Communication Studies, University of Bologna, on 12–13 May, 2020.

The idea of publishing this issue sprouted during a very distressing period, when the COVID-19 pandemic was proclaimed. Against all odds, the production of the issue was successfully concluded thanks to Renata Ziemińska (Chief Editor of A&E), who accepted our proposal and kindly agreed to host this issue. Our heartfelt thank-you goes to our contributors for the determination and dedication they exhibited throughout this venture. We owe a debt of gratitude to our families who encouraged us during this time, and especially to Chiara, Micol, and Wojtek for their affection and invariable support.

Monika Michałowska, Riccardo Fedriga & Costantino Marmo

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A PRAGMATIC THEORY OF EVERYDAY
IMPOSITION OF WORDS IN AN ANONYMOUS
THIRTEENTH-CENTURY COMMENTARY ON *DE ANIMA*
(MS PRAGUE, METROPOLITAN CHAPTER,
M. 80, FF. 54VA–55RB)**

Keywords: Anonymous of Prague, Commentaries on *De anima*, Medieval Pragmatics,
Medieval Semantics, Roger Bacon

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Introduction

In a broad sense, contemporary pragmatics is defined as “the study of language use in context” and, within the analytic philosophy of language, as “the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language.”¹ Pragmatic approaches to signification are also found in the history of medieval logic and semantics, and such a study can count on at least forty years of research.² After all these years, Roger Bacon (1214/1220–92) continues to attract great interest in this field as well as in the reconstruction of the pragmatic approaches to language in the Middle Ages, which are focused on the relationship between signs and their users.³ In fact, his theory of the everyday imposition of words is highly original and almost unique in the semantic panorama of the thirteenth century.⁴

According to Bacon, the imposition of words (the act of giving meaning according to medieval thinkers) does not produce the meaning as an invariant property of words, but speakers can—at least in theory—operate a continuous and tacit renewal of the meanings of words, a process that scholars called the “reimposition of words.” This process characterizes language in its ordinary, everyday practice and reveals its intrinsic dynamism. Like Bacon, another Franciscan, Peter John Olivi (ca. 1248–98) shares a similar concept of signification that was also labeled “pragmatic,” since the words signify not by an intrinsic acquired property but rather by an act of bestowing meaning that involves the speakers *qua* users of language and depends on their intention to signify.⁵ Hence, for both Bacon and Olivi,

¹ Huang, 2017, p. 1.

² I will mention the most important studies below: see, especially, § 2 and its footnotes.

³ See Marmo, Rosier-Catach, 2011, p. 1.

⁴ As we shall see, Anonymous of Prague supports a similar theory of the everyday imposition of words, see § 2.

⁵ I base this reconstruction on Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, who identified at least two opposing approaches in 13th-century theories of the signification of names, which they called the *poiesis*-oriented or artefactual approach (i) and the *praxis*-oriented or pragmatic approach (ii). According to (i), the meaning of words is the result of an initial act of imposition, after which words have the intrinsic property of “meaning something.” In contrast, according to (ii), meaning is an act performed by the speakers—i.e., language users—who intentionally aim to signify something. On the one hand, the model is the production of an artifact; on the other hand, it is the use of an instrument: see Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, §§ 125–200. For a further bibliography on this, see Appolloni, 2020.

the meanings of words depend on the activity of signifying performed by the speakers-users of a language. Acknowledging the crucial role of the intentions of users, scholars agree on the strong influence of Augustinian linguistics on the two theologians and, more generally, on thirteenth-century pragmatic accounts of the signification of names.⁶ While Aristotle's *logica nova* and natural philosophy, commented on at mid-thirteenth century faculties of arts, serves as the basis for theories more concerned with the formal aspects of language such as early Modism, theologians are more influenced by Augustinian semiotics and semantics, which insist on the intersubjective and pragmatic aspects of sign and language.⁷ This Augustinian influence is one of the forms that interactions between theological sources and the liberal arts—and the intersections between them—took in the thirteenth century.⁸

In this paper, I attempt to add a piece to the puzzle of reconstructing thirteenth-century pragmatic theories of imposition and signification of names. In particular, I examine a theory of the everyday imposition of words advocated by an anonymous, (probably) thirteenth-century master of the arts. His question-commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, from which I edit three questions below, is preserved in a single manuscript, M. 80, in the Metropolitan Library of Prague (ff. 42rA–89rA).⁹ Although his theory of everyday imposition sounds similar to that of Bacon, Anonymous of Prague¹⁰ emphasizes the need, in the act of everyday imposition, to obtain the consent (*consensus*) of others and the linguistic community rather than individual semantic freedom.

⁶ See Mora-Márquez, 2011, pp. 163–164; Mora-Márquez, 2015, pp. 61–70; Rosier-Catach, 1994, pp. 123–155. For the Augustinian linguistics, see Vecchio, 1994.

⁷ On the opposition between Augustine and Aristotle as “two models of occidental medieval semantics,” the former more concerned with pragmatic aspects and the latter with language as a formal system, see Rosier-Catach, 2000. This picture does not exclude that there were masters in the arts, for example, the grammarians known as “intentionalists,” who advocated a pragmatic approach to language; as Rosier-Catach argues, Augustine was part of their background, Rosier-Catach, 2000, p. 46.

⁸ On such intersections, see Marmo, 2010; Rosier, 1994; Rosier-Catach, 2004.

⁹ Praha, Archív Pražského hradu, fond Rukopisy, Knihovny Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta M. 80.

¹⁰ It may be important to note that by “Anonymous of Prague” I am not referring to the Anonymous Pragensis of manuscript Praha, Knihovny Metropolitní Kapituly, L66, 81rA–91vA, who belonged to a modist milieu [see Anonymus Pragensis, *Quaestiones super Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos* (ed. Murè, 1998) and Marmo, 1994, p. 497].

To examine the content of the three questions edited and to contextualize them I: i) analyze some thirteenth-century commentaries on *De anima* II.8 as the doctrinal context in which we can read the text; ii) examine the details of Anonymous of Prague's doctrinal position and how it differs from Bacon's theory of meaning; and iii) highlight some elements that exclude Bacon as being the author of the edited questions.

Thirteenth-Century Commentaries on *De anima* II.8

Translated for the first time by James of Venice in the twelfth century, Aristotle's *De anima* was widely commented on at faculties of arts from the mid-thirteenth century, when the prohibition on reading it was lifted and courses on *De anima* became mandatory.¹¹ These circumstances offered medieval thinkers the opportunity to broaden their reflection on various philosophical issues. Taking their cue from *De anima* II.8, 420b5–421a6, Aristotle's medieval commentators examine the utterance and what makes it meaningful, an aspect that may seem secondary but which yields results of particular interest for theories of language.

Aristotle defines the vocal sound,¹² or voice (*vox*, in medieval translations of the Greek *φωνή*), in the context of an examination of the five senses, in particular, hearing, showing its difference from sounds produced by striking the air in the vocal tract (or trachea), such as a cough.¹³ Different from a cough, a vocal sound is not only produced by “an animated being” but also “with some sort of image” or “imagination” (*aliqua imaginatio*); therefore, a vocal sound is significant, whereas a cough is not. Hence, the vocal sound is a significant sound produced by animals having imagination. Not all animals, however, can utter vocal sounds: it is necessary to have vocal cords, which is why (for example) fish lack a voice.

¹¹ See Gauthier, 1984, p. 236.

¹² “Utterance” is the standard translation for *vox*; however, I prefer “vocal sound” because it is more literal.

¹³ See Aristoteles Latinus, *Iacobus Veneticus translator Aristotelis. De anima* II.8 (ed. Decorte, Brams, ALD; 420b5–420b34); Aristoteles Latinus, *Guillelmus de Moerbeke revisor translationis Aristotelis secundum Aquinatis librum. De anima* II.8 (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 143; 420b5–420b34).

Dealing with the Aristotelian passage, medieval thinkers were confronted with various questions about language yielded by the interpretation of the excerpt produced. What I present in this section are only some of them,¹⁴ since I intend to provide only a conceptual framework for the questions edited below.¹⁵ First of all, how should the definition of vocal sound as a significant sound (*sonus significativus*) with a certain image (*cum aliqua imaginatione*)¹⁶ be understood?

One of the earliest elaborations of this problem is found in Albert the Great's *De homine*, part of the *Summa de creaturis*, dated around the early 1240s.¹⁷ Although Albert the Great refers to the entire work as *De homine*, when he deals with specific questions he also calls it *Quaestiones De anima/ Quaestiones in tractatu De anima*, or rarely *Tractatus De anima*.¹⁸ In this work, in a section entitled *De voce*,¹⁹ Albert deals with two questions that are particularly relevant for theories of language: 1) whether the vocal sound always signifies a mental image or a natural affection (*Utrum vox sit semper signum imaginationis vel affectus naturae*); and 2) how words (*dictiones*) signify concepts.

Albert's *De homine* builds on Avicenna's *Liber de anima* in considering imagination as the lowest faculty of the inner sense, common to humans and animals. Its function is to preserve the images received by the external senses as forms without matter, and it prepares them for further elaboration by the higher faculties.²⁰ Animals with a trachea, says Albert, produce a vocal sound (*vocant*), and this vocal sound is a sign of imagination and natural affection. Affections drive animals to produce a voice to express and realize their desires (food, protection, etc.). However, for human language to be

¹⁴ I leave aside, for example, the question about the innateness of language, for which see Ebbesen, 2017a, 2017b, 2020; Sekizawa, 2010.

¹⁵ For a detailed reconstruction of this context, see Köhler, 2014.

¹⁶ Although in the translations *aliqua imaginatione* leads us to think of it as a certain mental image, there remains an oscillation among medieval authors in considering "imagination" as a certain mental image or as the faculty of imagination. On this point, see Magee, 1989, p. 100; Rosier-Catach, 1994, p. 304; Valente, forthcoming.

¹⁷ Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, p. xv.

¹⁸ Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, pp. vii–xiii.

¹⁹ For the French translation and the discussion of this passage, see Rosier, 1994, pp. 303–315.

²⁰ Marmo, 2020, p. 86 and bibliography cited.

contained within the definition of *vox* as *signum imaginationis* (1), Albert argues that the vocal sound can be either definite or confused, depending on whether imagination dominates instinct, as in humans, or is dominated by it, as in animals.²¹ In fact, influenced also here by Avicenna's *Liber de anima*, Albert states that the signs produced by animals are confused because they are natural: since nature is the same in all, all animals' vocal sounds are similar, and the similarity is the cause of non-distinction. On the contrary, for humans, signs are definite and differentiated because they are established by an institution and at pleasure (a *placito*).²² In *Peri Hermeneias* (ca. 1250), Albert leaves aside the definite/confused distinction and points out that the *vox* can signify an image as animal affection (*imago affectiva*) or an image as abstracted in a concept (*conceptum*), as in human rational language.²³ This

²¹ Albert the Great, *De homine* II (ed. Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, pp. 214–215): “Dicimus quod multa animalia vocant et non solus homo. Quaecumque enim per pulmonem attrahunt aërem et habent arteriam vocativam et imaginationem, vocant et non alia. Et dicimus quod vox eorum significat imaginationem. Sed signum est duplex, scilicet formatum et informe, sive distinctum et confusum. Distinctum autem vocis signum non est a natura, sed a placito et institutione; et hoc non est nisi in illis animalibus, in quibus imaginatio dominatur super instinctum naturae, ita quod potest abstinere ab ipso et imitari eum, sicut est in homine. In aliis autem animalibus, in quibus imaginatio causatur ab instinctu naturae et sequitur eum per omnia—cuius signum est, quia non faciunt consilia nec inquisitiones suorum operum—, in illis etiam signum imaginationis non est nisi per naturam et non ab institutione. Et quia natura est eadem in omnibus, propter hoc suae voces et sua opera sunt similia in omnibus. Et quia similitudo causa est indistinctionis, propter hoc suae voces manserunt indistinctae nec unum animal percipit ex voce alterius nisi desiderium eius in commune, scilicet indigentiam cibi et desiderium coitus et nocumentum laesionis et vocationem societatis. Et in his desideriiis etiam aliquo modo variant voces suas.”

²² Rosier-Catach found that Avicenna's *Liber de anima* was behind this distinction, where the Arab philosopher claims that animals communicate (*significant*) their desires in a natural and confusing way (*naturaliter et confuse*), while humans have different and *ad placitum* signs with which they can express the infinity of their desires. See Rosier, 1994, p. 208, n. 23. See Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de anima seu Sextus de Naturalibus. IV–V* (ed. Van Riet, 1968, pp. 72–73). See also Rosier-Catach, 2006, pp. 454–458; Rosier-Catach, 2015, p. 232. However, it seems to me that, while inspired by Avicenna, Albert goes slightly further in explaining that distinction in the way we have seen (linking expressly, for example, animal language, and not only animal knowledge, to instinct).

²³ Albert the Great, *Peri hermeneias*, lib. I, tract. 2, cap. 1 (ed. Borgnet, 1890, p. 382): “Quamvis ergo vox sit sonus, tamen (quia sonus non est nisi fractio et ictus aeris a percussente solido plano percussus, tympanum auris immutans) non omnis sonus est vox:

makes it possible to explain the Aristotelian definition of *vox* as a significant sound with a certain image, even if the meaning is a concept or *species intelligibilis* expressed by humans.

Like Albert, other medieval commentators on the *De anima* investigate the definition of *vox* and the role of imagination in its formation. In the earliest commentaries, the interest in linguistic issues is not well developed, especially in exposition-commentaries.²⁴ Question-commentaries, adopted around 1250 by arts masters as a dialectical approach to teaching, become more sophisticated.²⁵ This is the case with two English commentaries from the 1260s:²⁶ on the subject concerned, both Anonymous' *Quaestiones in tres libros De anima*, edited by Vennebusch (1963), and Geoffrey of Aspall's *Quaestiones super De anima* show their dependence on Albert the Great's *De voce* (rather than on his later *De anima* ca. 1254–1257). Anonymous of Vennebusch approves the Aristotelian definition of *vox* and clarifies Albert's conception by distinguishing between definite and confused vocal sounds according to the different nature of the representations involved. The definite vocal sound is specific to humans since they have definite and distinct affections; and the confused one is specific to animals

quia vox est sonus ab ore animalis, cum imagine alicujus significationis prolatus. Haec enim imago potest esse affectiva et movens ad immutationem vel fugam: et tunc vox significat passionem gaudii, vel doloris, vel tristitiae, sicut plerumque significant voces brutorum, et etiam rationalium quorundam, ut gemitus et ea quae importantur per interjectiones. Imaginatio potest etiam esse a re accepta in qua accipit ratio veritatem vel falsitatem, vel cujuslibet rei verum conceptum: et hoc modo sonus cum imaginatione sermonis prolatus non est nisi hominis, etiam illa sola vox vere erit vox." On this, see Rosier, 1994, p. 308.

²⁴ See Richard Rufus of Cornwall, *Sententia cum quaestionibus in libros De anima Aristotelis* (ed. Ottman, Wood, Lewis, Martin, 2018, pp. 378–381); Adam Buckfeld, *In Aristotelis De anima* (Bologna, Biblioteca universitaria 2344, f. 39v; I thank Jennifer Ottman, who provided me with her working transcription of the text); Anonymous Bodley, *Sententia super II et III de anima* (ed. Bazan, 1998, p. 218); Anonymous Rome, *Lectura in librum de anima* (ed. Gauthier, 1985, p. 352). For the structure of thirteenth-century *De anima* commentaries, see Bazan, 2002 and, more generally, Weijers, 2002.

²⁵ Bazan, 2002, p. 143.

²⁶ However, for Anonymous of Vennebusch, the Oxford origin is only hypothetical: see Bazan, 2002, p. 150.

since they express confused affections.²⁷ Following Albert's *De voce*, Geoffrey of Aspall wonders how animals of the same species, although they have a confused voice, can understand one another's determined desire for a given thing. He argues that there is a certain degree of diversification between voices based on the expression of four common needs (i.e., food, help, sex, and care), which are the only things they can understand.²⁸ Yet, Anonymous of Siena, an arts master from the same period and milieu, puts into question the universal validity of Aristotle's definition of *vox* as meaning a certain image (because it might exclude the intelligible).²⁹ This definition seems consistent when we speak about an animal's vocal utterance, which is natural (*vox naturalis*), that is when the imagination moves the *virtus appetitiva* to utter a *vox*.³⁰ On the other hand, human beings can establish the meaning of words by means of the intellect, a faculty that is superior to the imagination. This allows human beings to signify the intelligible, thanks to an act of reason (*ex actu rationis*), and to signify it by institution or *ad placitum*;³¹ thus, only the human *vox* is properly meaningful.³²

²⁷ Anonymous of Vennebusch, *Quaestiones in tres libros de anima* (ed. Vennebusch, 1963, pp. 220–221): “Unde bruta non habent ymaginaciones ad significandum nisi secundum affectus generales confusos [...] et secundum istas diversas ymaginaciones, de quibus habent desiderium significandi in universali et confuse, habent similiter voces distinctas generales et confusas.”

²⁸ Geoffrey of Aspall, *Quaestiones super De anima* (ed. Čizmić, 2005, p. 321): “Dico quod in brutis et avibus ita est, quod unum comprehendit desiderium alterius in communi tantum. Ista autem communia numerantur per quatuor. Quorum unum est indigentia cibi, secundum est invocacio sociorum, tertium desiderium choitus, quartum nocumentum lesionis. Et in hiis quatuor possunt bruta comprehendere desiderium individuorum sue speciei. Unde in hiis quatuor habent voces aliquantulum diversificatas, per quarum diversitatem potest unum brutum comprehendere desiderium alterius quoad unam rem determinatam.”

²⁹ Anonymous of Siena, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, q. 83d (ed. Bernardini, 2009, p. 251).

³⁰ Anonymous of Siena, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, q. 83d (ed. Bernardini, 2009, p. 257).

³¹ Anonymous of Siena, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, q. 83d (ed. Bernardini, 2009, p. 256).

³² Anonymous of Siena, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, q. 83d (ed. Bernardini, 2009, p. 256): “Ad quartum quesitum dicendum quod omnis vox est significativa, vel sui ipsius, ut *buba*, vel alicuius rei alterius prius ymagine vel concepte quam intendit ymaginans exprimere. Set alia est vox instituta ad significandum ex actu rationis, et talis

After the discussion of question (1), in *De voce*, Albert the Great deals with the second issue (2)—already discussed by Irène Rosier-Catach³³—concerning vocal sounds that signify concepts (*intellectus et species intellectus*), namely, words (*dictiones significative*). Here, the issue deals with the interaction between the phonic matter of *vox* and the *species intelligibilis*, and the question concerns the way an immaterial *species* is attached to the phonic matter. As Rosier-Catach points out, the question is about how meaning is linked to the utterance during the first institution and how this meaning can be transmitted in every uttering; in other words, it is all about the relationship between the first imposition and the actual use of the signs.³⁴ According to Albert, humans have a *potentia interpretativa*, which is our ability to engender *species* into the vocal sounds, so that the generation of signification follows the virtual impression of a *species* on phonic material by such a *potentia interpretativa*.³⁵ However, in the act of uttering, it is only a copy of the *species* we have in mind that comes into the vocal sound since the original one remains inside our soul. This generation of words does not depend on the will alone: if it did, we could decide to signify whatever we want and however we want, for example, “donkey” with the word *homo*.³⁶ Our *potestas* can impress meanings on vocal sounds but it does so according to the meanings established by the first *impositor*, which potentially remains

institutata est ad placitum: et talis vox solum fit ab anima rationali, et est proprie significativa, et sic verum est quod quedam est significativa et quedam non, set primo modo omnis vox est significativa. [...] Vel dicendum quod uno modo accipitur ymaginabile ab ymaginativa virtute et ipsa virtus ymaginativa movet virtutem appetitivam, et ipsa mota movet organa ad proferendum vocem, set hec vox est naturalis. Et sic concedendum quod omnis vox est ipsius ymaginative. Alio modo imponitur vox a virtute superiori virtute ymaginativa ut ab intellectu, et tunc non est vox naturalis, set ad placitum, et possunt sic significari res intelligibiles ut substancie spirituales et alie.” This idea seems to be closer to Albert’s *De anima*, even if it is not clear who was influenced by the other (see Bernardini, 2009, pp. LXX–LXXXIII).

³³ Rosier, 1994, pp. 309–315.

³⁴ Rosier, 1994, p. 123. Commenting on Roger Bacon’s *De signis*, Cesalli, de Libera, Goubier, and Rosier-Catach claim that the speaker’s use could consist of a “validation”, that is, the use of the sign according to the meaning originally imposed, or of a renovation of meaning, namely, a new imposition or deviation from the imposed meaning. See Cesalli, de Libera, Goubier, Rosier-Catach, forthcoming, § 147.

³⁵ Albert the Great, *De homine* lib. II (ed. Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, p. 217).

³⁶ Albert the Great, *De homine* lib. II (ed. Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, p. 216).

inside it after the first imposition.³⁷ Ps.-Kilwardby, who in his comments on *Priscianus Maior* (ca. 1250) repeatedly quotes Aristotle's *De anima*,³⁸ addresses the same question about how to unify an intelligible *species* with a phonic matter, but he solves it by claiming that, in the moment of the first institution, a form (the meaning) is added to the vocal sound, analogous to the model of the "information" of the body by the soul.³⁹ Such a form/matter model is consistent with the idea that words cannot lose their original meaning.⁴⁰ The first imposition, indeed, remains (*manet*),⁴¹ according to its exemplar model, and the first act of imposition has the force of law.⁴²

Finally, we can mention another question, which actually cannot be numbered with Albert the Great's questions on the *De homine* since it is not presented there, nor, as already mentioned, can it exhaust the questions about *De anima* II.8 discussed in the period, but it is related to questions (1) and (2) above. In question-commentaries on *De anima* II.8, medieval masters wondered about the specific difference of human language (*loquela/locutio*)⁴³ (often formulated as "What is added to the vocal sound in

³⁷ See Rosier, 1994, p. 125.

³⁸ Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 2.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, pp. 57–64).

³⁹ Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 2.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, p. 61). Cf. Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, §§ 91–124.

⁴⁰ For a discussion, see Rosier-Catach, 2020, p. 34.

⁴¹ Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 2.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, p. 63).

⁴² Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 2.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, p. 73). On Ps.-Kilwardby semantic, see Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, §§ 91–124; de Libera, 1981; Marmo, 1994, pp. 110–136; Marmo, 2010, pp. 71–79; Panaccio, 1999; Rosier-Catach, 1994, pp. 126–131.

⁴³ There is a fluctuation in the Latin terminology to designate capacity of language (or speech capacity), and each word carries with it different nuances. Leaving aside *idioma* (which almost always means "idiom" or "a particular language"), *sermo* (found, for instance, in the medieval tradition of Aristotle's *Politics*) could be translated as "speech." However, only a lexicographical survey could try to understand the different medieval usage of *locutio* and *loquela*, which seems to be similar to designating the faculty/capacity of language. One hypothesis is that *loquela* might be related to the medieval tradition of *Historia Animalium*, and to biological and animal investigations (as the Latin equivalent of *διάλεκτον*), while *locutio* seems to be used generally in the tradition and commentaries of *De anima* and *Politics*, as interchangeable with *sermo*. Regardless, I prefer to translate *locutio/loquela* as language, and *sermo* with speech,

order to be language?”⁴⁴). In fact, according to both Geoffrey of Aspill and Anonymous of Erfurt—a similar commentary dated around 1250⁴⁵—*locutio* is a species of the genus *vox*.⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Aspill defines *locutio* as the utterance of a vocal sound that is significant by imposition in a certain language (*prolacio vocis significantis ab impositione in alico certo ydiomate*), and he states that it is the *virtus rationalis* that is added to the vocal sound. For this reason, animal language, which is generally (*communiter*) called *loquela*, cannot properly be labelled as such. Indeed, the rational faculty, proper to humans, is nobler than the imagination and appetitive faculty, and therefore “*voces brutorum significant naturaliter et non ad placitum.*”⁴⁷

The same issue is addressed by Anonymous of Erfurt, who points out that the difference between vocal sound and language (*locutio*) is that the latter adds to the vocal sound “the imposition of a certain voluntary signification” (*impositio significacionis spontanee certe*). Imposition is fundamental to defining human language and how it differs from the vocal sound of animals (*vox brutorum*), that is, the species of vocal sound opposed

because of communicational and dialogical nuances implicit in the latter. See below, § 2. On the complexity of such a lexicon, see Sekizawa, 2010, p. 70; Rosier-Catach, Cassin, Caussat, Grondeux, 2004; Von Moos, 2011.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Anonymous of Erfurt, *Quaestiones in libros II e III de anima II* (Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erf., CA 4° 312, f. 45 vB, quoted in Köhler, 2014, p. 417): “Queritur igitur, quid additum supra vocem vel vocacionem contrahit ipsam in locucionem tanquam in speciem.” See also Geoffrey of Aspill, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, II (ed. Čizmić, 2005, p. 323): “Unde adhuc remanet questio, quid additum voci constituit hanc speciem, que est locutio.”

⁴⁵ See Raedemaeker, 1968–1970, pp. 195–203; Wood, 2018, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Aspill, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, II (ed. Čizmić, 2005, p. 323), Anonymous of Erfurt, *Quaestiones in libros II e III de anima II*, f. 45vB (quoted in Köhler, 2014, p. 417).

⁴⁷ Geoffrey of Aspill, *Quaestiones super librum de anima*, II (ed. Čizmić, 2005, p. 324): “Dico quod locutio est species vocis. Est autem descriptio eius hec. Locutio est vocis significantis ab inpositione in alico certo ydiomate prolacio. Unde per illam particulam vocis significantis ab inpositione excluduntur vociferaciones brutorum, que secundum communiter loquentes dicuntur loquela extendendo nomen, inproprie tamen, quia ille voces secundum quod proferentur a brutis significant naturaliter, ut dicunt quidam et non ad placitum. [...] Unde prolacio vocis significantis ad placitum in ipso proprie non potest esse sine anima rationali. Unde virtus rationalis est illud superadditum appetitive cum ymaginatione in generatione locutionis.”

to *loquela*.⁴⁸ In fact, according to Anonymous of Erfurt, it is only equivocally said that birds speak, since they speak only according to simple use and habitude and not according to reason, like humans.⁴⁹

The more general scenario, in which these questions concerning both the relationship between animal and human language and the nature of human language are framed, is certainly the distinction between *ad placitum* and natural signs. In arts faculties, the picture of the natural/*ad placitum* gap is generally inspired by the tradition of *Peri Hermeneias* (16 a19–29). Here, Boethius translates with *secundum placitum* the Aristotelian expression for which names, verbs, and sentences signify by an implicit agreement or

⁴⁸ Anonymous of Erfurt, *Quaestiones in libros II e III de anima II*, f. 46 rA (quoted in Köhler, 2014, p. 424): “Ad hoc dicendum, quod locucio est species vocacionis et quod locucio addit supra vocem, scilicet impositionem significacionis spontanee certe. Unde sic debet diffiniri locucio: locucio est vox inposita ad significandum in alico certo idiomate, ut affectus unius alii significetur. Vox autem est generaliter sive significet naturaliter sive ab impositione ut aliis significet, quod apud se est. Unde vox diffinita ab Aristotile potest dividi per vocem significativam naturaliter quod penes se est, et talis est vox brutorum, et ad placitum, et talis est locucio. Et ita patet, quid additum supra vocem contrahit ipsam in speciem, que est locucio, et eciam que est species opposita locucioni, cum genus non dividatur per unicam speciem tantum.”

⁴⁹ Anonymous of Erfurt, *Quaestiones in libros II e III de anima II*, f. 46 rA (quoted in Köhler, 2014, p. 424): “Ad illud, quod obicitur, quod aves loquuntur, dicendum, quod equivoce loquuntur aves et homines. Unde non dicitur proprie locucio, sed garritus, quia fit per (preter E) motum consuetum nature et a solo usu. Locucio autem humana non fit a solo usu, sed eciam ab usu et ratione. Patet eciam ultimo quesitum, an bruta loquuntur, quia quod non videtur (v.] n[atur]a[*lite*]r cod.), tamen affectus proprie mentis ad se invicem exprimunt sub quadam specie vocis, ut prepatet. Nec habet nomen sibi proprium et bene possent vocari locucio brutorum, nec tamen locucio simpliciter.” For a deeper analysis of this passage, I refer to Köhler, 2014, p. 424 and ff. and his bibliography on the relationship between human and animal language. The secondary literature is rich (see below); I want only to point out that other authors also claim that animal speech is ruled by usage and habit because of its naturalness. See Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri politicorum*, lib. I, cap. 1, 29 (ed. Leonina, 1971): “Videmus enim quod cum quaedam alia animalia habeant vocem, solus homo supra alia animalia habeat locutionem; nam etsi quaedam animalia locutionem humanam proferant, non tamen proprie loquuntur, quia non intelligunt quid dicunt, sed ex usu quodam tales voces proferunt.”

convention (κατὰ συνθήκην⁵⁰), while he claims that no name is *naturaliter* (φύσει) significant, as in the case of animal sounds, which are not literate.⁵¹

More generally, among late medieval thinkers, artists and theologians, the picture is complex, and both *ad placitum* and *naturaliter* are intended in multiple ways.⁵² *Ad placitum* is used according to different nuances of meaning, sometimes collective, as convention, sometimes individual, as voluntary or intentional, in the latter case often being influenced by Augustine's semi-otic.⁵³ In any case, the most appropriate translation remains "at pleasure"⁵⁴. There are different ways of understanding even *naturaliter*. For example, the classifications of signs, such as those of Ps.-Kilwardby or Roger Bacon, consider among the natural signs the inferential or intentional signs as they are presented in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*.⁵⁵ In most of the texts of the arts masters considered, however, the authors do not seem to elaborate the distinction between natural and *ad placitum* on Augustinian criteria: as already seen, the common feature is that they all ground the opposition between *ad placitum* and natural voices on Avicenna and Albert, according to whom the former are distinct and diversified, while the natural ones are indistinct and the same for all. Therefore, in light of this

⁵⁰ See Noriega-Olmos, 2012, pp. 141–170. In n. 255, Noriega-Olmos discusses the problematic concept of "implicit agreement" and claims it might be consistent with Aristotle's view.

⁵¹ Aristoteles Latinus, *De interpretatione* (ed. Minio-Paluello, 1965, p. 6: 4–6; 16a 19–21): "Nomen ergo est vox significativa secundum placitum sine tempore [...]. 'Secundum placitum' vero, quoniam naturaliter nominum nihil est, sed quando fit nota; nam designant et illiterati soni, ut ferarum, quorum nihil est nomen."

⁵² As Peter of Spain claims, according to medieval authors, *natura dicitur multipliciter*, cf. Petrus Hispanus, *Quaestiones super libro "De animalibus"*, lib. IV, q. 4 (ed. Navarro Sánchez, 2015, p. 187). For *naturaliter* in animal language, see Eco, Marmo, Lambertini, Tabarroni, 1989; Rosier-Catach, 2004, pp. 57–65.

⁵³ For the meaning of *ad placitum* and its bibliography, see Rosier-Catach, 2004, p. 63; Rosier-Catach, 2011, pp. 259–261, and below § 2.

⁵⁴ See Ashworth, 2013, p. 259.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 1.1.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, pp. 2–5) and Roger Bacon, *De signis*, §§ 1–15 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 81–86). Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II.1, see Marmo, 2010, pp. 71–92; Cesalli, Rosier-Catach, 2018, and their bibliography.

tradition,⁵⁶ all of these authors re-elaborate the distinction presented in the *Peri hermeneias*.⁵⁷

A Pragmatic Theory of an Everyday Imposition of Words

The text of Anonymous of Prague, a question-commentary preserved only in a composite and complex manuscript in the Metropolitan Library of Prague (MS 80, ff.42rA–89rA), dated around the 1250s–60s, and probably written by an English arts master,⁵⁸ can be contextualized within the textual tradition of question-commentaries on the *De anima* presented above. However, it is in relation to the theories of meaning of his contemporaries (already partially sketched in § 1) that we can reach a better understanding of his originality.

Anonymous of Prague devotes approximately five questions of his commentary to language, qq. II.40–II.44, according to Ebbesen’s list of questions.⁵⁹ The first (q. II.40) investigates the definition of *vox*, asking what differentiates it from a simple sound (“What does the vocal sound add to the sound?”—*quid addit vox supra sonum*). The answer, which echoes Aristotle’s *De anima* definition described above, gives the author the opportunity to explain which physiological characteristics determine the tone of voice. The degree of curvedness, thinness, and flexibility of a membrane inside the trachea (*pellicula*) determines a voice’s acuteness or lowness, for both humans and animals such as oxen. Although it is not among the most debated topics in the *De anima* corpus of question-commentaries,

⁵⁶ I would like to thank Irène Rosier-Catach for having made me notice Avicenna as a common source. See n. 22.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Boethius’ commentary on *Peri hermeneias*. Boethius, *Commentarii in librum Aristotelis Peri hermeneias*. In *Peri hermeneias* 1 (ed. Maiser, 1880, p. 47): “Huiusmodi ergo voces, quae secundum positionem sunt, secundum ponentium placitum sunt. Sed nomen non naturaliter significat. Apud diversas enim gentes, diversa sunt nomina. Quae autem apud diversa diversa sunt, ea non sunt naturaliter sed secundum placitum eorum qui posuerunt positionemque ponentium.”

⁵⁸ See below, § 3.

⁵⁹ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 9. I present below the edition of qq. II.40–II.43; q. II.44 is has been edited by Ebbesen, 2020.

Albert the Great focused on this subject in two questions of his *De voce*⁶⁰ and addressed it in his *De animalibus*.⁶¹ The latter must be one of the sources for these discussions since Anonymous of Prague also refers to his questions on *De animalibus*⁶² (II.40). However, the actual answer to question II.40 is presented in the subsequent short question II.41, where Anonymous of Prague states that a cough is different from a vocal sound because a vocal sound has received a form or, he says, an *informatio*, to express the conceived imagination. He writes:

Aristotle's expression is to be understood in this way, namely that the voice is accompanied by the imagination as far as it receives a form from those whose function is to do so, so that it is configured to express the conceived imagination. On the other hand, although a cough sometimes occurs with the imagination, however, that sound does not receive such a form and therefore does not deserve to be called voice. If one wonders what the voice adds to the sound, one must say the configuration (*informatio*).⁶³

Early Modism or, as already seen, grammarians close to it such as Ps.-Kilwardby, adopt from Aristotle the form/matter model in order to explain the signification of words (*ratio significandi*). For that theory, the substantial form is the meaning added, as an intrinsic property, to the phonic matter and thanks to which a vocal sound became a word (*dictio*).⁶⁴ Here, however, Anonymous of Prague is not concerned with form as meaning. For this reason, I prefer to understand *informatio* as “configuration” rather than “form,” “notion,” or “representation,” depending on how it is used in the authors who discuss the same issues. Anonymous of Vennebusch, for

⁶⁰ Albert the Great, *De homine*, qq. 3–4 (ed. Anzulewicz, Söder, 2008, pp. 218–220); *De differentiis vocum quae sunt acutum et grave*; *De mutatione vocum secundum sexum et aetatem*.

⁶¹ See also Albert the Great, *De animalibus*, lib. IV, tract. 2, cap. 2, § 97 (ed. Stadler, 1916–1920, p. 401). See Perfetti, 2012, 2017.

⁶² Indeed, the issue is inspired by Aristoteles, *Historia Animalium*, lib. IV, cap. 9 (536b5). See Rossi, 2017.

⁶³ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. II.41, p. 44: ll. 17–24. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine.

⁶⁴ Marmo has defined it “Semiotica dell’organismo,” see Marmo, 1994, pp. 109–136; and Cesalli and Majolino “poiesis-oriented approach,” see Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, §§ 91–124.

instance, argues that *vox* is different from sound because it receives a shaping (*figuratio*) with respect to sound, that is, a configuration of the air (*informatio aeris*) determined by its passage through the trachea, through which voices are diversified from one another.⁶⁵ This configuration, as far as the word is involved (*figuratio dictionis*), according to Albert the Great, must be distinguished from its meaning: he claims that it is the product of the phonatory organs of speech, directed by the soul, which produces configurations of sound to express its imagination.⁶⁶ If my translation is consistent, Anonymous of Prague is simply saying that a voice is different from a simple sound because those things whose function is to do so (*illi quorum officium est ad hoc deputatum*), i.e., the phonatory organs, have given it a form, namely, a “phonic configuration,” to express the imagination.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Anonymous of Vennebusch, *Quaestiones in tres libros de anima*, q. 47 (ed. Vennebusch, 1963, p. 220): “Ad primum istorum respondendum est, quod vox est una species essentialis soni, distincta contra sonum qui non est vox; et hoc propter diversam figuracionem quam recipit vox in sui generacione super sono alios, sicut in vocibus simplicibus litterarum una littera secundum speciem distinguitur ab alia propter diversam figuracionem et informacionem aeris in vocis generacione.”

⁶⁶ Albert the Great, *De anima*, lib. II, cap. 22 (ed. Stroick, 2009, p. 131): “Forte autem dubitabit aliquis, cum duo sint in voce, scilicet figuratio dictionis et significatum, quid faciat in ipsa significatum. Et ad hoc aliquando aliqui dixerunt, quod conceptus, qui est ex parte intellectus, descendit in imaginationem, et organum illius est in anteriori parte capitis, ad quam pervenit respiratus aër, in quo vox figuratur, et ibi generat vis imaginativa intentionem rei in voce. Sed hoc absurdum esse videtur [...]. Oportet igitur, quod anima imaginans et intendens significare conceptum verberet aërem in arteria existentem ad ipsam arteriam; et in veritate pulso aëre ad arteriam, fit sonus, qui est materia vocis, sed figuratio ipsius soni in dictiones est per linguam et dentes et palatum et cetera interpretationis organa.”

⁶⁷ The expression “ab illis quorum officium est ad hoc deputatum” is ambiguous by virtue of the plural pronoun “ille, -a, -ud” which can indicate both people and souls as well as things, as I understood it referring to the phonatory organs. However, I excluded it as referring to people, who would be in this case the original language impositors, because the passage explains the configuration of the *vox* (and not the *locutio*), which is common to humans and animals. In this sense I also think it is highly implausible that it refers to animal individuals having a specific vocal configuration task, which would imply an animal social organization that I do not think is concerned here. Finally, I excluded it as referring to souls in analogy to Albert’s passage where *figuratio vocis* is the prerogative of the phonatory organs. cf. *supra* n. 66. I thank Laurent Cesalli for suggesting to me that “illis” could refer to “something,” besides “someone”.

The *quaestio* that follows (q. II.42) asks what language (*loquela*) adds to the vocal sound, or, in other terms, what differentiates human language from animal communication. Animals, in fact, communicate their imaginations with one another through their vocal expressions (*vociferationes*).⁶⁸

The question concerns the nature of language and its difference from the vocal sounds of animals. If, according to *De anima*, *vox* is a vocal sound with a mental image, what differentiates humans' language from animals' expressions? If animals have imagination and utter *voce*s with images, do they speak in the proper sense? The underlying source for Anonymous of Prague is, on the one hand, the beginning of Aristotle's *Politics*, where the philosopher argues that vocal sound is common to all animals, while speech (*sermo*) is proper only to humans, who can communicate moral values and build a community.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the main source is *De historia animalium*, where Aristotle argues that language is proper to humans and that "not all those that have vocal sounds also have language."⁷⁰ A few lines earlier, however, Aristotle said that birds have not only vocal sound but also language (*loquela*, in Moerbeke's translation⁷¹), especially those that have a large tongue.⁷²

⁶⁸ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, p. 44: ll. 28–32.

⁶⁹ Aristoteles Latinus, *Politica*, lib. I, cap. 2 (ed. Susemihl, 1872, p. 8; 1253a). On this topic, see Briguglia, Gentili, Rosier-Catach, 2020; Briguglia, 2015; Rosier-Catach, 2015. For the translation of *sermo*, see above n. 44.

⁷⁰ Aristoteles Latinus, *De historia animalium. Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 4, cap. 9 (ed. Beullens, Bossier, 2000, p. 123): "Animalifica autem et quadrupedia animalia aliud aliam vocem emittit, loquelam autem nullum habet, sed proprium hominis est; quaecumque quidem enim loquelam habent, et vocem habent, quaecumque autem vocem, non omnia loquelam habent. Quicumque autem fiunt surdi a nativitate, omnes muti fiunt; vocem quidem igitur emittunt, loquelam autem nullam."

⁷¹ Aristoteles Latinus, *De historia animalium*, lib. 4, cap. 9 (ed. Beullens, Bossier, 2000, p. 122). Providing the translation from Greek to Latin by Moerbeke is only relevant up to a point. In fact, *Historia Animalium* (as one of the three parts of "medieval" *De animalibus*, which also contains *De partibus animalium* and *De generatione animalium*) entered the Latin world in the 1270s, and by that time many authors had commented on Michael Scot's translation from Arabic to Latin (1215), which is the most widely used (see Rossi, 2017). Unfortunately, Michael Scot's translation is only partially available: van Oppenraay recently published an edition of the first three volumes: see Aristoteles, *De animalibus* (ed. van Oppenraay 2020).

⁷² Aristoteles Latinus, *De historia animalium. Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 4, cap. 9 (ed. Beullens, Bossier, 2000, p. 122): "Avium autem genus emittit vocem, et

To solve the puzzle, Anonymous of Prague argues that we can understand the ability to speak, or language (*loquela*), in three ways, from the least proper and most general to the most proper and correct. In the first sense, language is an animal's basic ability to communicate its mental images to another through the configuration of a vocal sound (*formatio vocis ad imaginationem*). In the proper sense, language is the articulated (*litteralis*) configuration of vocal sound for communication.⁷³ According to Anonymous of Prague, this is an ability that trained birds have. They can learn images of human voices (*imaginationes vocum humanarum*), although they cannot grasp universal concepts.⁷⁴ In general, Anonymous of Prague recognizes that animals have a form of semantic ability: animals can conceive the meaning of simple things, that is, sensible things. Thus, a dog understands its own name. This is, however, a "sensory" or "imaginative" knowledge because it knows the singular sensible thing but cannot know the universal in any way.⁷⁵ However, birds can also articulate sounds: we can reasonably assume that *litteralis* (note that the author does not oppose another category to it) is synonymous with *articulata*, as intended in logical tradition, that is, both phonically articulated and writable.⁷⁶

Finally, in the third sense, language consists of forming vocal sound articulated according to one's pleasure (*secundum placitum*) to signify images conceived by the soul. In this latter sense, language is the prerogative of human beings.⁷⁷ As the author explains, the specificity of this third kind of language is, namely, the *ad placitum* language:

Accordingly, among all animals, human beings are said to speak in a very proper sense, since they utter articulated configurations of the vocal sound and institute them according to their pleasure with the aim of signifying; I do not mean according to the pleasure of the first impositor only, but according to the pleasure of any speaker whatsoever.

maxime habent loquelam quibuscumque existit mediocriter lingua lata, et quecumque ipsorum habent subtilem linguam."

⁷³ See Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, p. 45: ll. 5–6.

⁷⁴ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, pp. 45–46: ll. 31–13.

⁷⁵ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, p. 46: ll. 10–13. For theories of animal intelligence in the Middle Ages, see Marmo, 2020; Oelze, 2018.

⁷⁶ Eco, Lambertini, Marmo, Tabarroni, 1989, pp. 11–12; Rosier-Catach, 2003, p. 168.

⁷⁷ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, p. 45: ll. 6–10.

For every human being is an impositor of all the names of his language (*idioma*). Therefore, those who impose in the same way, have the same language. Since the same concepts (*species*) are in everyone's soul, every day (*cotidie*) I impose the same vocal sounds to signify the same concept (*species*), those vocal sounds which I have heard more frequently being imposed by others (*quas frequentius audivi alios imposuisse*). Therefore, learning to speak is nothing else than learning the imposition of vocal sounds made by others and then imposing them in a similar way.⁷⁸

In this account, any speaker, and not just the first impositor of language, establishes the configuration of vocal sounds, and especially institutes the meaning of words. As I have briefly explained, by “imposition” medieval scholars mean the act of giving names to things on the basis of which particular languages were instituted. The most common view is that human language originated from an act of imposition of meanings on the words performed “at pleasure” by an original name-giver (or *nomothete*). According to *Genesis* II.19–20, where God brought animals to Adam to see what he would call them, the impositor could be Adam himself;⁷⁹ or, otherwise, he could be a metaphysician, who knows the properties of the words and can impose properly because of his knowledge, as Ps.-Kilwardby argues.⁸⁰ Conversely, according to Anonymous of Prague, the will of the *impositor* involved in the act of naming and signifying is not the will of the first name-giver only. Imposing the meanings of words is an activity, which concerns every single common speaker of a particular language, and these meanings depend on their *everyday use*. No first name-giver can reclaim the authority to give a name to things, as Ps.-Kilwardby argues; on the contrary, every single human being is a name-giver.

⁷⁸ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, lib. II, q. 42, p. 45: ll. 9–17.

⁷⁹ Dahan, 1995.

⁸⁰ Ps.-Kilwardby, *Commenti super Priscianum maiorem extracta*, 2.1 (ed. Fredborg, Green-Petersen, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1975, p. 76): “Ad illud ergo quod querebatur, cuius sit voces instituere ad significandum, dicendum quod sapientis non cuiuscumque, sed principalis, qui habet auctoritatem super omnes alios sapientes, qui est philosophus primus; ille enim habet cognoscere res generaliter et earum generales proprietates et differentias, et propter hoc illius est voces ad significandum instituere et earum multipliciter distinguere.” On this, see Ashworth, 2013; Cesalli, Majolino, 2014; Marmo, 1994, pp. 110–136; Rosier-Catach, 1994, pp. 126–131. It should be noticed that the expression *ad placitum* indicates that the act of imposition is voluntary and not necessarily arbitrary. Indeed, the names of things are often chosen with a reason; see Ashworth, 2013, p. 259.

This idea is particularly important because there is a striking resemblance to what Roger Bacon says in his *De signis* when he introduces his theory of the imposition of words. In *De signis* Roger Bacon advocates a theory of the reimposition of words, according to which, if one wants, every human can impose the signification of words every day by giving them a new meaning. According to Bacon:

We act this way throughout the day (*tota die*) and renew the significates of words without the vocally expressed form of imposing, where a name is given to infants.⁸¹

Different from the imposition of names on infants, which are pronounced out loud during the baptism, the daily imposition can be tacit and not even conscious.⁸² As Cesalli has recently shown, two senses of imposition can be found in *De signis*. According to the first sense, imposition is naming things according to the will and reason of speakers. This imposition can be vocally expressed, and it institutes the words of particular languages.⁸³ The other imposition, which is tacit and unconscious, is realized continuously and throughout the day (*tota die*), without almost being noticed. The first is usual and habitual, the second accidental.⁸⁴ The process of daily imposition is that by which a word has a semantic transfer (*transumptio*). For example, as Goubier points out,⁸⁵ according to Bacon, reimposition often happens beyond the will by the fact that a thing ceases to exist. Grounding his reflection on the rejection of the thesis of the univocal appellation of entities and non-entities,⁸⁶ Bacon believes that if a thing ceases to exist, since a present thing and a past thing cannot be signified univocally but only equivocally, we—apparently unintentionally—reimpose the same word to signify a non-being. Goubier employs the example of the *circulus*

⁸¹ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 155 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, p. 130): “Et sic tota die facimus et renovamus significata dictionum sine forma imponendi vocaliter expressa, ut datur nomen infantibus” (Engl. trans. in Maloney, 2013, p. 107).

⁸² Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 51 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, p. 100).

⁸³ See Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 156–158 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 130–131).

⁸⁴ Cesalli, 2021, p. 191; Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 157 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, p. 131).

⁸⁵ Goubier, forthcoming.

⁸⁶ See de Libera, 1981.

vini when the wine is over; and the name “Socrates” reimposed on “dead Socrates” during a commemoration seems to be a similar case.⁸⁷ Moreover, in *De signis*, Bacon devotes several pages to develop meticulously very precise rules of equivocation, based on analogical inferences that usually guide speakers’ reimpositions.⁸⁸ However, it seems to me that Bacon does not limit the imposition as *ad placitum* nomination to the first origin of language. In § 157, indeed, Bacon says that speakers can give names to the things they need to express.⁸⁹ Free will (*libertas*), free choice (*deliberatio*), and pleasure (*placitum*) make this process of imposition available for every speaker. For this reason, and hence for the crucial role of the language’s user, most scholars have talked about semantic freedom, as well as about a pragmatic or praxis-oriented approach to signification in such a medieval text. Cesalli and Majolino, for instance, have shown how, according to the medieval pragmatic approach, the meanings of words depend on their use by the actors of communication. Therefore, for Bacon too, signification is the result of an act of bestowing/conferring meaning that involves the speaker *qua* user of language and his/her intentions to signify.⁹⁰ Although Bacon does not explicitly use the concept of intention to signify, he insists on the free nature of the signification,⁹¹ on the volitional intention as well as on the role of the will⁹² in both his classifications of the signs and his semantic account. The signs *ad placitum*, i.e., the signs of the human’s language, are classified among the intentional signs, namely the signs instituted by

⁸⁷ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, §§ 148–149 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 128–129).

⁸⁸ See Cesalli, Rosier-Catach, 2018; Maloney, 1984; Marmo, 1997.

⁸⁹ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 157 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, p. 131): “Si vero aliter fit impositio, hoc est propter alium finem quam propter linguam componendam, scilicet ut pro voluntate cuiuslibet recipiat una res unum nomen vel plura secundum quod homo indiget uti re illa propter aliquas eius compositiones, conceptiones et imaginationes circa rem illam et tunc potest quilibet hoc facere, quia nomina sunt ad placitum.”

⁹⁰ Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, §§ 125–167.

⁹¹ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 143 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, p. 34): “Scimus enim quod illud, quod est in libertate bene placiti nostri, non est necessarium. Sed significatio dictionum est huiusmodi, significant enim ad placitum, quare nihil est hic necessarium.”

⁹² Cesalli, Majolino, 2014, § 170.

the soul—even of animals—in order to communicate something.⁹³ Unlike animal signs, however, the signs “at pleasure” are instituted by reason and will.⁹⁴ As is widely acknowledged, the classification of signs at the beginning of the *De signis* is strongly based on Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*.⁹⁵ As Rosier-Catach has pointed out, however, although Bacon follows Augustine in emphasizing the importance of the will in establishing the value of signs, he does not take too much account of the consensual and collective dimension of the institution the latter suggests.⁹⁶ Although the semantic freedom in Bacon is limited by some rules that regulate the new imposition, reimposition remains theoretically free⁹⁷ and especially individual, without giving an explicit role to the community and to the speakers’ mutual understanding. Indeed, we might say that Bacon’s theory of imposition is a radicalization of what Engels saw as the most individual meaning of Boethius’s *secundum placitum*.⁹⁸

Probably, in understanding the danger for communication and the risks of Bacon’s semantic freedom, Peter John Olivi argues that we cannot renew meanings as we wish to. By distinguishing actual signification, the act of bestowing meaning by speakers, and a habitual signification, the meaning established by an act of institution,⁹⁹ Olivi gives a normative value to signification which speakers must respect. Indeed, each individual intention to signify and each act of “bestowing meaning,” unless it is made explicit, must be based on common meaning shared by the community and

⁹³ Bacon defines this kind of sign as *datum ab anima; ordinatum ab anima* or *recipiens rationem signi ex intentione animae*, see, Roger Bacon, *De signis*, §§ 7–8 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 83–84).

⁹⁴ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, §§ 7–8 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 83–84).

⁹⁵ See Rosier, 1994, pp. 95–112.

⁹⁶ See Rosier, 1994, p. 137.

⁹⁷ Roger Bacon, *De signis*, § 92 (ed. Fredborg, Nielsen, Pinborg, 1978, pp. 111–112): “Eadem enim ratio est quia quandocumque renovatur significatum erit aequivocatio et nomina sunt ad placitum nostrum et possumus transsumere nomina sicut volumus, <etiam si> non ita utimur quibusdam aequivocationibus sicut aliis nec transsumimus nomina, et tamen possumus si volumus.”

⁹⁸ Engels, 1963.

⁹⁹ Peter John Olivi, *Quaestiones logicales. Critical text*, q. 4 (ed. Brown, 1986, p. 5).

established by an original agreement of people. As for Augustine and unlike Bacon's view, the collective dimension is at stake here.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, as Goubier points out, if we ask ourselves whether in the Middle Ages we can find the pragmatic idea that "meaning is use" intended in a collective sense, i.e., in which mutual consent can be reached, we should not look for it in Bacon.¹⁰¹ However, this is not true for Olivi either, though for a different reason than Bacon's individual imposition: as Goubier says, in many medieval theories, linguistic meaning is not properly identical to use because we usually have a default signification of words that is more or less stable.¹⁰² All the other significations are variations of the stable ones. In fact, in the Middle Ages, the idea that the first imposition is an agreement of a community is more widespread than one might think. In addition to the texts indicated by Goubier, there are texts of thirteenth-century arts masters who deal with the Psammetichus experiment,¹⁰³ whereby two children are left to grow up in isolation to find out which language they will speak spontaneously. Starting from this basis, arts masters often discuss the acquisition of language, or language innatism (also in *De anima* question-commentaries as Anonymous of Prague does [II.44]).¹⁰⁴ In commenting on the Psammetichus experiment, a text that is possible to attribute to Radulphus Brito says that language originates by *communis consensus* and through the agreement of one who gives his/her consent to another.¹⁰⁵ Two anonymous authors in the same milieu claim that humans communicate and learn meanings of language by communication and use.¹⁰⁶ In this case, it is

¹⁰⁰ See Appolloni, 2020; Mora-Marquez, 2015; Rosier-Catach, 2004.

¹⁰¹ Goubier, forthcoming.

¹⁰² Goubier, forthcoming, 3.2.2.

¹⁰³ See Ebbesen, 2017a, 2017b; Durand, 2017a, 2017b; Sekizawa, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous of Prague's answer is quite similar to that of other thinkers: he says that two children left in the desert without ever listening to human words would not speak a particular language, and therefore there is no such thing as an innate language.

¹⁰⁵ <Radulphus Brito>, *Quaestiones super librum De sensu et sensato*, q. 8 (ed. Ebbesen, 2017, p. 161): "Minor patet, quia sermo est significativus ad placitum ex communi consensu plurium ad invicem consent<ient>ium; modo surdus a nativitate non potest communicare cum aliis in tali concordia et consensu; ideo non potest vocem significativam ad placitum alteri exprimere neque per consequens loqui, quia a quocumque removetur definitio loquelae et loquela."

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous Vaticani 3061, *Quaestiones super librum De sensu et sensato*, q. 8 (ed. Ebbesen, 2017, p. 168): "Maior patet, quoniam ille non habet loqui qui non habet

a communitarian meaning of *ad placitum*, different from the individual ones classified by Engels.¹⁰⁷ However, as Goubier points out, a communitarian origin of language, and the idea that there are always default meanings that we use, do not imply the idea that “meaning is use.”

Is it the same for Anonymous of Prague? As Anonymous of Prague says, every day I usually impose names on mental images or concepts, but in doing so I follow the impositions that I have already heard from others and which are more commonly performed. The common use of meanings is the guide that any speaker should follow. Unlike Bacon’s view, for Anonymous of Prague the community and the social agreement on meanings are fundamental, both for the use of the language and for its learning. In fact, learning and sharing a particular language is nothing more than listening to other people who impose names, and then doing the same. Nevertheless, unlike Bacon, this everyday imposition does not imply a deviation from the usual meanings.

Although we do not have the same freedom that we have in Bacon’s account, semantic freedom is, for Anonymous of Prague, a fundamental peculiarity of human language:

From these considerations, it is clear what one must answer to the question of whether trained birds speak properly. Indeed, birds that utter vocal sound articulated (*litterata*) with the imagination lack the possession of language (*loquela*), because they do not have the ability to form different vocal sounds and to impose them according to their pleasure. Indeed, a well-trained bird cannot call things by any other word, as a human being can. For human beings can impose new vocal sounds for things throughout the day (*tota die*), over which there can be a mutual consent (*mutuus consensus*). Nevertheless, birds which are well-trained and form human vocal sounds associated to the same human mental images—that is, by having in their soul the images of the same

vocum distinctionem cognoscere, et etiam voces dearticulare, et hoc per usum quo communicat cum hominibus et utitur tali loquela cum hominibus; ideo <non> loquitur idioma determinatum ad placitum impositum;” Anonymous Vaticani 2170, *Quaestiones super librum De sensu et sensato*, q. 7 (ed. Ebbesen, 2017, p. 173): “Credo tamen istud non est verum secundum Philosophum, quia voces tales vel tales non sunt significativi huius aut illius nisi secundum placitum et voluntatem hominum, et ideo hebraicum idioma est ad placitum; modo de talibus quae sunt ad placitum nullus habet cognitionem nisi per communicationem et usum.”

¹⁰⁷ Engels, 1962, 1963.

vocal sounds—are said to speak in the proper sense of the term, if compared to other animals besides human beings. However, with respect to human language they do not speak at all in the proper sense of the term.¹⁰⁸

As we can see from this passage, rather than Bacon’s mechanism of everyday language, the ability to signify in a different way is what characterizes the human species and the human language as opposed to the animal one. Birds and humans can share the same images of vocal sounds, but even if birds can articulate it, as parrots do, only human beings can “call things by any other word.” Therefore, the creativity and the intrinsic freedom of human language mark the difference between it and the animal one.¹⁰⁹ For this reason, Anonymous of Prague claims that, if someone wishes (or considers it appropriate), one *can* (*potest*)—has the freedom to—impose new vocal sounds on things throughout the day (*tota die*).¹¹⁰ Anonymous of Prague uses the same expression as Bacon’s *De signis*, but he continues by stressing the importance of reaching a *consensus* on the new sound.¹¹¹ This means sharing a language and thus ensuring mutual understanding.

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, q. II, lib. 42, p. 45: ll. 18–29.

¹⁰⁹ As Rosier-Catach has noted, Avicenna already underlines the creativity of human language, as opposed to that of animals, since humans can infinitely combine letters to form words according to the infinity of their desires. See n. 22 and its bibliography.

¹¹⁰ It should be noticed that for Anonymous of Prague the new imposition consists in naming things with new names and not properly in a semantic renewal, as in the first sense of Bacon’s imposition.

¹¹¹ By emphasizing this aspect of mutual and common understanding, Anonymous of Prague seems closer to Olivi than to Bacon. Indeed, Olivi believes that under certain circumstances one can legitimately change the meanings of words. However, the conditions for making the change acceptable are quite traditional, especially the need for “some authority on the part of the impositor” (see Ashworth, 2013, p. 264; Peter John Olivi, *In Mattheum 5:37* (ed. Corran, 2015, p. 111). Differently, according to Anonymous of Prague, there is no “aristocracy” or “noocracy” of naming and meaning. Instead, every speaker can do this freely even without any special knowledge or authority.

Concluding Remarks about the Authorship: Adam of Whitby, Magister R. *et alii*

Multiple problems arise from the examination of manuscript 80, preserved in the Metropolitan Library of Prague, which contains the question-commentary presented above. According to Rega Wood's codicological description,¹¹² it is a composite codex of six parts, apparently written in England in the thirteenth century, between approximately 1245 and 1275. The codex contains several works from English authors, including Richard Rufus of Cornwall and Adam of Whitby, mostly commentaries on Aristotle, among which are two commentaries on *De anima*. However, the second part of the manuscript (80.2: ff. 42rA–89rA), dated around 1250 by Wood,¹¹³ or, at the very latest, the 1260s by Ebbesen,¹¹⁴ contains *Quaestiones de anima* II and our questions.¹¹⁵ Moreover, it consists of four groups of questions, which Ebbesen designates using Greek letters: group α (69 questions on *De anima* II; approximately 7 on *De Anima* III); group β (12 questions on *De anima* II; 5 on *De Anima* III); group γ (2 questions on *De anima* I); and group δ (17 questions on *De anima* I).¹¹⁶ The four sections of questions seem to be independent of one another; they are all anonymous except for some questions in the first group. Indeed, group α contains around eleven questions attributed (in a caption, with red ink on the margins) to Magister R. and approximately fifteen to Magister Adam Wyteby (or Magister Adam, or simply A.). The rest is anonymous. Hence, the corpus of questions of group α (but the same could be said for the others) is a collection of different sets of questions put together to create a more unified text by copying sections from each in turn.¹¹⁷ The *ratio* of such a composition seems to be to mix almost two sets of questions to exhaust a certain topic. For example, we can find questions about *lux* and *color* by Magister Adam (qq. 20–23), followed by a set of questions about *lux* and *color* attributed mostly to Magister R. (qq. 24–29: q. 26 and q. 28's attribution is unclear, and q. 27 is not attributed). The puzzle is further complicated by the fact that it

¹¹² Wood, 2010.

¹¹³ Wood, 2010.

¹¹⁴ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 21.

¹¹⁵ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 9.

¹¹⁶ Ebbesen, 2020, pp. 2–20.

¹¹⁷ Ottman, Wood, Lewis, Martin, 2018, p. 62.

is not clear whether the questions in group α —which include the questions edited below—are all by Magister R. or by Adam of Whytby. It is likely, however, that, for group α , the writer had two sets of question-commentary, which he put together. In such a situation it seems incautious to attempt an attribution, which could be highly speculative and certainly beyond my reach.

For this reason, I will argue, though not in a definitive way, for a *non-attribution* to show how, in my opinion, these questions cannot be attributed to Bacon.

The hypothesis of an attribution to Bacon actually seems suggestive, and many arguments might be advanced in its favor. In fact, although the theory of everyday imposition is different from that of *De signis* (1267), there are few similar theories in the thirteenth-century milieu, and this formulation could be a sort of intermediate step in the development of his semantic theory of reimposition. Indeed, Bacon's question-commentary on *De anima*, which scholars place between approximately 1237 and 1245,¹¹⁸ is lost, although nothing prevents us from post-dating it. The date of Bacon's stay in Oxford (ca. 1248–51) is still unclear to scholars but was at least before he entered the Franciscan Order in 1256/7.¹¹⁹

Such an attribution could explain some of the anomalies that Ebbesen found in his edition of the selected questions: Anonymous of Prague quotes and uses Augustine, which is a source for Bacon even before he became a theologian, and, above all, he shows an acquaintance with the Hebrew language.¹²⁰ As Ebbesen points out, this is evident in question 44 on the Psammetichus experiment, which is closely related to qq. 40–43. Here, for instance, Anonymous probably relies on Augustine's *Confessions* when he deals with learning language by ostension.¹²¹ As for Hebrew, while

¹¹⁸ Delorme, 1935, p. XXX; Ottman, Wood, Lewis, Martin, 2018, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ Hackett, 1997, p. 15; Hackett, 2020.

¹²⁰ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 22.

¹²¹ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestio*, II.44. (ed. Ebbesen, 2020, p. 27): “Verumtamen si essent cohabitantes in uno loco deserto, credo ipsos posse invenire unum novum idoma eis commune. Necessaria tamen esset eis sensibilis demonstratio rerum inter eos, ut quando unus formet vocem ostendat alteri rem cui vult imponere, et quod illa vocis impositio memoriter retineatur penes utrumque vel alterum.” See Augustine, *Confessionum libri XIII*, I.8 (ed. Verheijen, 1981). Actually, the same reference could be found in Ps-Kilwardby, see Cesalli, de Libera, Goubier, Rosier-Catach, forthcoming, § 147.

arts masters wonder whether Hebrew is a natural language,¹²² Anonymous of Prague claims not only that speaking Hebrew is not a natural endowment but also that much learning and instruction (*multa doctrina et instructione*) is required for Jews. As Ebbesen pointed out, this suggests that “the author has some acquaintance with the situation among contemporary Jews,” which is notable since the other authors seem to be unaware that Hebrew is only, at that time, acquired as a second language.¹²³ Another remarkable sign of such an acquaintance with Hebrew is that he claims that producing words (*formatio vocum*) in Hebrew is easier than in any other language.¹²⁴ For this reason, he argues, the words of isolated children may be more similar to Hebrew than to any other language.¹²⁵ Ebbesen suggests that, “if the remark is not completely gratuitous, it suggests someone who has learned a bit of Hebrew himself and found it relatively easy.”¹²⁶ Therefore, Roger Bacon seems to be a good candidate because, according to Hackett, “sometime after 1248, he set aside the common scholastic ways of teaching to devote time to languages and experimental concerns.”¹²⁷ Moreover, in his *Opus tertium*,¹²⁸ when he wanted to resume its lost part of the *De signis*, Bacon shows that he dealt with the questions of innate language and acquisition.¹²⁹ However, if we look at Bacon’s corpus of mature works (1260s),

¹²² See Ebbesen’s dossier of texts on Psammetichus’ experiment (Ebbesen, 2017a).

¹²³ See Dahan, 1990, pp. 229–289; Ebbesen, 2020, p. 22.

¹²⁴ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 22.

¹²⁵ Anonymous of Prague, *Quaestio*, II.44 (ed. Ebbesen, 2020, p. 27): “Nec credo hoc esse verum quod famose dicitur quod quilibet puer non instructus ad loquendum loqueretur hebraice. Illi enim qui modo loquuntur hebraice, ut iudaei, egent necessario multa doctrina et instructione. Item, apud hebraeos est ars loquendi recte et non recte; ars autem non est circa ea quae sunt a natura, nullus enim eget arte ad comedendum etc.; ergo loqui hebraice non est a natura. Verumtamen, quia facilius est vocum hebraicarum formatio—ut in pluribus, dico—quam formatio vocum aliorum idiomatum, ideo credo quod pueri in deserto magis convenirent in suis vocibus cum vocibus hebraicis quam aliis alterius idiomatis, non penitus et universaliter.”

¹²⁶ Ebbesen, 2020, pp. 22–23.

¹²⁷ Hackett, 2020.

¹²⁸ Roger Bacon, *Opus Tertium, Opus Minus, Compendium Philosophiae* (ed. Brewer, 1859, p. 101).

¹²⁹ After the resumé of *De signis* that was given to us, Bacon says that in his *De Signis* he deals with the double sense of Scripture, Sacraments, the first language of Adam and: “et an pueri in deserto nutriti aliqua lingua per se uterentur, et si obviarent sibi invicem

in which he deals with Hebrew, there is no trace of a similar position on the configuration of vocal sounds. This is true for *Opus tertium*¹³⁰ and *Opus minus*,¹³¹ but also for his *Fragment of His Hebrew Grammar* or the *Notes* on Hebrew attributed to him by Anheim, Grévin, and Morard,¹³² although the latter *Notes* devote several pages to comparative studies of languages and their phonic features.¹³³

The attribution of our questions to Magister R. might be a very suggestive element to confirm the hypothesis of Roger Bacon. One could imagine that qq. 40–44, which seem to compose a unit, could be by Magister R., since they come after a part attributed to Magister R. himself (II.31) and before the attribution to Magister A. of q. 45.¹³⁴ As Ebbesen has shown, some questions attributed to one of them are placed among the parts attributed to the other master.¹³⁵ Moreover, even if the copyist could only have signaled a change of attribution, our part might still not be attributed to Magister R. because it could be by another author: nothing prevents group α from being composed of more than two authors. The first three questions (II.1, 2, 3),

quomodo mutuos indicarent affectus” (Roger Bacon, *Opus tertium*, p. 101). This indicates his acquaintance with this question, even though his commentary on *De anima* precedes his *De signis*. However, the questions are not exactly the same: Anonymous of Prague wonders whether a) natural language is innate to children educated in the desert without listening to language; and b) two children separated from each other will speak the same language, that is, if this natural language will be the same (Ebbesen, 2020, p. 26: “a) an ita insit homini naturalis loquela quod loqueretur quis etiam si ab infantia esset educatus in deserto neminem umquam audiendo; b) et si essent duo pueri [duo pueri] ab humana conversatione separati, etiam a se invicem, utrum, si ambo loquerentur, haberent eandem an diversam et diversam loquelam.”) In a similar but more general way, Bacon wonders a) whether children nourished in the desert would use some language for themselves; and b) in which way they would communicate if they met.

¹³⁰ Roger Bacon, *Opus Tertium, Opus Minus, Compendium Philosophiae* (ed. Brewer, 1859, p. 65).

¹³¹ Roger Bacon, *Opus Tertium, Opus Minus, Compendium Philosophiae* (ed. Brewer, 1859, p. 350).

¹³² Anheim, Grévin, Morard, 2001.

¹³³ The text is preserved in the Municipal Library, Toulouse, Ms. 402, ff. 233ra43–278vb [T] and in the Laurentian Library, Florence, S. Croce, Pl. XXV sin. 4, ff. 182ra–213vb [F]. *Correspondence* (F, ff. 188 rA–207vA10) presents many of these examples.

¹³⁴ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 9.

¹³⁵ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 24.

for instance, are not attributed.¹³⁶ Moreover, even if one keeps supposing that Magister R. could be Bacon, one will be quite disappointed looking at the questions on color. In his commentary on *De sensu et sensato* (ca. 1240), Bacon argues that light (*lux*) and color (*color*) are *species specialissime* of what is visible (*esse visibile*).¹³⁷ Magister R., conversely, denies this explicitly.¹³⁸

If one still believes that there is a way, or fertile ground, to attribute qq. 40–44 to Roger Bacon, I think that a doctrinal element is crucial. According to de Libera,¹³⁹ Bacon's *Summule dialectices* could be dated to the beginning of the 1250s, which would make it a work contemporary to our questions. A brief doctrinal comparison between the two texts shows theories that are hardly compatible. In his *Summule* Bacon distinguishes three senses of *vox*: most commonly it can be taken as sound; less properly as the sound of animals, which can distinguish sounds and communicate with one another (including humans); and more properly as the voice of some animals, such as oxen, which do not distinguish sounds.¹⁴⁰ This is a classification that has little to do with the *De anima*, which, indeed, is never mentioned. Hence, we might suppose that his question-commentary was written later. However, in the same section on *De voce*, Bacon admits that the intention of signifying (*intentio significandi*)¹⁴¹ is a criterion for distinguishing human/animal language, which Anonymous of Prague never mentions. Finally, in the *Summule* Bacon already assumes the thesis of the non-univocal signification to non-existing things.¹⁴² Of such a question, which is central to Bacon's semantics, there is no trace in qq. 40–43. Adding to this a brief lexical analysis that shows the differences between Bacon's

¹³⁶ Ebbesen, 2020, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Roger Bacon, *Liber De Sensu et Sensato. Summa de Sophismatibus et Distinctionibus* (ed. Steele, 1937, p. 48).

¹³⁸ Magister R., *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, II.28, f. 51vA (working transcription by J. Ottman): "Unde lux et color non sunt in eodem genere logico; sunt tamen eiusdem essentiae, sicut principium et principiatum." See Raizman-Kedar, 2007. I would like to thank Monika Mansfeld for introducing me to this interesting aspect of Roger Bacon's thought and his theory of color.

¹³⁹ Libera, 1986, p. 152.

¹⁴⁰ Roger Bacon, *Summulae dialectices*, I.2, §§ 10–13 (ed. Libera, 1986, p. 226).

¹⁴¹ Roger Bacon, *Summulae dialectices*, I.2, § 23 (ed. Libera, 1986, p. 222).

¹⁴² Roger Bacon, *Summulae dialectices*, II.1 § 611 (ed. De Libera, 1986, p. 287).

Summule and qq. 40–43,¹⁴³ and the doctrinal divergences just examined, I consider such an attribution to be highly unlikely.

Conclusion

The nature of the composite manuscript and the great difficulty inherent in understanding its composition and authorship can only lead to partial and partially hypothetical conclusions. However, this does not prevent us from appreciating the interest in a theory of everyday imposition of meaning that has similar pragmatic accents to Bacon's, albeit less systematic than Bacon. Compared to Bacon's theory, the consensual aspect of continuous imposition is privileged, and meaning becomes an everyday act of the speaker that must intercept the most frequently heard common use. There is too little textual basis to say whether Goubier's question can be answered positively, namely whether in some medieval conception of signification "meaning is use." Certainly, in a sense it might be admitted, but the fact that we possess only a few questions does not give us a clue as to whether, for example, for Anonymous of Prague there is an established first and default meaning from which the others depart. However, the Anonymous mentions only once the first institutor of language and puts him on the same level of every other speaker who can institute signs at her/his pleasure like the name-giver does (*non dico secundum placitum primi instituentis solum, sed secundum placitum cuiuslibet loquentis*). In doing this, he suggests the idea that there is no hierarchy between the first institutor and the other speakers and, therefore, there is no "default" meaning with a privileged role.

This work, however, leads to another final remark: if the hypothesis of "non-attribution" is sufficiently convincing, then we can imagine that an everyday imposition of words is not only Bacon's original idea but circulates in different forms and environments. The occasion for discussion might in fact be the question of Albert the Great, in which imposition and use are questioned and which Rosier-Catach had already indicated as the debate in which inscribe Bacon's position. This is not to say that Augustine

¹⁴³ I made a quick search for lemmas that seem to me characteristic of Anonymous of Prague, both in the *Summule* and the *De signis*, and I found: "cotidie" 0; "loquela" 0; "tota die" 4 [3 *DS*; 1 *SL*]; "vocis formatio" 1 [*DS*]; and "consensus" 0.

is not influential, that his role is less crucial, or that there are not intersections between Augustinian linguistics and the philosophy of language of the early arts masters, as we have seen for Anonymous of Prague (although, of course, they are stronger in the theological milieu, as in the case with Bacon and Olivi). Rather, Anonymous of Prague's questions seem to point in the same direction as recent scholarly tendencies to attenuate the opposition between an Aristotelian tradition, which should be more interested in the formal aspects of linguistic meaning, and an Augustinian and theological one, which is more attentive to pragmatic approaches.¹⁴⁴ If such considerations are consistent, perhaps the tradition of commentaries on Aristotle by arts masters might reveal further surprises.

¹⁴⁴ See, for instance, Marmo, 1995; Mora-Marquez, 2015 and her *Topica project*: <https://www.gu.se/en/research/topica-project>.

Anonymous Pragensis, *Quaestiones de ente et anima*, qq. 40–43
(ff. 54v–55r)

The text is preserved in a single composite manuscript: Prague, Metropolitan Chapter MS 80 (cited as P in note), described by Rega Wood at <https://rrp.stanford.edu/pragM80-xml.html>. The following edition presents three questions, numbered 40 to 43 according to Sten Ebbesen’s list of questions (Ebbesen, 2020).

As the copy is unique, it might be better to leave the orthography as faithful as possible to the text preserved by the manuscript. However, since the manuscript presents many morphological variations (*placitum/placidum*; *displicentia/displacentia*; *sed/set*; *tertius/tercius*; *aliqua/alico*; *heesdem/easdem* etc.), it is very hard to follow consistently such a criterion. Accordingly, I preferred to normalize the text according to classical orthography. However, I did not use classical diphthongs to preserve the Medieval Latin orthography, since the manuscript is uniform and consistent under this respect. As for punctuation and paragraphs, they are my own and follow the argumentation of the questions. I offer conjectural solutions and report errors by indicating the version of the manuscript both in the footnotes and in the text with the signs described below. For Aristotle’s texts I used the Bekker editions.

Such an edition has benefited from a partial transcription presented in Kölher (2014) and especially from the working transcription of the entire manuscript realized by Jennifer Ottman as part of the *Richard Rufus of Cornwall Project* coordinated by Wood and supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. They kindly shared it with me, and I am extremely grateful to them.

Sigla and Abbreviations

P	codex Bibliothecae Metropolitanae Pragensis MS 80
// 55 rA //	incipit columna sinistra folii 55 recto
<i>i.m. dext.</i>	in margine dextra
<i>i.m. sin.</i>	in margine sinistra
(?)	de lectione vocis praecedentis dubitare licet
< >	addendum censeo
[]	delendum censeo
[[]]	deletum habet codex
***	lacuna

Anonymous Pragensis
Quaestiones de ente et anima, qq. 40–43

Quaestio II.40

5

54 vB Postea queritur de voce quid addit vox supra sonum.

Et hoc solvit Aristoteles quando vult quod vox sit sonus aeris respirati reverberati ad tracheam arteriam cum aliqua imaginatione.

Ergo trachea arteria instrumentum vocis dici potest sed tamen non est vocis instrumentum secundum se totam sed secundum aliquid quod est in ea, ut pro pelliculam unam vel plures que extenduntur ex tran<s>verso intra tracheam arteriam, et tremit quando pellitur aer ad ipsam. Et quandoque tremit cum tanto impetu quod ille tremor efficit sonum audibilem, et ille sonus, cum fuerit emissus cum aliqua imaginatione, vox est. Quandoque autem tremit sed non cum tanto impetu ut ille tremor sit sonus, ut in simplici respiratione. 10 15

Et circa istam pelliculam faciunt ad vocis acuitatem hec tria, scilicet curvitas et tenuitas et magna tensio; et horum opposita faciunt ad vocis gravitatem sicut erat in sono circa cordam cithare. Curvitas autem illius pellicule provenit ex strictura trachee arterie et eius longitudo ex amplitudine et ideo pueri et mulieres acutiorem habent vocem quam viri. Tensio autem pellicule quedam est gratuita et tunc fit vox acutior, quedam naturalis causata a naturali complexionem: complexionem enim siccam illius pellicule consequitur possibilitas ad magnam tensionem; humidam vero eius complexionem consequitur labilitas et impossibilitas ad rigidam tensionem. Eius aut tenuitas vel spissitudo est ex eius naturali compositione. Placentia autem et displicentia in voce est ex planitia vel asperitate illius pellicule vel ceterorum meatuum per quos exit vox ita quod ex levitate causatur placentia, et ex asperitate displicentia. 20 25 30

Ex hiis subtiliter inspectis potest patere causa, ut credo, quia boves grossiorem et graviorem habent vocem in iuventute quam cum ad etatem pervenerint. Non potest vitulus in tantum tendere tracheam arteriam

9 Cf. Aristoteles, *De anima* II.8 (420b34) 18 acuitatem] acuciem P 19 magna] maxna P 29 planicia] planicie P 31 subtiliter] breviter P (*corr. i. m. dext.*) 33 arteriam] arteream P

ut magis graciliter aer expiratur sicut potest cum factus fuerit bos; nec etiam habet tantam vim expulsivam nec attractivam aeris sicut bos et cum minori impetu feritur trachea ab aere, et liberalius exit aer a trachea vituli quam bovis. Unde quando bos nititur viriliter vocem emittere, et
 5 cum omni impetu et vitulus similiter, vox bovis est acutior voce vituli. Sed, si non fiat visus emittendi vocem neque in bove neque in vitulo, vox bovis est gravior, ut patet in bubuctatione tauri sine violentia et tensione colli emissa; de hoc tamen planius tangetur in questionibus super librum *De animalibus*.

10

Quaestio II.41

55 rA Postea queritur super illud verbum quod est in diffinitione vocis scilicet quod vox sit cum imaginatione. Queritur vero si tussiens
 15 proponat aliquid et intendat significare illud per tussim aut eius tussis debeat dici vox an non.

Dicendum quod non. Sed verbum Aristotelis sic est intelligendum scilicet ut vox sit ita cum imaginatione ut recipiat formam ab illis quorum officium est ad hoc deputatum ut informet^{<ur>} ad expressionem concepte
 20 imaginationis.

Tussis autem etsi quandoque fiat cum imaginatione, non tamen recipit ille sonus formam talem, et ideo demeretur tussis dici vox.

Unde si queratur quid addit vox supra sonum, dicendum informationem.

25

Quaestio II.42

Postea queritur quid addit loquela super vocem et an aliquo modo sit dicendum quod bruta loquuntur quando per suas vociferationes significant
 30 aliis animalibus sue speciei suas imaginationes, ut gallina pullis et ovis agnis et gallus gallinis, et sic de ceteris animalibus completis.

1 graciliter] graeiliter P 6 emictendi] emictandi P | bove] bone P

14 Cf. Aristoteles, *De anima* II.8 (420b34) 24 Copyist leaves six white lines

31 gallinis] galluis P

Ad hoc dicendum quod potest dici loquela communiter et proprie, et magis proprie sive omnino proprissime.

Communiter igitur dicendo loquelam potest dici quod omne animal loquitur alteri quando per talem vociferationem significat ei talem imaginationem. Propri^e autem dicitur loquela non quelibet vocis formatio ad 5
imaginationem sed formatio litteralis. Magis sive maxime proprie dicitur loquela litteralis formatio vocis secundum placitum ad imaginationem significandam ab anima conceptam.

Homo igitur inter omnia animalia proprissime dicitur loqui, quia profert litterales vocis formationes, et eas instituit secundum sui placitum ad 10
significandum; non dico secundum placitum primi instituentis solum, sed secundum placitum cuiuslibet loquentis. Quilibet enim homo impositor est nominum omnium sui idiomatis. Unde illi qui uno modo imponunt unum habent idioma. Cum eedem sint species in anima apud omnes, ego 15
easdem voces eisdem speciebus significandis impono cotidie, quas frequentius audivi alios imposuisse. Unde discere loqui nihil aliud est quam discere impositionem vocum ab aliis factam et postea similiter imponere.

Ex hiis patet quid est respondendum ad hanc questionem, utrum aves instructe loquantur proprie. Aves enim proferentes voces litteratas cum 20
imaginatione defficiunt a proprietate loquele, eo quod non habent potentiam diversas voces formandi et eas secundum placitum [[in]] imponendi. Non enim potest avis optime instructus alteris vocabulis quibuscumque res appellare, sicut potest homo. Tota die enim potest homo novas voces rebus imponere si haberet cum quo posset mutuum consensum habere; 25
verumtamen aves bene instructe et formantes humanas voces cum eisdem imaginationibus humanis—idest habentes in animis earum vocum imaginationes—dicuntur loqui proprie respectu aliorum animalium preter hominem; respectu tamen loquele hominis nequaquam dicuntur loqui proprie.

Queritur tamen a quibusdam an hoc sit possibile scilicet quod aves 30
easdem concipian[n]t // 55 rB // imaginationes vocum humanarum quas addiscunt, quas quid^{em} imaginationes concipit homo per illas voces.

10 placitum] proplacidum P 13 imponunt] *add. i. m. sin.* 24 mutuum] mutium P
26 animis] animabus P 32 addiscunt] addiscit P

Et dicendum quod bene est hoc possibile. Videmus enim quod etiam bruta concipiunt significationes vocum simplicium sicut patet ad sensum de cane qui cognoscit nomen quo solet appellari; et similiter concipiunt significationes vocum complexarum ut patet sepiissime de equis
 5 et bobus et canibus. Unde, si haberent potestatem formandi huiusmodi voces quas cognoscunt, loquerentur cum imaginatione. Et ita—firmiter estimo—faciunt aves instructe ad loquendum; aliter enim non narrarent ea que vident, nisi significatum vocis videndo conciperent suo modo et illud voce sibi instructa proferrent. Significatum enim complexi universalis nullatenus potest aliquod brutum concipere in quantum universale.
 10 Non enim habet potestatem pertractandi aliquam significationem, et ideo tantum complexum singulare et sensibile potest concipere, sed non secundum quod valet ad cognoscendum universale: hoc enim solius rationis est.

Ex hoc patet quod canis currens ex tran<s>verso contra leporem non
 15 habet hanc universalem cognitionem quod quelibet duo latera trianguli sunt longiora tertio, vel quod corda sit brevior arcu; sed habet cognitionem huius particularis quod hec duo latera sunt longiora tertio, vel quod hec corda sit brevior hoc arcu: cognitionem dico sensitivam sive imaginativam.

20

Quaestio II.43

Postea queritur an hoc sit ex parte corporalium instrumentorum an ex parte virtutum anime, quod quedam bruta, ut quedam aves, possunt
 25 addi<s>cere loquelas et quedam animalia non.

Et dico quod non loquuntur aves pre ceteris brutis a<nima>libus eo quod aliquam virtutem anime habent nobiliorem quam cetera animalia, sed quia habent virtutem appetitivam proximiorum sive promptiorum ad formandum voces si<mi>les illis nostris quas audiunt, et[iam] etiam quia
 30 habent instrumenta vocalia habiliora ad litteralem formationem faciendam quam habeant alia a<nima>lia.

Unde forte non est reputandum pro stultitia quod cum pulli capiuntur a nido qui sunt instruendi ad loquendum, quod linguis eorum apponatur

3 “Nota” *i.m. dext. P* 7 “Nota” *i.m. dext. P* 11 “Nota” *i.m. dext. P* 16 “Nota” *i.m. dext. P*

29 nostris] nobis P | “Nota” *i.m. dext. P*

sanguis lingue hominis. Multum enim habilitat sanguis ille forte subtilis lingue humane vocalia avis instrumenta ad aptius movendum in formando vocem.

Hiis autem duabus de causis quarum una sumitur ex parte anime et altera ex parte instrumentorum corporalium accidit similiter (?) quasdam 5
aves debiliores esse ad loquendum quibusdam aliis brutis et etiam quibusdam aliis avibus.

Quod autem non modica causa formandi vocem constet in instrumentis vocalibus patet. Duorum enim hominum easdem virtutes anime 10
habentium, unus loquitur melius et alter peius, et hoc est propter meliorem et peiorem complexionem suorum vocalium instrumentorum.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to offer an edition of three anonymous questions on *De anima* II.8, contained in MS Prague, Metropolitan Chapter, M. 80, ff. 54vA–55vB and dated 1250–1260. The text offers an original theory of the everyday imposition of words. To present it, I (i) analyze the contemporary question-commentaries on *De anima* II.8; (ii) I present the theory of everyday imposition by discussing the analogies with, and differences from, Bacon’s contemporary pragmatic theory; and (iii) I discuss the hypothesis of the attribution of the text to Roger Bacon.

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ASSENSUM IN MENTE PROPHETAE: WILLIAM OF OCKHAM AND WALTER CHATTON ON PROPHECIES

Keywords: Walter Chatton, William of Ockham, Prophecy, Assensum,
God's Foreknowledge, Future Contingents, Externalism

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The theological debate between Chatton and Ockham about prophetic statements can be usefully approached by stating two key assumptions. First, the question about the truth-value of prophecies fits into a broader issue within the theological framework of the early 14th century debate that Russell Friedman has effectively described as the “search for simplicity.”¹ Indeed, the discussion on prophecies undergoes a significant paradigm shift during the transition from the 13th to the 14th century, moving as it does from the psychological approach of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, who link the inquiry to an analysis of the soul’s faculties, to the linguistic framework employed by Ockham and Chatton. For them, prophecies have to be intended from a linguistic point of view, that is, focusing on the sentences’ structure more than on events described.² Second, we intend to apply the epistemological externalism/internalism distinction³ to prophetic statements as a case study to show that assessing the degree of externalism displayed by Ockham

divina riguardo ai futuri contingenti di Guglielmo di Ockham, co-author R. Fedriga (Roma 2020) and the Italian edition of Peter Damian’s *De divina omnipotentia* (Milano 2020).

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¹ Friedman, 2013, p. 597: “God’s absolute simplicity [has to be intended as] the most important goal in Trinitarian theology.” See also Slotemaker, 2015, p. 689.

² Rodolfi, 2016, pp. 24–35 and pp. 194–212; Torrell, 1992, particularly pp. 558–560; Vauchez, 1990, pp. 291–683.

³ “Epistemological” has to be intended, here, according to what William Courtenay defines as “covenantal theology”, particularly in the case of social justification and acceptance of prophetic statements, see Courtenay, 1972, p. 186, note 3: “The concept of covenantal causality is not a small point in sacramental theology but rather one of the fundamental principles of the Nominalist worldview. Although not created by the Nominalists, it was utilized by Ockham and his followers to solve a wide variety of theological problems.” The covenantal theory of sacramental causality was based on a belief that certain causal relationships depend for their efficacy on nothing more than a contract or a more general ordination, agreement, or understanding that is accepted by all persons concerned. For a brief definition of the internalism and externalism distinction that we use in this article, see Pappas, 2014: “Internalism in the first instance is a thesis about the basis of either knowledge or justified belief. [...] A second form of internalism, connected just to justified belief but probably extendable to knowledge as well, concerns not access but rather what the basis for a justified belief really is. Mentalism is the thesis that what ultimately justifies any belief is some mental state of the epistemic agent holding that belief. Externalism on this dimension, then, would be the view that something other than mental states operate as justifiers.”

and Chatton's theories helps verify their internal coherence and efficacy with reference to their declared goals. As we shall see, (epistemological) realism and externalism do not necessarily coincide. In the search for divine simplicity, prophecies show (i) that the interplay between Ockham and Chatton is based on direct realism, but (ii) include different degrees of externalism depending on the ontological commitments of the different theories.

Let us start with the second point, namely externalism and ontological commitment. Recently, the distinction between externalism and internalism has been at the center of a debate on Ockham's theory of knowledge, with particular reference to acts of direct apprehension or intuitive cognition (*notitia intuitiva*). We shall not dwell here on the various positions that frame the current discussion, though we will make occasional reference to them.⁴ Rather, we shall focus on a specific issue that has led a crucial role within the debate between externalism and internalism, and which may be expressed as follows: if and only if, in Ockham's view, an intuition is the cognitive act through which one apprehends that a thing exists when it exists, and if the truth-maker of such a cognition is the direct and causal action of a *res* upon the knower's cognitive faculties, how is it possible (if at all) to have intuition of a non-existing or not yet present thing (*cognitio intuitiva de re non existente*), as in the case of prophecies?⁵

For at the heart of the question there lies a notion of intuition that lacks a corresponding object and yet is certain—accordingly to the act through which God generates in the *viator's* mind, namely the assent to a proposition which stands for (*supponit pro*) a thing's existence. Prophecies, that is to say statements that are necessarily true though they describe non-actual states of affairs, thus provide a fruitful case study to examine and legitimize the scientific status of theological knowledge as a science (i) either in the sense of the first definition of *scientia* in the prologue of Ockham's *Expositio*

⁴ See Brower-Toland, 2007, pp. 317–336; Brower-Toland, 2015, pp. 204–234; Brower-Toland, 2017, pp. 59–80; Fedriga, 2019, pp. 19–47; Karger, 2015, pp. 186–203; Klima, 2010, pp. 99–110; Normore, 2017, pp. 81–94; Panaccio, 2010, pp. 241–243; Panaccio, 2014, pp. 55–74; Panaccio, 2015, pp. 166–185.

⁵ See Karger, 1999, pp. 204–226; Karger, 2004, pp. 225–236; Pasnau, 1997; Tachau, 1988, pp. 123–129.

*in libros Physicorum*⁶ or (ii) in the sense of a soft implication (“bringing about”) between theological statements and the states of affairs they refer to.⁷

Future Contingents and Prophecies: Ockham’s Position

Ockham tackles the problem of prophecy principally in the *Tractatus de praedestinatione et de prescientia dei respectu futurorum contingentium*, even if some important remarks can also be found in the fourth question of the *Quodlibeta Septem*.⁸ His analysis works at the level of the logic of propositional rules: a prophecy is understood not as a cognitive state as it was in Aquinas’s *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate*,⁹ but as a contingent statement about future events, whose truth-value is determined by revelation. Ockham asks whether prophetic revelations “necessarily happen in the way they were revealed or not.”

⁶ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Expositio in libros physicorum*, Prologus (ed. Richter, Leibold, 1985, p. 5: 29–34): “Una est quod scientia uno modo est certa notitia alicuius veri; et sic sciuntur aliqua per fidem tantum. Sicut dicimus nos scire quod Roma est magna civitas, quam tamen non vidimus; et similiter dico quod scio istum esse patrem meum et istam esse matrem meam, et sic de aliis quae non sunt evidentiter nota; quia tamen eis sine omni dubitatione adhaeremus et sunt vera, dicimur scire illa.” As we shall see, the role of faith is crucial for the pragmatic and performative use of prophetic statements. About faith as a *habitus*, see Courtenay, 1990, p. 124.

⁷ About the notion of “bringing about” as a kind of “soft implication”, see Dummett, 1964, pp. 338–359. For an implicit source of this interpretation of causality in Ockham’s thought, see Guillelmus de Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem*, VI, q. 2 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 591: 47–55): “Secundo dico quod de necessitate [Deus] acceptat actum elicited ex caritate, loquendo de necessitate ex suppositione, quia haec consequentia est necessaria: Deus ordinavit et instituit per leges iam datas quod talis actus sic elicited sit acceptandus, igitur Deus illum actum iam elicited acceptat; quia antecedens non potest esse verum sine consequente, et tamen tam antecedens quam consequens est simpliciter contingens. Sicut ista consequentia est necessaria: Petrus est praescitus, igitur Petrus damnabitur; et tamen tam antecedens quam consequens est simpliciter contingens.”

⁸ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Tractatus de praedestinatione et de praescientia Dei respectu futurorum contingentium* (= *Tractatus de praedestinatione*), q. I, d. 8 (ed. Boehner, Brown, 1978, p. 513: 163–182); cf. also Guillelmus de Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem*, IV, q. 4 (ed. Wey, 1980, pp. 314–319). On prophecies and future contingents in Ockham’s work, in particular in the *Tractatus de praedestinatione*, see Fedriga, Limonta, 2019.

⁹ See question 12 “De prophetia” in Thomas de Aquino, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (ed. Dondaine, 1970–1976, pp. 365–414).

The key issue concerns the fatalistic implications that derive from propositions whose truth-value is guaranteed by their being objects of divine revelation but which, as far as their content is concerned, are still about indeterminate and “open” states of affairs. The issue of prophecy is addressed by means of a distinction that operates along two planes. First of all, there is the ontological plane, in which Jonah the prophet (Ockham’s example) prophecies at T_1 that event p will occur at T_2 . In order for this statement to be recognized as a prophecy, it is necessary to wait for the occurrence of event p at T_2 ; but the need for such a verification—which will be obtained only *a posteriori*—does not detract from the fact that even at T_1 the statement “ p will occur at T_2 ” was to be considered a true prophecy.¹⁰ Determinism, however, is ruled out, for the statement will be recognized as true only on a different, temporal/epistemological plane—that is, when it is possible to verify that the predicted state of affairs has actually taken place.

Prophecies, therefore, seem to belong with those statements to which one may apply Ockham’s distinction between past-tensed propositions *secundum rem* (i.e., propositions about events that actually took place in the past and are thus fixed by necessity, such as ‘Caesar crossed the Rubicon yesterday’) or *secundum vocem* (i.e., propositions that are only verbally about the past, such as ‘Peter was predestined to salvation’).¹¹

¹⁰ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Tractatus de praedestinatione*, q. 1, d. 8 (ed. Boehner, Brown, 1978, p. 513: 170–182): “Dico quod nullum revelatum contingens futurum evenit necessario sed contingenter. [...] omnes prophetiae de quibuscumque futuris contingentibus fuerunt condicionales, quamvis non semper exprimebatur condicio. Sed aliquando fuit expressa, sicut patet de David et throno suo; aliquando subintellecta, sicut patet de Ninive destructione a Iona prophetata: Adhuc post quadraginta dies et Ninive subvertetur, nisi scilicet poeniterent; et quia poenituerunt, ideo non fuit destructa.”

¹¹ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Tractatus de praedestinatione*, q. 1, s. 3 (ed. Boehner, Brown, 1978, p. 515: 208–220): “[...] aliquae sunt propositiones de praesenti secundum vocem et secundum rem, et in talibus est universaliter verum quod omnis propositio de praesenti vera habet aliquam de praeterito necessariam, sicut tales: ‘Sortes sedet’, ‘Sortes ambulat’, ‘Sortes est iustus’, et huiusmodi. Aliquae sunt propositiones de praesenti tantum secundum vocem et sunt aequivalenter de futuro, quia earum veritas dependet ex veritate propositionum de futuro; et in talibus non est ista regula vera quod omnis propositio vera de praesenti habet aliquam de praeterito necessariam. Et hoc non est mirabile, quia sunt propositiones verae de praeterito et de futuro quae nullam habent veram de praesenti, sicut istae ‘album fuit nigrum’, ‘album erit nigrum’, quae sunt verae, et sua de praesenti est falsa, scilicet ista album est nigrum.’” Unless otherwise stated, all translations are our own.

The prophetic sentence uttered at T_1 , e.g., ‘*Petrus praedestinatur*’, requires that the predicted event take place at T_2 ; thus, while the sentence may be said to be true already today at T_1 , insofar as it is guaranteed by the divine *auctoritas* that revealed it, it still needs to be completed by a series of intentional acts that determine the actual occurrence at T_2 of the state of affairs described at T_1 . It must therefore be understood as a proposition that is only verbally about the present, and as such escapes both Aristotle’s necessity of the present and the *necessitas per accidens* of the past.¹²

A prophetic statement, therefore, does not describe at T_1 a fact that is completely determined at T_2 , but defines the truth conditions of a future-tensed statement that always presents itself as an “implicit conditional proposition.” In case the event that functions as a premise takes place, the conditional proposition shall be true and necessarily so. The prophecy predicts the actual occurrence of an event in the following manner: the event will (necessarily) take place in case a (contingent) combination of situations occurs, which causes the event to become real. Thus, in Ockham’s view, the truth-value of prophecies is that of *necessitas consequentiae*, i.e., the necessity that follows from the logical implication between two propositions, and not the truth-value expressed by the *necessitas consequentis*, which presupposes that the future event will deterministically occur.

A prophecy institutes a relationship between the propositional complex and the *res*, in the absence of the *res* themselves. Prophetic statements, therefore, refer by virtue of *suppositio* to states of affairs that are real to divine cognition, but are not yet so in actuality—at least as far as the human intellect is concerned. The implicitly assumed premise is that the divine subject that uttered the prophecy provides sufficient guarantee for the inferences that one may draw from prophetic statements to accept and justify meritorious acts. The inferential process’s foundation thus remains externalist: the “intentional” act of belief does not grasp any mental object to which the *viator*’s mind turns and immediately assents, but anchors the inferential chain to the plane of *res*, even though the state of affairs (the *res*) is absent from the prophet’s mind—for it is, however, present in the mind of God, which

¹² Cf. Guillelmus de Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem*, IV, q. 4 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 316: 43–46). For Aristotle on necessity of the present and the past, see *De Interpretatione*, 9, 18a 28–34 (ed. Migliori, 2016, p. 228).

guarantees its truth-value. Still, prophecy is a divine truth that is expressed through the rules of human language.

Ockham's account may thus be defined as a kind of externalism¹³ that alleviates the rigid direct reference to the *res* through language, in particular categorematic and, above all, syncategorematic terms.¹⁴ The latter, indeed, though derived from conventional human languages, may provide the rule for forming true propositions, which, though expressed as statements, correspond to God's non-verbal and non-propositional knowledge. This is made possible, for Ockham, by the relationship of reverse subordination:¹⁵ concepts are subordinate to words, and this results into a semantic redefinition and a new employment of those concepts within propositions. One may thus affirm that in certain cases the signification of concepts takes place at the level of language pragmatics, since it depends on the conventional use the speaker makes of them.

The Ockhamist analysis of future contingents, prophecies and the intuitive cognition of non-existing things more shows the possibility of developing counterfactual logical models capable of guaranteeing a direct apprehension of the individual thing. This scenario, which as we shall see Chatton shares, is grounded in the following theses: (1) the meaning of words does not depend in the first instance on what we have in mind when we use them; (2) the content of our thoughts depends on the causal chain that produced those mental states; (3) the mere reference to mental states does not allow us to distinguish knowledge from belief, since this difference is grounded in the fact that these two kinds of knowing produce different kinds of causal chains.

¹³ For the different forms of externalism (linguistic, mental content and epistemic externalism), see Panaccio, 2015, pp. 166–167.

¹⁴ Categorematic terms have signification independently from other words. Syncategorematic terms such as “not”, “and”, or “if” need other words to have meaning within a statement. The latter kind of term has a crucial role, because they make possible the logical articulation of the proposition.

¹⁵ See Panaccio, 2015, pp. 179–180: “The process Ockham postulates, in short, is a reverse subordination. Instead of subordinating a spoken word to a concept, we now subordinate a concept to a spoken word. And as a result, we can use this concept in our mental propositions with this new signification, just as with any other mental term. [...] The suggestion, moreover, brings us a step further into externalism. What we are led to, if we follow the hint, is that the signification of some of our concepts can depend upon the conventional imposition of certain words by other speakers.” About this topic, see also Fedriga, 2019.

Although Ockham did not set out these three theses as parts of a single unified theory, it is undeniable that they, even taken singularly, point to what seems *prima facie* an externalist framework. But if this reading of Ockham is correct, we can admit a cognitive theory purely grounded in causal processes that does not need the metaphysical assumption of a causal theological determinism or temporal *necessitas per accidens*, where causal processes are necessarily linked to the existence of external things. In the case of prophecies, consistent with the principle of parsimony and divine simplicity, the causal chain in question simply describes the operative mode of the cognitive process in the absence of any external object. Ockham's omnipotent God can shorten or even annihilate the process that leads to the evident cognition (*notitia evidens*) of a not (yet) existing thing. In fact, Ockham admits the theological principle according to which God can cause, by himself, the effect of any other cause.¹⁶ This short path makes clear the real nature of this process, which is not in the natural course of things. Indeed, the difference between intuitive and abstractive cognition does not lie in their object, but in their effect. As Susan Brower-Toland rightly points out,

Ockham's appeal to the counterfactual dependence of an intuitive state on its natural cause is motivated by his views about the nature of causal dependence in general. And, as we have now seen, Ockham holds that such dependence is grounded in certain essential dispositional features of the effect-features that would remain even when its natural or *de facto* cause does not exist, or at least does not produce it. It is precisely these dispositional features of the effect that the supernatural cases highlight. Even when a given effect—an intuitive cognition, say—is produced by God acting alone, it will by nature be such that it is counterfactually causally dependent on its natural cause.¹⁷

In this context, phenomena such as miracles, prophecies, future contingents, sensory illusions, and the direct apprehension of absent or non-existing things are no longer objects of research for determining their psychological or epistemological status, and there is no longer any question as to which

¹⁶ Ockham defines intuition as a kind of cognition by virtue of which one knows that a thing exists when it exists, and that it does not exist when it does not exist. Intuitive cognition of non-existents may therefore occur, but such acts are supernaturally caused by God acting alone to produce them in an intellect.

¹⁷ Brower-Toland, 2017, p. 71.

function of the soul they belong, and how they are produced, for example, in causal processes. Rather, this kind of event is understood as a test to verify the coherence and stability of theories about the divine order of the world.¹⁸

Belief as *Regula*: Logic and Pragmatics of Prophecy

In the prologue to the *Expositio in libros Physicorum*, Ockham lists four possible definitions of scientific knowledge (*scientia*), which go back to Aristotle. The first claims that science may be identified with knowledge grounded on assent given to propositions that are considered true.¹⁹ Divine *auctoritas*, expressed in *fide digni* statements (called *suppositiones* by Ockham), functions in this case as the necessary premise (*regula*)²⁰ that leads the argumentative chain to true conclusions in the modern sense of ‘necessary hypothesis’ or ‘postulate’, which is the meaning attributed to the term *suppositio* in many 13th-century commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics*.²¹

Such an *auctoritas* constitutes a normative and prescriptive ground that can indicate the correct way of performing cognitive acts and the will’s choices (in the sense expressed by Michael Dummett’s notion of “bringing about”) without thereby causally determining the contents and truth-values of our items of knowledge. In Ockham’s view, therefore, prophecies are to be understood as ‘signs’ starting from the certainty of the ground, which functions as a rule. Prophecies supply a paradigmatic model for the way the things must connect to one another through cognitive acts, as explained in the *Ordinatio*; at the same time, they function as precepts whose normative force applies to human conduct on the path to salvation. Prophecies are thus

¹⁸ On this meaning of *ordinatio*, see Courtenay, 1990, p. 121.

¹⁹ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Expositio in libros physicorum*, Prologus (ed. Richter, Leibold, 1985, pp. 5–6: 29–34).

²⁰ In the *Summa logicae* Ockham employed the term *regula* to name the guarantee of correctness on the basis of which an argumentative chain can arrive at true conclusions; see Guillelmus de Ockham, *Summa logicae* (ed. Boehner, Gál, Brown, 1974, p. 334: 10–14).

²¹ It must be pointed out that the term *suppositio* understood in this way has a different meaning from the one it usually has in Ockham’s works. In the *Summa logicae*, for instance, the term *suppositio* indicates the referential property that allows words to replace things within propositions, directly anchoring the logical plane to the ontological one.

linguistic indications—or norms—that outline what might be defined as the “pragmatics of a theological language”.²²

The *Venerabilis Inceptor*’s position crucially hinges on the notions of acts of belief and logical-demonstrative procedures. This is made evident by another *locus* on prophecies, which has received less attention than the *Tractatus*. It is the fourth question of the fourth *Quodlibeta Septem* (*Utrum Deus possit revelare alicui notitiam evidentem futurorum contingentium*), particularly the third *dubium* concerning *qualem notitiam habuerunt prophetae de facto talium futurorum*:

[o]ne can reply that the prophets had this sort of evident knowledge of future contingents. Alternatively, one can reply that God revealed such truths to them simply by causing faith in them. But I do not know what in fact the case is, since this has not been revealed to me.²³

In the context of prophecies, the role of ground is performed by the certainty of revelation and thus by the divine world-order; they are not simply objects of the believer’s faith, but they constitute the premises of an argumentative procedure in the modern sense of “necessary hypotheses” or “postulates”. The *auctoritas* of prophetic statements—and their source, that is to say divine foreknowledge—are thus both necessary and indemonstrable, and in this respect they are similar to the postulates of Euclidean geometry.²⁴ Prophetic revelation is an act that produces knowledge in the form of an assent (*fidem*, endowed with truth)²⁵ given to statements whose terms immediately replace states of affairs, even though such an assent

²² On the pragmatic meaning of the prophecies, see Piron, 2014, pp. 255–286.

²³ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem*, IV, q. 4 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 318: 92–95; trans. Freddoso, Kelley, 1991, p. 262).

²⁴ At the end of the first question of the *Tractatus de praedestinatione* Ockham uses *suppositio* but not to indicate the referential property of a term in the context of the proposition (see Guillelmus de Ockham, *Summa logicae*, ed. Boehner, Gál, Brown, 1974, pp. 11–12), but as synonymous with “postulate”, following William of Moerbeke’s translation of the Aristotelian term “hypothesis” (Aristoteles, *Analytica Posteriora*, I [A], 10, 76b [ed. Migliori, 2016, p. 892: 23–29]). See also William of Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, q. 1 (ed. McCord Adams, Kretzmann, 1979, pp. 45–53), where *suppositio* is always translated as “assumption”.

²⁵ See the first definition of *scientia* in Guillelmus de Ockham, *Expositio in libros physicorum*, Prologus, § 2 (ed. Richter, Leibold, 1985, pp. 5–6: 29–34).

cannot become in turn an object of knowledge, since it is not an object but a mental state that allows one to gain access to states of affairs.

In this case, the *Venerabilis Inceptor's* position seems to be an externalist one: intuitive cognition is always an act through which the intellect turns to things directly. However, in responding to Claude Panaccio, Susan Brower-Toland has convincingly pointed out two cases that Ockham accepts and that undermine a purely externalist reading of his theory of perceptual knowledge: namely, the case of the intuition of a distant thing, which is caused by God, and the case of the intuition of a non-existing object or no longer existing object, which is conserved by God.²⁶ To these two, we may add the case of prophecy. As we saw, in Ockham's view prophecies cannot be understood as holding a merely descriptive function. Insofar as they are implicit conditional statements, they predict the *viator's* capacity to correctly connect the terms of the statements that come from God's knowledge and use them as a moral guide. In this context, the connection is operated by syncategorematic terms like *si* or *et*, as we shall see in Chatton's theory. These terms, which derive from the syntax of historical languages, perform an essential semantic and pragmatic function from both a moral and a cognitive point of view. They give the will a directive and allow the intellect to correctly connect the terms in formulating statements.

Res as Truth-Makers: Prophecies and Cognitive Questions in Chatton's *Reportatio*

Ockham's specific position is shaped by the interaction of two conversational communities,²⁷ a diachronic and a synchronic one. The former is provided by the theological tradition on prophecies, which started in the 12th and 13th centuries as a reflection on the status and function of the soul's cognitive faculties but gradually shifted over the course of the 13th and 14th centuries, finally taking a "linguistic turn" with William of Ockham, whose position

²⁶ Brower-Toland, 2007, pp. 326–327.

²⁷ For the sense, here, of the term "conversational community", see Gelber, 2004, pp. 12–21.

was to become the *opinio communis* within the 14th-century theological debates on prophetic statements.²⁸

Ockham's synchronic conversional community, on the other hand, is supplied by the theological-philosophical debates taking place in Oxford in the first two decades of the 14th century, which revolved around the distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, and the epistemological problems that issue from that distinction. A vast number of scholars and theologians formed the Oxonian community, at different times and in different ways. We may roughly group them as follows: Henry Harclay, William of Alnwick and Richard Campsall, who were active before Ockham's arrival; Robert Graystones, John of Reading, Hugh Lawton, John of Rodington, Richard FitzRalph and Walter Chatton, who animated the debate in the first two decades of the 14th century; and finally, Robert Holcot, William Crathorn and especially Adam Wodeham, representing the generation of scholars active in the 1330s.²⁹

Here, we shall focus on the position held by Walter Chatton, with whom Ockham engaged in a constant critical exchange. We shall refer in particular to the distinctions 38–41 from the first book of the *Reportatio Super Sententias* and the questions 26–29 from the *Quodlibeta*.³⁰ The first point to consider is the relationship between *res* and statements in the case of prophecies. In *Quaestio Secunda*, article 1 of distinctions 40–41 in the *Reportatio*, Chatton focuses on the act through which divine intellect gives its assent to a state of affairs, thus certifying its truth. Chatton wonders whether such an assent is given to a propositional complex or rather directly to things. The answer leaves little room for doubt:

[i]t is not necessary that one always assents to a complex, but one can assent to the thing immediately signified by the complex; and for this

²⁸ For a brief account of the theories on prophecy between the 13th and the first half of the 14th century, and for a summary bibliography, see Fedriga, Limonta, 2015, pp. 399–401.

²⁹ Grellard, 2014, pp. 61–108; Perini Santos, 2006, pp. 57–128; Tachau, 1988, pp. 157–314.

³⁰ See Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio super Sententias: super Librum I* (= *Reportatio*) (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002). We would like to thank Rondo Keele for having made the transcription of the questions 26–29 from the manuscript (Paris BN MS lat. 15805, ff. 54ra–60rb. 26) of the *Quodlibeta* available to us.

reason, in order that God assent to a thing signified by ‘a is’, it is not necessary that God assents to the proposition but to the thing.³¹

A similar non-propositional answer is given to the question concerning divine knowledge: “God does not assent to a thing mediately by assenting to a proposition but to the thing immediately.”³²

Let us dwell on divine knowledge in particular, since in Chatton’s view this is the model for any other form of knowledge. Divine knowledge is not to be understood as an act that is separate from God himself. Thus, the statement ‘God cognizes *a*’ simultaneously attests to and certifies the existence of an omniscient God and the fact that the contingent fact *a* will occur. These are expressed by the two statements ‘There is an omniscient God’ and ‘The contingent state of affairs *a* will occur’.³³ Each statement, in order to be true, must be anchored to the temporal instant (whether past, present or future) in which the state of affairs it describes is real. For this reason, the statement ‘This is true, that Socrates will be seated’ cannot be true, for it needs a truth-maker in the present when the state of affairs *a* (the being seated of Socrates) is not yet in the present. By contrast, the statement ‘This will be true, that Socrates is seated’ is true.

Assent, Prophecy and Temporality

In Chatton’s account, assent—and the temporal mode of its relation to the state of affairs it refers to—are the key aspects of the cognitive process involved in prophetic statements. In distinction 38 of the *Reportatio*, when talking about prophecy in the context of divine foreknowledge, Chatton

³¹ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, qq. 40–41, q. II, art. 1 (ed. Wey, Etkorn, 2002, p. 395): “[n]on oportet assensum esse semper complexo, sed potest esse immediate rei significatae per complexum; et ideo ad hoc quod Deus assentiat rei significatae per istam ‘a est’, non oportet quod assentiat propositioni, sed rei.”

³² Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, qq. 40–41, q. II, art. 1 (ed. Wey, Etkorn, 2002, p. 395): “Deus non assentit rei mediante assensu propositioni, sed rei immediate.”

³³ Cf. Keele, Pelletier, 2018: “Chatton’s view is that the necessity we detect in ‘God knows *a*’ attaches to God as a necessary cognizer, i.e., it attaches to the divine intellect alone, not to the objects it cognizes or to some distinct, determinate body of truths called ‘God’s knowledge’. It is almost as if, for Chatton, ‘God cognizes [future contingent] *a*’ simply means, ‘the all-seeing God exists and contingent *a* will exist’.”

claims that “there is no adequate mode to express divine foreknowledge”³⁴ and then specifies:

When God causes assent in the prophet’s mind about a thing that will be, that assent is true, otherwise God could not make sure the prophet about future things. And that assent has the same meaning of the statement “this thing will be”; therefore, if the assent is true, the statement will be true.³⁵

The (necessarily true) assent that God induces in the prophet’s mind does not produce in it a cognitive act whose truth-value is fixed by the actual or present occurrence of the relevant state of affairs. Rather, it certifies, on the one hand, that the *res* are disposed as the terms which, in the linguistic context of the *complexum*, substitute for them, and, on the other, that it is in the future: “God does not cause the assent in the mind of the prophet by which he assents that it [the thing] is in reality but that it will be in reality.”³⁶

The stress that Chatton places on temporality is decisive because in his view it is the simultaneity between states of affairs or occurrences that functions as the truth-maker’s rule, as well as the statement itself. That is, the *complexum* is true only when it is capable of grasping a present state of affairs, which is different from Ockham’s view. In distinction 38 of the *Reportatio*, the statement ‘God knows *a* will be’ must be understood as equivalent to ‘God knows this, and it will be’.³⁷ The key here is the syncategorematic term “and”, which links divine cognition to the occurrence of the “true” state of affairs, and is thus what makes the inference true. The term “and”, joining as it does the two statements, determines a simultaneity relationship that is also a logical implication.

³⁴ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 38, q. u. (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 350, n. 13).

³⁵ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 38, q. u. (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 350, n. 16): “[quando] Deus causat assensum in mente prophetae de re quae erit, ille assensus est verus, aliter Deus non posset certificare prophetam de re futura. Et ille assensus significat idem cum propositione tali ‘haec res erit’; igitur si assensus est verus, propositio erit vera.”

³⁶ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 38, q. u. (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 350, n. 16): “Deus non causat in mente prophetae assensum, quo assentiat sic esse in re, sed sic esse venturum in re.”

³⁷ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 38, q. u., art. 1 (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 352, n. 28).

On the two sides of the syncategorematic term, the ontological component ('this will be') has priority over the epistemological one ('God knows this'). From the point of view of human temporality, divine cognition precedes the coming of the Anti-Christ, since God's acts of apprehension exist from eternity. With respect to a statement's truth, the states of affairs precede the uttering in the case of prophecies and future contingents. The correspondence between statement and state of affairs is the truth-maker of divine knowledge too, though the latter always has all occurrences in the eternity of its present in view; this is what guarantees the necessary, universal and timeless character of its truths.

When prophecies are considered from the point of view of human apprehension, the prophet's assent (and thus his knowledge) is not aimed at the future state of affairs but always at their actual occurrence: the prophet does not assent to a future occurrence, but to the moment in which that occurrence becomes present in the future. Before the state of affairs is realized, the assent is 'neither true nor false'.³⁸ This does not entail that the prophet has *scientific knowledge* of the thing in the sense of having complete knowledge of it, but only that he has a cognition of it, i.e., merely an apprehension of the thing.³⁹ It is the divine *auctoritas* that, in the form of a testimony, guarantees the correspondence between terms, statements and *res* that are not yet actual.

The Causal Power of the *Res*

Thus, language functions as a guide for ontology. It points us towards those *res* that constitute the truth-makers of linguistic statements; and this justifies Chatton's interest for the mechanisms that regulate the functioning of terms and propositions. Meaning and reference are not located on two different

³⁸ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 40–41, q. 1, art. 2 (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 383, n. 62): "Sed est ne assensus verus? Dico quod nec verus nec falsus ante a, sed tunc primo est assensus verus quando ponitur res, quia assensum esse verum importat quod assensus sit, et quod illud sit in re cui assentitur."

³⁹ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 38 (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 355, n. 42): "Utrum autem cognitio Dei sit assensus vel scientia, et non solum apprehensio, posset dici quod cognitio Dei non est assensus nisi re posita; et quando res est futura, potest dici quod cognitio non est scientia."

levels, but overlap to the point of coinciding on the ontological level of the *res*: the linguistic statement does not produce meaning but feeds on it, latching onto the things that the terms describe. With reference to this, Rondo Keele has talked of a “causal power” held by the *res* in relation to propositional *complexa*, and such a reading clearly implies a definite externalist reading of Chatton’s epistemology.⁴⁰

The case of prophecies is exemplary in this context. According to Chatton, God makes prophecies possible and truthful by inducing the prophet’s mind to grant assent to states of affairs that, insofar as they are in the future, are beyond the human intellect’s cognitive capacities. The assent given to the predicted things or state of affairs has a determinate truth only in the form of a causal inference, direct and externalist, linking the states of affairs and the statement describing them at a future time. God, on his part, does not cognize through language. Prophetic statements are but the means through which God witnesses and communicates a kind of knowledge that, by its very nature, is not discursive.⁴¹ Through the language, God does not know but, more properly, communicates.

In Chatton’s view, propositional analysis is not an end in itself nor is it used to determine the statement’s rules and their use in linguistic practice, which it is in Ockham’s soft externalism. Rather, propositional analysis grounds any possibility of linguistic reference in the direct and necessary link between mental language and the ontological level of *res*. It is true that in the *Reportatio* and in particular in distinction 38, Chatton explores a solution in which future contingents can be true if they are correctly formulated from the point of view of propositional rules⁴² but it must be kept in mind that this does not mean that the linguistic plane is independent from that of the *res*.

⁴⁰ Keele, Pelletier, 2018: “We are to imagine, within the absolute power of God, whether the causal powers attributed to the kinds of entities in a given ontological snapshot would be sufficient to make the proposition in question turn out true. [...] if the causal powers of those entities are found wanting on the basis of consistency and yet the proposition in question were known to be true, then another kind of entity, with its attendant causal powers, would have to exist.”

⁴¹ Gualterus de Chatton, *Reportatio*, d. 40–41, q. 2 (ed. Wey, Etzkorn, 2002, p. 393, n. 3): “Certum est quod non sunt propositiones in mente Dei, nec assentit nostris propositionibus, igitur.”

⁴² See Bornholdt, 2017, p. 348.

From the Logic of Belief to the Logic of Witnessing

The absence of an isomorphic relation between *res* and *complexa* makes simultaneity the necessary condition for a statement's truth. For Chatton, the assent that God induces in the prophet's mind is an *assensum in absentia* so to speak, but such an absence actually consists simply in being at a temporal removal from a state of affairs. Such an assent replaces the inferential chain or the causal power of the *res* that would normally produce assent in the intellect. In so doing, the prophet becomes a witness: in the present of his prophetic uttering, it is possible for men heeding it to grasp the concurrence between word and event that mundane temporality locates on two different levels, present and future.

This is why prophecies may not be simply considered as a sub-category of future contingents, that is rather a kind of thought experiment. Prophecy is a useful case study for thinking about how a community of believers can be semantically and pragmatically oriented to the path of salvation. Even though they are linguistically similar, prophetic statements have more "power" when compared to future contingents because of their theological meaning. What makes prophecy stand out is the peculiar figure of the prophet, who is placed within a complex conceptual framework based on the notions of assent and testimony. The former moves along the plane of mental language, in the form of linguistically formulated consent; the latter refers to a state of affairs that it guarantees and bears witness to. But assent and testimony intertwine, as the *assensum* is given to things and not to words, while testimony works as proof of states of affairs that is nonetheless formulated in linguistic form.

As Bornholdt rightly emphasizes, from the *Reportatio* to questions 27–29 of the *Quodlibeta* Chatton effectuates a crucial transition.⁴³ He shifts his enquiry from the relationship between *res* and statements to the ground of the prophetic statements' truth-value. On our reading, the latter hinges on the role of the prophet as a witness. An indication of such a shift is Chatton's insistence on the issue of the deceiving God, which becomes central in *Quodlibeta*, questions 27–29. Indeed, at the beginning of question 27, Chatton writes:

⁴³ Bornholdt, 2017, p. 424.

The second problem is whether it lies in the power of any free agent whatsoever to make the sayings, oaths, and expressions of God false and that God deceives men and will make them believe something is going to be that will not be and that he knows will not be.⁴⁴

If God can deceive us, then the truth and the value of the Holy Scriptures should be questioned, which is surely a crucial point.

In Chatton's view, knowledge is an inferential causal chain that can only start from a non-inferential knowledge of facts, i.e., an individual, existing *res*. On the basis of such a realist externalism, he rejects any hypothesis of a deceptive God or of an intuitive cognition of a non-existing thing.⁴⁵ Chatton's insistence on this matter signals a shift of attention from prophetic statements to the prophet himself, who is not so much held responsible for the truth content of his own statements (since this is guaranteed by the direct reference to the *res*) as much as he is considered the guarantor of those statements by to those who heed them and receive guidance from them. The absolute power of God is able to generate any sort of inferential chain, even one that leads one to assert with certainty the existence of something that does not exist. In this case, the role of the prophet consists in bearing witness to the direct knowledge chain represented by the prophetic revelation.

Conclusion

To conclude, a question arises: why does God decide to indicate future events through prophecies? Given that this cannot happen out of necessity, prophecies (and miracles) must be intended to help the deficient *viator*. Because of congenital weakness of intellect and wisdom, the *viator* needs conceptual clarity and the right moral guidance. Prophecies consist in *telling* so that human beings *understand*. They are signals on the path of the *viator*, ontological or linguistic marks that talk to man. Miracles show God's

⁴⁴ Gualterus de Chatton, *Quodlibeta* 26–29, q. 27, art. 1 (ed. Keele, pp. 187–188: 20–23): “Secundum dubium est utrum sit in potestate cuiuslibet agentis liberi facere dicta et iuramenta et locutiones Dei esse falsas et quod Deus decipit homines et fecerit eos credere aliqua esse ventura quae non fient et quae ipse scit non fore.”

⁴⁵ Gualterus de Chatton, *Quodlibeta* 26–29, q. 27, art. 1 (ed. Keele, p. 199: 397–399): “Quantum ad istum articulum non concedo pro nunc Deum posse immediate alios fallere. Hoc enim apparet mihi modo magis irrationale quam alias apparuit. Iuxta ista quaero.”

absolute power and the divine origin of every possible order of the world. Prophecies show the righteous way of human action. Prophecies do not destabilize this divine order but rather reveal its coherence—most of all through rare cases and contingent events—showing how God’s power is such that it can turn even the infraction of natural laws to the good.⁴⁶ In fact, miracles and prophecies are not only events located in time, but also (and most of all) the proof of God’s existence to humankind. Prophetic propositions are not only descriptive. They are “productive” of words about a current state of affairs that they contribute to determine (like performative speech acts).⁴⁷ Prophecies must be intended within their theological finalities in the divine order of the world (like showing God’s providential design of history and the path for human souls’ salvation) and not relative to divine nature, which remains unchanged, but in a pragmatic context, that is the human path to salvation. God seconds it, disclosing counterfactual states of things, and giving *viatores* all the elements for the right conduct among those choices.

Though far from being exhaustive, our analysis allows us to draw some conclusions. First, the epistemological categories of internalism and externalism may function as guiding criteria for identifying the degree of ontological commitment displayed by a theory, and thus whether this theory leans more towards one pole of the cognitive relationship or the other—whether towards the cognizing subject or the cognized object. This allows one to establish a parameter or at least an indicator of the theory’s efficacy and internal coherence, that is, which objects they allow us to know and whether there is consistency between the latter and their ontological commitment.

Secondly, Chatton’s theory of assent is aimed at framing prophecies as pragmatic rules that are meant to guide the *viator*. Chatton’s assertions and Ockham’s claims about prophecies as implicit conditional statements seem to belong to the same theological milieu, confirming Brower-Toland’s interpretation of a kind of debate between the two Franciscan theologians.⁴⁸

Finally, while the different theories we examined both display varying degrees of internalism/externalism, they all rely on a fundamental realism that none of the authors seems to undermine, neither Chatton with his “hard” externalism, nor Ockham with his “soft” externalism. The existence of a solid

⁴⁶ Normore, 1985, pp. 254–258.

⁴⁷ Austin, 1962, pp. 4–11.

⁴⁸ See Brower-Toland, 2015.

metaphysical grounding, represented by the *res* and by necessity established in the divine order of the world, is the basic foundation for all the theories we examined, and not an issue they attempt to resolve. Such theories all share the same realist framework—characterized by that common “search of simplicity” specific to the conversational community of 13th–14th century theologians described by Friedman in the context of Trinitarian theology and extended here, as we have seen, to the debates about prophecies. These theories differ from one another simply by virtue of their degree of oscillation within it. Here is where all the difference in the contemporary debate on externalism lies; in today’s discussion the situation is reversed and the issue of the ontological grounding is precisely the point of contention.

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Abstract

The subject of this article is the intertwining between Walter Chatton and William of Ockham's theories about the cognitive nature of prophetic statements, a topic in the theological debate of the early 14th century, where the two Franciscans, albeit from different positions, played a crucial role. Starting from recent interpretations of Chatton and Ockham's cognitive theory in terms of the distinction between externalism and internalism, and from a reading of some sources where the topic of prophecy is crucial (for Chatton: *Reportatio Super Sententias*, I, dd. 38–39, the less investigated distinction 41 and *Quodlibeta*, questions 26–29; for Ockham: *Tractatus de praedestinatione et de praescientia Dei respectu futurorum*

contingentium, question 1 and *Quodlibeta*, question 4), we will apply the externalism/internalism distinction to the case study of prophetic statements. On the basis of the epistemological questions about prophecies, future contingents and divine foreknowledge, we will show the outcomes as pragmatic rules of this kind of statements in both conceptual frameworks analyzed.

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CONCEPTION, CONNOTATION,
AND ESSENTIAL PREDICATION:
PETER AURIOL’S CONCEPTUALISM TO THE TEST
IN II *SENTENTIARUM*, D. 9, Q. 2, ART. 1

Keywords: Peter Auriol, Connotation, Essential Predication, Conceptualism

Introduction

Peter Auriol’s theory of cognition is undoubtedly the part of his thought which has been most thoroughly scrutinized by Medieval scholars. It is quite surprising, however, that one of the noetic tools which Auriol most insistently makes use of to shape his own position has managed to escape

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the attention of a great part of contemporary scholarship.¹ This is the notion of connotation, which, in contrast, for example, with Ockham's detailed treatment, Auriol thinks of just as the semantic property of some terms to have a primary and a secondary signification which are in fact implied, so that one cannot think of the former without also thinking of the latter. The aim of this paper, then, is to show that Auriol's use of connotation as applied to intellectual cognition is fundamental to his moderate conceptualism, as it is presented, while partly taken for granted, in Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1. Such a paper, then, must be thought of as an introduction to Auriol's text and a discussion of the arguments there contained. To this purpose, the first part of this paper will be devoted to a brief presentation of Auriol's conceptualism. In the second part, Auriol's theory of essential predication will be presented. This task will be accomplished by taking into account an objection to Auriol's own view, which he himself discusses, as well as the answer he provides to it. In the third part, I will present my claim that Auriol's answer as well as his theory of essential predication can only make sense when read against the background of his theory of connotation as applied to intellectual cognition. Finally, I will offer a semi-critical edition of Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1.

Auriol's Moderate Conceptualism

One of the most fundamental claims of Auriol's ontology is that individuality is a primitive feature of reality: everything that exists, insofar as it exists, is an individual entity.² The result of his radically lean ontology is that no essences, common natures or whatever form of universals *in re* are to be posited in the extra-mental reality. The world is solely made of singulars and, independently of the mind's act, numerical unity is the only form of real

¹ Remarkable exceptions are Conti, 2000, pp. 99–116; Friedman, 2013; Halverson, 1998. For Auriol's employment of connotation within theological discussions, see Fornasieri, 2018, pp. 231–274; Paladini, 2018a, pp. 203–238; Paladini, 2018b, pp. 455–498. On connotation as applied to intellectual cognition, see also Fornasieri, 2021.

² Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 3, art. 3 (ed. Fornasieri, 2019, vol. II, p. 50): “[...] omnis res eo quod est singularis est.” On Auriol's treatment of individuality see Fornasieri, 2019; Friedman, 2000; Suarez-Nani, 2009.

unity to be possibly given in the extra-mental reality. The task of this paper is to present a survey of Auriol's criticism of metaphysical realism and offer a discussion of his defense of the irreducible singularity of the extra-mental reality.³ What is central to my analysis, then, is to see how his moderate conceptualism is linked to his theory of essential predication and to his claim that intellectual cognition is a connotative notion. To give some more insight into this issue, I will show that, for Auriol, postulating the existence of a common nature simultaneously shared by each and every individual of a given species would inevitably mean for him to compromise both the unity and the unicity of primary substances, which instead is one of Auriol's most cared-for philosophical thesis.

This interpretation becomes apparent by pointing out just one of the arguments Auriol provides to reject realism and defend his claim about the primitive feature of individuality, as it is found in distinction 9, question 2, article 1 of his *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*. The target of Auriol's criticism is a type of realism, which he does not hesitate to define "Platonic". It is not easy to discern whom (if any in particular) Auriol might have had in mind here, though. Upon closer inspection, one needs to make no particular efforts to realize that Auriol takes that label in a quite loose sense, that is, to refer even to a less extreme form of realism, which one would not immediately reduce to the genuine form of exaggerated realism attributable to Plato. Auriol, in fact, seems to think of as "Platonic" whatever doctrine, according to which the semantic values of our general terms (say: "animal", "human being", etc.) are some kind of F-ness really borne by and fully inhering in each and every individual belonging to the F species, independently of any cognitive act. In this regard, it is no coincidence that, in contrast to what one might expect, Auriol does not take the Platonic Ideas to be as something existing in a world of pure, fully existent forms, entirely detached from our contingent reality, but as something inhering in and still somehow different from the particulars in which it inheres. Upon these considerations, then, it seems that the most sensible reading of Auriol's words is that by "Platonism" here he is referring to a number of authors (*multi*), whose views share some basic philosophical theses, regardless of the specific differences that distinguish their theories. By "Platonism", in other

³ A full understanding of Auriol's view on the matter, as well as his criticism of realism can be easily obtained through the text in the appendix.

words, Auriol seems to have in mind whatever kind of doctrine aims at granting some form of mind-independency to what is signified through our universal concepts. In this regard, Auriol's arguments should therefore be taken as addressed against not just an extreme, Platonic form of realism, but also against much more moderate forms of it.⁴

This view easily discloses once that Auriol's reasoning is taken into account. As he puts it: if something like a specific unity (i.e., common nature) were ever to exist in the extra-mental reality, as a feature indifferently instantiated in each individual of a given species, then essential predication (and thereby scientific knowledge) would never be possible. In fact, by granting the existence of a F-ness fully occurring in each individual of the F-species, a realist of the sort of which Auriol is dealing with here implies that that F-ness occurs in each of those particular entities (1) in its entirety and (2) independently of any cognitive act.⁵ Upon this view, then, F-ness would occur as something instantiated by and therefore identical with its own suppositum, while still being somehow distinct in each of the supposita in which occurs.⁶

⁴ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, pp. 107–108: 29–20). See also Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, pp. 114–115: 12–11). It is no coincidence that Auriol relies on Aristotle and the so-called “argument of the third Man” to support his own view against this form of realism. On this point and Auriol's use of Aristotle, see Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 110: 13–15).

⁵ See, for example, Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, pp. 107–108: 29–20; p. 109: 7–14; p. 110: 16–20).

⁶ When it comes to finding out whose opinion could have been the target of Auriol's criticism here, a good attempt is made by Cross, according to whom, Auriol's aim is undoubtedly Burley's opinion. The main reason for his claim is that the very same view Auriol presents here can be found in Burley's *Tractatus de Universalibus* (see Cross, 2014, pp. 214–215). Now, Cross is surely right in stressing this point, as there are some solid philosophical reasons in support of his thesis, such as Burley's endorsement for an exaggerated form of realism, which was generally considered by his contemporaries as Platonic. In addition to it, the fact that Auriol openly discusses Scotus's view in d. 9, q. 2, art. 2 seems to entail that, for him, Scotus's and Plato's views should be treated as definitely distinct theories, thereby excluding Scotus (a serious candidate for the title of “Platonic thinker”) from the list of the “Platonists” Auriol is dealing with in article 1. Despite the evidence, however, some reservations still remain. First and foremost, Cross' attribution does not appear entirely convincing from an historical point of view. As Conti has effectively shown (see for example Conti, 2016), it is only

However, Auriol claims that it is precisely at this point that some problems arise for this view. In particular, he raises the issue by asking the realist how the general term signifying a common nature should be predicated of the individuals to which that common nature belongs, which is to say, how that common nature should be deemed to occur in the individuals in which it said to occur. As Auriol claims, there are just two options available here: a common term signifying a common nature should be predicated of the

after 1324 that Burley shifts from a form of moderate toward a form of “Platonic” realism. More specifically, Burley’s *Tractatus de Universalibus* seems to be placed after 1337. Since at that time Auriol had already concluded his lecturing on Book II of the *Sentences* about nineteen years previously, then, it would have been impossible for him to refer to Burley’s specific opinion. As a result, if we really want to stay with Cross’ thesis and thereby to claim that (one of) Auriol’s target(s) here is Burley (which is not necessarily false), such a conclusion cannot be surmised from just Cross’ own argument of a ‘family resemblance’ between the position Auriol rejects here and Burley’s realism, as it is found in the *Tractatus de Universalibus*. Of course, the scattered evidence presented above to question Cross’ attribution does not provide us with strong, *positive* reasons to claim once and for all that Auriol’s target *cannot* be Burley: Auriol’s reference is probably too vague to make univocal attribution. But here is my second point: I do not think that Auriol’s target here *must* be Burley, as the type of realism Auriol is dealing with here might also apply, as has been shown, to a less extreme, or not-genuinely Platonic, form of realism. In fact, there are at least other thinkers, whose doctrines may indeed fall into Auriol’s description. As Suarez-Nani also argues (see Suarez-Nani, 2009, p. 342), one of these cases is certainly Duns Scotus. Compare (as an example) the realist’s arguments Auriol refers to here with Scotus’s following text: John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1 (ed. Balić, Barbarić, Bušelić, Hechich, Modrić, Nanni, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1973, n. 23, p. 400): “Quia si omnis unitas realis est numeralis, ergo omnis diversitas realis est numeralis. Sed consequens est falsum, quia omnis diversitas numeralis in quantum numeralis est aequalis, - et ita omnia essent aequae distincta; et tunc sequitur quod non plus posset intellectus a Socrate et Platone abstrahere aliquid commune, quam a Socrate et linea, et esset quodlibet universale purum figuratum intellectus.” There is further evidence to support the claim that Duns Scotus should be added to the list of Auriol’s targets here. Also, there are additional reasons to claim that even other thinkers should be included besides Burley and Scotus. For reasons of space, I cannot dwell on these points here. I limit myself to referring to what I have discussed in Fornasieri, 2019, pp. 70–91 and to the literature indicated therein. What stems from the aforementioned and is relevant to our purposes here is that, although Cross’ thesis (which is quite intriguing) cannot be rejected with no recourse, there are good reasons to claim that the most profitable attitude here is probably to be cautious and acknowledge that a list of potential suspects (in the absence of decisive evidence) is the best we can get from Auriol’s own words.

individuals to which it said to belong either *identice*, that is, by asserting a real identity between that common nature and its subject, or non-*identice*, that is, by claiming that the common nature is not really identical with the supposita which instantiate it (i.e., the things that actually carry that common nature and thereby satisfy the intension of the term signifying that nature). Of course, a realist whose position may be somehow traced back to Auriol's description would take both options to be valid: as instantiations of the nature of humanity, both Socrates and Plato would be really the same as the humanity they instantiate and as being simultaneously instantiated by Socrates and Plato (and by every other human being alive at time *t*), the nature of humanity would necessarily remain something different from its own carriers. The problem, however, is that, for Auriol, none of them could in fact be accepted. If the first option were true (as realists somehow admit), then, say, Socrates would be to (his) humanity as one of the Divine Persons would be to the Divine essence, which is something we hardly understand by means of natural reason. Making this claim, in other words, would be like appealing to miracles to explain something (the possibility of essential predication and of scientific knowledge) of which we have experience in our everyday life and thereby should instead be described with the aid of solely natural reason.⁷ If, on the contrary, the second option were true, that is, if the common nature in Socrates were something distinct from Socrates himself, being something occurring identically in each individual of the human species as such (as some realists admit), then, by stating that Socrates is a human being (i.e., that Socrates is the bearer of the common nature of humanity) we would know nothing about Socrates. Socrates and his humanity, in fact, would be utterly distinct entities.⁸

⁷ By presenting the theory of common nature the way he does, Auriol is undoubtedly tacitly giving his personal spin to it: while surely having been thought by those who endorse the view of such common nature as something really and entirely present in each individual of a given species, that common nature is clearly considered here by Auriol as something endowed with full, numerical existence, which is the conclusion that the great part of the authors he is supposedly referring to have strived to avoid. This remark, however, should not lead us to think of Auriol as a naïve thinker. On the contrary, Auriol proves he knows the realists' thesis of a less-than-numerical unity and he tries to show its inconsistencies as well. Since this paper is a sort of quick introduction to the text found in the appendix, this can only be done here by referring the readers to Auriol's discussion in the text below. On this point, see for example, n. 5.

⁸ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 111: 17–28).

In sum, as long as common nature is granted a form of autonomous subsistence, it will always be present in its entirety in each individual of a given species. According to Auriol, however, that would imply an undue multiplication of entities within the same substance, which would compromise its knowability: if one were to posit in Socrates the existence of humanity, as common nature, being fully inherent and still somehow distinct from Socrates himself, then, one would be inevitably committed to affirm that the reason by virtue of which Socrates is a human being is utterly different from the reason by virtue of which Socrates is Socrates. According to Auriol, then, the only way to avoid this counterintuitive conclusion is to get rid of realism and its heavy ontological tools.

In view of his harsh reaction to metaphysical realism, it is not hard to see why Auriol has earned, (somewhat hastily) over time, the title of a conceptualist thinker. I, however, argue that there are relevant elements to call him a *moderate* conceptualist. In fact, Auriol claims that, although no common natures are to be posited outside the mind, universals still have some ground in the extra-mental reality. As he states, it is *the thing as it is in itself* that makes the intellect form the concepts it forms about that thing.⁹ It is a sort of *natural aptitude*, with which extra-mental particulars are really endowed. Russ Friedman stresses this point quite efficaciously when he says: “for Auriol, there is a direct extra-mental ground for our universal concepts: there is, e.g., a characteristic innate to each and every member of the same genus that upon intellectual acquaintance leads us to form the concept of that genus.”¹⁰ The remote metaphysical ground for universals is a set of individual quidditative properties each individual is naturally endowed with, which Auriol calls *rationes*.¹¹ As he sees it, these features are what makes an object what it is: Socrates *is* Socrates, due to his *ratio* of substance, corporeality,

⁹ These are, in particular, the concepts of genus, species and difference. For Auriol discussing this point, see Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 3–14). For a discussion of Auriol’s view on the matter, see Friedman, 1997, pp. 416–417.

¹⁰ Friedman, 1997, p. 416.

¹¹ Auriol’s treatment of the *rationes* is quite complex and still to be fully studied. It cannot therefore be entirely discussed here, nor is it the purpose of this paper. I will devote an entire chapter of the book on Auriol’s theory of universals I am currently working on to this issue. For more on this, see, among others, Adriaenssen, 2014; Fornasieri, 2019; Friedman, 1997, 2000; Wöller, 2015.

sensibility, rationality, which belong uniquely to Socrates. Despite their being different, each *ratio* coagulates into each other, giving birth to what he calls the individual's ultimate *ratio*, that is, its *ratio atoma*, Socrates' unique humanity.¹² Also, Auriol claims that numerically distinct entities may have utterly similar (*simillimae*) *rationes*. For example, Plato's *rationes* are perfectly similar to those of Socrates. Plato has his own *ratio* of substance, corporeality, sensibility, rationality, his own unique humanity. Each and every *ratio* belonging to Plato, however, is fully indiscernible from each and every *ratio* belonging to Socrates and to any other human being.¹³ This is what makes them individuals of the same species, in the same way as Socrates and Brunellus can be conceived as individual of the same genus, as their *rationes* of substance, corporeality and sensibility are mutually indiscernible. For Auriol, then, although there are no universal features inhering in the extra-mental particulars, numerically distinct individuals may have, in fact, extremely similar aspects (*rationes*) according to which they can be legitimately conceived as entities of the same type.¹⁴ They do have some quidditative aspects able to guide our activity in concept formation. Upon this view, then, concepts are not merely mental constructs, they do not conventionally refer to things. Although they do not exist as universals in the extra-mental reality, what they are about (their content, so to speak) is fixed (through the *rationes*) in and by the extra-mental reality. In a nutshell, Auriol's conceptualism does not flow into a mere arbitrariness of the mind, as it is constrained or *moderated* by the nature of the outside objects.

One of the implications of Auriol's view on ontology, as it applies to the process of concept formation, is that although universals do not exist as such outside the mind, our concepts present things how they are. To put it as Auriol would, concepts are really identical to the extra-mental individuals

¹² Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 3, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, 2019, vol. II, p. 34). On this point, see Friedman, 2000.

¹³ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 2, q. 1, art. 4 (ed. Buytaert, vol. II, p. 493): "[...] quia <Sortes et Plato> addunt ad rationem substantiae rationem corporeitatis, et ad rationem corporis sensibilitatem, et ad rationem animalis rationabilitatem, et ad rationabilitatem autem penitus nihil addunt; idcirco, Sortes et Plato sunt penitus eiusdem rationis, quamvis realiter distinguantur."

¹⁴ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 3, art. 3 (ed. Fornasieri, 2019, vol. II, p. 54): "[...] nihil est in me quod sit in te. Et tamen nihil in me, cui simillimum non possit esse in te, ideo ego et tu non sumus idem; sed tamen ego possum esse talis, qualis es tu."

they are about; they literally *are* the external objects they are about, insofar as they are cognized. According to him, being cognized for a thing means just being put into what he calls intentional or apparent being; cognizing is all about putting things in a different state, i.e., the state of appearing to the cognizer. As a result, since *forming* a concept, for Auriol, means just *putting* a thing *in the state* of being visible to whatever cognizes it, concepts are nothing but extra-mental particulars as they are made to appear to whatever cognizes them. What marks the difference between them is *appearing*, so that every time we conceive of a thing, nothing ensues but the cognized thing as it appears to the cognizer.¹⁵ Of course, it is Auriol's conviction that this claim also applies to the formation of universal concepts. As he sees it, that we may have universal concepts is something no one could ever disclaim.¹⁶ In this framework, then, the concept of Socrates as a human being, i.e., the universal concept of *human being*, is Socrates as put into apparent being and thereby appearing to the cognizer, according to the *ratio* of humanity Socrates is really endowed with. As one may recall, one of Auriol's main tenets about ontology is that *rationes* of the same type, while belonging to fully distinct particulars, are nonetheless mutually indiscernible and thereby serve as the metaphysical basis for our concepts about them. The result is that the concept of *human being* is all human beings, not as they exist in the extra-mental reality, but as they appear to the cognizer, through the *ratio* of humanity we grasp in Socrates, and still occurs as maximally similar in every other human being.¹⁷

¹⁵ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 27, q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel, 2020, p. 10: 365–366). See also, Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 9, pars 1, art. 1 (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel, 2020, p. 8: 339–341).

¹⁶ See Friedman, 2013, p. 582.

¹⁷ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 27, q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel, 2020, p. 15: 520–525): “Relinquitur ergo ut detur septimum, scilicet quod (conceptus) sint verae rosae particulares et flores, non quidem ut existunt exterius, sed ut intentionaliter et obiective, et secundum esse formatum concurrunt in unum quid simpliciter, quod est praesens in intellectu per speciem intelligibilem vel per actum. Et cum constet quod tale quid non est in animo nisi dum actu intelligit, species autem intelligibiles remanent sine actu, manifeste concluditur quod talis res in esse huiusmodi non emanat nisi dum actu intelligitur et in intellectione sive notitia actuali.” See also note 12 and Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 27, q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel, 2020, p. 13: 464–468): “[...] in phantasmate; aut actus intellectus; aut res aliqua accidentalis existens subiective in intellectu ad quam intellectio terminetur; aut rosa quaedam vel flos subsistens sicut

Despite the anti-realist attitude of Auriol's philosophy, universals, for him, do grasp things the way they are, as concepts *are* (to some extent) the things they are about. They are the "sum" of a given individual *plus* its property of being cognized, i.e., its property of being in relation with and thereby appearing to the mind. According to Auriol, an object cognized can never be really distinct from its being cognized: the concept of, say, *human being* is Socrates as indistinguishably mixed together with passive conception (*conceptio passiva*), i.e., with its being a concept conceived by the mind.¹⁸ Upon this framework, a concept and the object of which it is a concept are numerically the same entity.¹⁹

Auriol's Theory of Essential Predication

According to Auriol's ontology and his theory of concept formation, our general terms do not *immediately* signify a universal property really occurring in each individual of a given species or genus. They signify the objects they are drawn from, insofar as they signify the concepts, which Auriol has in

positus Plato; aut rosae particulares existentes extra; aut rosae illae particulares secundum aliud esse, intentionale videlicet et formatum, existentes in anima obiective." Although it is impossible to go deeper into this issue here and now, as it is not the purpose of this paper, it is worth noting that, given Auriol's account of the *rationes*, the cognizer would need in theory just one particular to form the relevant universal concept. A more in-depth discussion of this issue will be found in the book on Auriol's theory of universals I am currently working on. Good treatments of the same problem are to be found in Friedman, 1997, 2000.

¹⁸ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 23, art. 2 (ed. De Rijk, 2005, pp. 718–719); Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 27, pars 2, art. 2 (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel, 2020, p. 18: 643–648): "[...] res posita in esse formato non est aliquid aliud quam res extra sub alio modo essendi [...] vera res habet esse fictitium et apparens. Nec propter hoc fit bis, sed idem fit in duplici esse: realiter quidem exterius in natura, intentionaliter vero in mente." Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 2, art. 4 in Firenze, BNC, conv. soppr., ms. A.3.120, f. 27rb; Padova Biblioteca Antoniana, ms. 161 scaff. IX, f. 24rb: "Sic igitur est eadem res addita alia et alia apparentia, quae nihil est reale, sed tantum intentionale— non enim apparentia illa est in re, sed in intellectu tantum, tunc igitur venit difficultas, quomodo illud additum se habebit ad rem, puta apparentia, qua res apparet clare, et illa qua apparet obscure, aut ut ad substratum, aut ut ad compositum."

¹⁹ This is not the place to dwell on Auriol's view on intellectual cognition. For more on the mechanics of Auriol's theory of concepts, see Fornasieri, 2021; Friedman, 2015.

turn made invisible by identifying them with the objects cognized.²⁰ In this case, “human being” signifies the really existent individual human being called Socrates plus Socrates’s being cognized. It signifies Socrates as placed into apparent being.

However, a potential objection arises against this view, according to which some sort of formalities have to be admitted *in re*, if we really want to make sense of essential predication. Auriol deals with it in distinction 9, question 2, article 1 of his *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*. Taking the stand of his imaginary realist opponent, Auriol argues that ‘Socrates is a human being’ can never be equated to a predication (i) of a mental token of a real entity (i.e., Socrates as a real being and human being as a concept); (ii) of a thing of itself (i.e., Socrates of himself); (iii) of two really distinct entities (i.e., Socrates and humanity as really distinct items). None of them could actually work: if (i) were the case, then, provided that Socrates as a real being is [s] and human being as a concept is [H], stating *Hs* would amount to saying that Socrates is a concept, which is clearly false; if (ii) were the case, then, stating that Socrates is a human being would be the same as stating that Socrates is Socrates, which would reduce essential predication to a mere tautology, deprived of any increasing of informational content about the object; finally, if (iii) were the case, then, asserting that Socrates is a human being would be like stating that this individual being called Socrates is this individual being called Plato, given that Socrates and humanity are two really distinct items. As a consequence, the opponent concludes the only way we have to give a compelling description of how the subject and its predicate relate in essential predication is by claiming that general terms like “human being” signify some kind of formalities, which occur in Socrates, independently of any cognitive act.²¹

Quite surprisingly, Auriol seems unconcerned about a valid argument which is directly aimed against his moderate conceptualism. Auriol’s idea is that such conclusion is far from being necessary. More specifically, he claims that a statement like that would follow only upon admitting a dangerous misunderstanding of the mechanics of intellectual cognition. Not by chance, Auriol’s solution aims precisely at showing how intellectual cognition relates

²⁰ Friedman, 2013, p. 584.

²¹ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 113: 1–12).

to essential predication, that is, at how essential predication can be described as a predication of the type (ii).

Auriol's solution can be boiled down to three main theses: (a), (b) and (c):²²

(a): Essential predication is a predication of the type (ii).

(b): Essential predication, as a predication of the type (ii), implies that the subject and the predicate of a predicative statement are concepts.

(c): Essential predication, as a predication of the type (ii), can neither be reduced to tautology, nor to a predication of the type (i), provided that concept formation does not add a separable (although accidental) feature to *what* is being conceived through the relevant cognitive act.

According to Auriol, (c) proves as a condition for (a), as it proves as a condition for (b), which, in turn, proves as a condition for (a). To put it in a formula: (a) iff (b); (b) iff (c); (a) iff (c).

Auriol's thesis (a) claims that Fx is the same as $F=x$, which means that when we state that Socrates is a human being, the semantic values of the terms "Socrates" and "human being" are nothing but the same individual Socrates. According to Auriol, this is possible because each individual thing is endowed with the natural ability to make the intellect form several concepts of itself, to the point that really distinct particulars may be indeed conceived as tokens of the same type. Insofar as Socrates is apt to make a more and a less determined concept of himself, we can form the concept of Socrates, that of a human being or that of animal (among others). However, since upon Auriol's view concepts are identical to the object they are about, it occurs that the concept of Socrates, that of a human being and that of animal actually refer to the very same existing Socrates. As Auriol claims, they *are* Socrates, though *conceived* in two different ways.²³

The result is that when we state that Socrates is a human being or an animal, or even when we state that a human being is an animal (while referring to Socrates), we are just making an identity statement about Socrates; we are just *repeating* him. Essential predication is a predication of the type (ii), but with significant qualifications. More precisely, essential predication amounts to predicating a thing of itself, while being presented according

²² This treatment partly refers to what I have discussed in Fornasieri, 2021.

²³ On these points and on Auriol's defense of his view, see the first section.

to different conceptions.²⁴ Christian Rode makes this point in a very sharp manner saying that: “[i]n this correct sense, a predication amounts to the following operation: an individual thing which I conceive in a determinate manner is the same thing which I conceive in a confused way. The underlying thing in the extra-mental reality is the same, but the modes of presentation [...] are different. We have one thing, but two different *esse apparentia*.”²⁵

As one can immediately recognize, in order to explain (a), one is thereby compelled to appeal to Auriol’s thesis (b). In fact, this is precisely Auriol’s point.

His first remark is certainly trivial, but also surprisingly robust: without an entity being cognized, which is to say, without what he has called *conceptio passiva*, making a statement about the entity’s nature could never be possible. As a mental act, essential predication requires that both the subject and the predicate, which make up the predicative statement, be concepts.

This evidence, however, gains even much more importance in Auriol’s framework, as it underpins his theory of essential predication as a predication of the type (ii) and thereby (quite significantly) his conceptualism. This can easily be shown by quickly comparing Auriol’s view with the one held by his realist opponents here. According to their view, the semantic value of the term “human being” can never be reduced to a certain conception of Socrates. Since we can predicate the term “human being” of Socrates and no mental being can ever be predicated of a real being, there has to be admitted some kind of distinction in Socrates himself between Socrates and his humanity. The difference between the subject and the predicate of a predicative statement has to occur independently of any cognitive activity. Now, if no common natures or universals exist in the extra-mental reality as properties instantiated in the relevant particulars and only particulars are to be posited outside the mind (as Auriol claims), it is impossible for a thing to be predicated of itself (thesis (a)) unless it is conceived (thesis (b)). Upon Auriol’s conceptualism, the diversity between the subject and the predicate cannot be thought of as a difference involving a distinction in the extra-mental

²⁴ See, n. 9: Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 3–14).

²⁵ Rode, 2017, p. 150.

reality. As a result, it can only arise at a conceptual level, which means that, for Auriol, essential predication *essentially* involves only concepts.²⁶

These remarks immediately bring us to Auriol's thesis (c). In fact, one might ask how Auriol's theory of essential predication can account for the diversity between the subject and the predicate without either being reduced to a mere tautology, or collapsing into a predication of the type (i). In a nutshell, if essential predication is nothing but a kind of self-predication, how can Auriol account for the diversity between the subject and the predicate of a predicative statement? Furthermore, if the diversity between the subject and the predicate should not be thought of as a difference involving a distinction in the extra-mental reality, but as a difference arising at a conceptual level, how would we not be compelled to claim that concepts are predicated of real beings?

As to the first question, Auriol agrees that, whether essential or not, predication requires some manner of diversity between subject and predicate. Stating Fx adds some information to (our knowledge of) x . Essential predication, in other words, must always come with the increase of our informational content about the object about which that predicative statement is made. That is what marks the difference with tautology. In contrast with realism, however, Auriol's idea is that such diversity between a subject and a predicate is perfectly accounted for by the interaction between a thing and the mind.²⁷ Conceiving of Socrates as a human being or an animal is sufficient to increase our knowledge of him, as it appears to us according to different essential aspects (*rationes*) he is endowed with. According to Auriol, each individual thing has the natural ability to make the intellect form several concepts of itself, to the point that really distinct particulars may be indeed conceived as tokens of the same type. As a result, no formalities or universals to which our general terms correspond are to be posited in the extra-mental reality.

The second question represents a much more threatening problem for Auriol's theory of essential predication. According to (a) and (b), essential predication as a predication of the type (ii) involves concepts formation. It would therefore seem to be implied that, when we predicate *human being* or *animal* of Socrates, we are saying that Socrates is a *human being*, in

²⁶ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 17–29).

²⁷ On this point, see Friedman, 1999.

fact. Auriol's way out is that essential predication can be taken in a twofold sense. On the one hand, *being predicated* can be taken according to what it *directly* means. When we say that Socrates is a human being, "human being" can be taken to *directly* signify Socrates's being cognized, his *being* a mental concept in the mind. Now, if we were to take essential predication in this way, Auriol acknowledges, we would end up claiming that an existing entity such as Socrates is the same as one endowed with diminished or intentional existence, which is clearly false. Essential predication could never occur and the realists' criticism would also be fair. At any rate, Auriol continues, there is at least another available option. *Being predicated*, in fact, can be taken somehow *indirectly*. When we say that Socrates is a human being, Auriol continues, "human being" can also be taken to signify Socrates's being cognized, his *being* a mental entity *only* as being a feature necessarily included within what the predicate "human being" actually means. Every time "human being" is attributed to Socrates by virtue of a cognitive act, its being mind-dependent (i.e., a concept) may be thought of as something involved in what "human being" directly signifies.²⁸

However, a further question arises at this point: if claiming that through predication being a mental entity is necessarily included within what *human being* signifies, would it not therefore imply that an accidental feature is added to what Socrates is? Would we still be able to talk of *essential* predication in general? After all, Socrates is a human being whether we conceive of him as such or not.

Auriol's answer to the question seemingly lies on (albeit without discussing it) the distinction between accidental, separable properties and accidental, non-separable properties.²⁹ His idea is that essential predication is maintained and thereby (c) (i.e., the thesis that (a) *and* (b) are valid) is verified, because passive conception, i.e., the property of being cognized a thing acquires as soon as it is cognized, does not add a *separable*, however much *accidental*, feature to *what* is being conceived through a cognitive act.

As Auriol remarks, it is impossible even to think of concepts and essential predication without also thinking of their being cognized by a mind's act. Cognizing a thing always entails that thing's being cognized. Since essential predication involves the mind's activity (as thesis (b) shows), then,

²⁸ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 15–29).

²⁹ The primary source for this distinction is: Porphyry, *Isagoge*, c. III.

the property of being cognized a thing acquires by being cognized is part and parcel of that concept, as it is employed to compose a predicative statement. They are inseparable features.³⁰ Neither concepts nor essential predication could ever be possible without something's being cognized. What follows is that, far from impeding essential predication, the passive conception is necessary to it. It is a feature intrinsically included in each concept we employ whenever we state *Fx*.³¹ It is necessarily included in that *which* is conceived and thereby no accidental, separable property of a concept.

Notably, this coincides with Auriol's claim that a concept is the real referent it is referred to, as indistinguishably mixed together with passive conception (*conceptio passiva*).³² By conceiving an extra-mental particular, the passive conception cannot be separated from what is conceived through a concept. They do not entail composition, nor do they differ numerically. They are not two really distinct items. Auriol makes this point clearer by stating that the passive conception does not regard the object it is associated with as a substratum. Passive conception is not superimposed to the content of what is conceived. As previously mentioned, our concepts, for Auriol, are nothing but the really existent particulars plus their being conceived and made apparent to the cognizer.³³

³⁰ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 17–29).

³¹ Rode, 2017, p. 151: “[i]f the intellect conceives the extra-mental thing in a concept, it cannot separate the passive conception from the quiddity. If we prescind from the passive conception completely, we would not be able to form an essential predication in the first place [...]. Hence the passive conception cannot impede the essential predication, because if we abstracted from it, the predication would not be possible. Auriol makes very clear: we cannot conceive a thing without its being conceived, without the passive conception. If we tried, we would contradict ourselves: we would try to intellectually grasp a thing without grasping it conceptually.”

³² See n. 1.

³³ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 23, art. 2 (ed. De Rijk, 2005, pp. 718–719): “Et propter hoc obiectiva conceptio passiva dicta non respicit rem per modum substrati, ymo res que concipitur est aliquid sui et immiscetur indistinguibilter sibi, unde conceptio rose idem est quod rosa, et conceptus animalis idem quod animal. Iste nimirum conceptus claudit indistinguibilter realitates omnium particularium animalium et quendam modum essendi qui est intentionalis, qui non est aliud quam passiva conceptio.” For a more detailed account of Auriol's view of his theory of predication, see Friedman, 1999, 2000.

Connotation: The Background of Auriol's Theory of Essential Predication

Once the backbone of Auriol's theory of essential predication has been given, however, one is left with an aspect that needs to be investigated. In fact, one might question how it can be the case that something *necessarily* involved in each predicative statement about a certain thing (i.e., passive conception) is not *directly* predicated of that thing. In other words, how it can be the case that Socrates's *being cognized* does not end up being predicated directly of Socrates, being necessarily involved in our predicating, say, "human being" of Socrates himself.³⁴ To answer this question and thereby make sense of (c)—and thus of (a) and (b)—Auriol employs the noetic tool of connotation. His view on connotation as applied to intellectual cognition, concept formation and essential predication is barely discussed in his *II Sententiarum*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1. Although, it is mostly taken for granted, as it occurs as a sort of nuanced theoretical background to his discussion, his thinking on the matter can be easily (and safely) reconstructed by reading his claims against those texts where he openly addresses the issue. In his view, connotation provides the most effective and elegant way to describe *how* something's being cognized, i.e., its *conceptio passiva*, is necessarily required and indirectly predicated within every predicative statement.

Auriol is convinced that his theory of essential predication is not affected by the inconsistency mentioned above, because passive conception occurs as a co-signification of what a concept directly means. It is something implicitly connoted by concepts' primary signification. In Auriol's view, connotative terms have a primary and a secondary meaning, which are in fact mutually related. Connotative terms, in other words, are terms you cannot even think of without also thinking (*quasi cointellecta*)³⁵ of what they indirectly refer to as their secondary meaning. While expressing their primary signification, they simultaneously co-signify to what that signification is necessarily linked. One of Auriol's most famous examples concerns the term "flesh": while "flesh" directly (*in recto*) signifies a given flesh, it

³⁴ See Auriol's claim at n. 27.

³⁵ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 45, art. 1, ed. Romae 1596, f. 1067D-Fb.

also indirectly and simultaneously (*in obliquo*) co-signifies the animal to which that flesh belongs.³⁶

Now, his fundamental idea is that our concepts cannot but be thought of as connotative notions. Auriol argues, as being extra-mental particulars endowed with the *esse apparens*, namely, as particulars just being made to appear to whatever cognizes them, our concepts cannot even be thought of without also referring to their relevant cognitive acts. A thing's being cognized, i.e., its being a concept of the mind, is always obliquely co-signified whenever the content of that concept is thought of.³⁷ The result is that what is *directly* predicated of Socrates when it is stated that Socrates is a human being is nothing but the primary meaning of those concepts. The very same particular is conceived through different concepts. However, the ways that thing is differently conceived by (i.e., the different passive conceptions) do not actually fall into the predication, due to Auriol's claim that they are only *obliquely* co-signified, connoted within each concept's primary meaning. As Christian Rode remarks very clearly, Auriol may validly assert that a human being is an animal, "because the passive conception is not predicated directly (*in recto*), but indirectly or implicitly (*in obliquo*)."³⁸

Now, according to Auriol, the *conceptio passiva*, that is, our concepts' being sets of objects as cognized, is not an *accidental* feature of our concepts. Concepts *are* extra-mental particulars *plus* their being cognized. How

³⁶ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 8, q. 3, art. 2, (ed. Friedman, Nielsen, Schabel in *The Electronic Scriptum*, p. 14: 5–11): "Est enim considerandum quod sunt aliqua quae nihil dicunt nisi in recto, utpote homo, leo, et ceterae substantiae; et sunt aliqua quae, cum hoc quod dicunt aliquid in recto, aliqua significant in obliquo, ut simitas dicit concavitatem in recto et nasum in obliquo, et similiter caro dicit substantiam propriam in recto et animal in obliquo, quia dicitur caro alicuius caro; similiter etiam os, manus et similia connotant aliquid in obliquo, principale autem significatum est illud quod dicunt in recto."

³⁷ Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 2, art. 4, in ms. Firenze, 3.120, f. 27rb: "Tunc ad aliud quando dicitur quod non praedicatur res de re, sed cum ratione. Respondeo, aut praedicatio intelligitur fieri ratione ipsius concipi, vel ratione rei indivisae tamen a concipi. Primo modo propositio est falsa, quia esset sensus, cum dico: 'homo est anima', conceptus hominis est conceptus animalis, quod falsum. Secundo ergo modo tantum tenet praedicatio, et sic verificatur propositio, cum dico 'homo est animal', non ratione concipi *in recto*, sed *in obliquo* per explicationem, sicut dicit Avicenna." Italics are mine. Compare this text with Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 2, art. 1 (ed. Fornasieri, *infra*, p. 117: 17–29).

³⁸ Rode, 2017, p. 150.

does *connotation* help to solve the question raised at the end of the previous section, then? In other words, does Auriol imply that passive conception is *necessarily* included in, say, the definition of the concept of *human being*? Is it really the case that stating that *human being* is a concept equals to stating that Socrates is a concept? After all, as Fabrizio Amerini rightly notes, doubts like these were the core of the objections raised by Hervaeus against Henry of Ghent's theory of intentions, which is very close to Auriol's on this specific point.³⁹ Auriol's idea, in fact, is that the propositions "human being is a concept" and "human being is a rational animal" are indeed the same. They are both *per se primo modo* propositions.⁴⁰ Upon this view, then, there seems to be little chance for Auriol's theory of essential predication to avoid Hervaeus's criticism. It seems committed to the quite absurd conclusion that: "[i]f 'man is universal' were a *per se* predication, the property of 'being universal' would be part of the essence of man."⁴¹

Regardless of the apparent validity of such conclusion, Auriol maintains that it could never apply to his case. As far as he sees it, connotation suffices to avoid it. Although he maintains that "human being is a concept" equals to "human being is a rational animal", he believes that properties like "being a concept" or "being cognized" are not part and parcel of human being's essential definition. General concepts *are* extra-mental particulars *plus* their own being cognized. Their being cognized (their passive conception), however, is just *implicitly* included in what each concept primarily means, upon Auriol's analysis. The fact that *human being* is a concept is only connotatively (laterally or co-incidentally, so to speak) included in *human*

³⁹ Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 3, q. 3 (ed. J. P. Doyle, 2008, p. 434). On this point, see Amerini, 2009; 2017.

⁴⁰ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 23, art. 2 (ed. De Rijk, 2005, p. 719): "Dicendum quidem ad hoc quod idem est iudicium de prima intentione et de vera re. Unde si ista est per se primo modo 'Animal est vera res', et ista 'Animal est prima intentio'; in utraque namque predicatur ens: in prima ens reale, in secunda ens intentionale. Cum igitur animal, in quantum differt ab homine ratione, non sit precise res, ymo includens aliquid rationis, nec sit precise ratio, ymo includens aliquid vere realitatis, nec sit compositum ex realitate et ratione tamquam ex duobus que distinguibilia sint, sed sit aliquid simplicissime et indistinguibiliter adunatum,—tam 'vera res' quam 'prima intentio' predicari possunt per se de ipso, quia non se habent per modum partis. Et predicantur in primo modo, sicut et 'ens'; nec ponuntur in diffinitione animalis, sicut nec ipsum ens." For a discussion of Auriol's view on *perseitas*, see Friedman, 2013, pp. 529–594.

⁴¹ Amerini, 2017, pp. 135–136.

being's "being a rational animal". To put it differently, Auriol claims that being a concept is not part of *human being*'s essential definition, because it is not *primarily*, but only *secondarily* involved in what human being *directly* signifies. *Being a concept* is just a co-signified feature of each and every concept and that suffices, in Auriol's view, to avoid Hervaeus's criticism.⁴² Connotation, in sum, provides Auriol the tool to describe how our concepts can be really about extra-mental things, without postulating common natures or universal properties instantiated by several individuals at once to which our concepts should correspond:

1. Only particulars exist in the extra-mental reality.
2. Each particular is naturally apt to make the mind form more concepts of itself.
3. Our (general) concepts are particulars being cognized.
4. They are particulars *in recto* and concepts only *in obliquo*.
5. Essential predication is valid upon this view, because the predicate's being a concept is only *obliquely* predicated of the relevant subject term.

According to Auriol, every existing thing, insofar as it exists, is singular. Given that *human being* does not exist outside the mind, but it is a concept, then *human being* cannot be thought of without immediately referring to the cognitive act by which it is formed. At the same time, being just co-signified by what *human being* primarily means, *being cognized* does not alter what *human being* primarily means. As soon as it is drawn from Socrates, the concept of human being directly means Socrates, while it signifies Socrates's being cognized only in an oblique manner. What stems from this view and proves relevant to our purposes is that, in Auriol's account, connotation serves as a decisive support for the kind of moderate conceptualism he endorses in his *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1. His theory of essential predication, in fact, is entirely built upon his ontology of singulars. He takes it to be as an answer to the inconsistencies that realists would meet, given their own premises. In other words, proving that his claims on essential predication is valid means for Auriol to prove that realists are wrong on their own assumptions. Now, the fact is that, upon Auriol's own admission, connotation serves precisely this purpose. It is the tool which makes sense of his theory of essential

⁴² Fornasieri, 2021, pp. 44–45.

predication and thereby of his own moderate conceptualism. It is connotation that explains how essential predication works, without endorsing realism. By doing it, connotation implicitly serves as a justification for Auriol's moderate conceptualism.

Conclusion

Auriol's use of connotation is deeply intertwined with both his ontology and his epistemology. It is the meeting point between them. Once Auriol has rejected realism, in fact, predication becomes just a matter of concepts. No universals *in re*, no common natures really instantiated in the individuals of a given set are signified by our general terms. As a consequence, Auriol needs to find a compelling way to explain how essential predication occurs—a way which agrees with his lean ontology. Now, according to him, connotation serves precisely this purpose: it manages to explain how mental items can be predicated of a real particular, without entailing contradiction. Being connotative notions, in fact, concepts *qua* concepts are spoken of a certain individual only *in obliquo*. What is *in recto* predicated of that thing is just what those concepts directly mean, which is nothing but that very same thing under different conceptions. Essential predication is therefore granted. Thanks to the noetic tool of connotation, the test has been passed and Auriol's moderate conceptualism is safe.

Appendix

Manuscript Tradition

Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences* is handed down (either partially, or integrally) by eighteen manuscripts:⁴³

- A.** Assisi, Biblioteca del Convento di S. Francesco, ms. 197
- B.** Barcelona, Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, ms. Ripoll 77bis
- D.** Düsseldorf, Landes und Staatsbibliothek, ms. B. 159
- Fb.** Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, ms. conv. soppr. A.3.120
- Fc.** Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, ms. conv. soppr. B.6.121
- N.** Napoli, Biblioteca nazionale, ms. VII.C.3
- O.** Oxford, Balliol College, ms. 63
- Pb.** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. latin 3066
- Pc.** Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. latin 15867
- Pg.** Padova, Biblioteca Antoniana, ms. 161 scaff. ix
- Pi.** Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. 1580
- Pj.** Pelplin, Biblioteka Seminarium duchownego, ms. 46/85
- Vg.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Borg. lat. 404
- Vi.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 942
- VI.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 943
- Vm.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 944⁴⁴
- Vn.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 946⁴⁵
- VQ.** Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 6768

Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1 is preserved in the following manuscripts: D (ff. 56ra–58va); Fb (ff. 38vb–40ra); Fc (ff. 39va–40vb); N (ff. 137rb–138rb); Pb;⁴⁶ Pc (ff. 43vb–45va); Pg (ff. 34va–35vb); Pj (ff. 150rb–151vb); Vg (ff. 29va–30va); Vi (ff. 30rb–31rb).

D: Parchment; late fifteenth century; 270 × 200 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–178v: Petrus Aureoli: *Commentary on Book II*, labeled as *Quaestiones theologicae XLV*; ff. 179r–192v: Petrus Aureoli, *De conceptione B.V.M.*; ff. 192v–203v:

⁴³ The initials for each manuscript are taken from Schabel, 2000.

⁴⁴ This manuscript is lacking from the list found on the Peter Auriol Homepage.

⁴⁵ This manuscript is lacking from the list found on the Peter Auriol Homepage.

⁴⁶ Unfortunately, I could not have access to **Pb**. This should not be much of a problem, however, because, as Schabel points out, **Pb** carries a text which is even worse than **X**.

Petrus Aureoli, *Repercussorium editum contra adversarium innocentiae matris Dei*, f. 204r–205v.⁴⁷

Fb: Parchment, fourteenth century; 325 × 225 mm, two columns; ff. 1r–124r: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*.

Fc: Parchment; fourteenth century; 320 × 240 mm; two columns; ff. 1–121r: Petrus Aureoli: *Commentary on Book II*; 121r–121v: Auriol's *Commentary on Book II tabula quaestionum*; 123r–146v: Petrus Aureoli: *Commentary on Book III*.

N: Parchment; fourteenth century; 238 × 335 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–110r: Anonymus (maybe Conradus de Soltau); ff. 111r–199r: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*; ff. 199v–200r: *scattered notes*; ff. 200v–201r: sermon for a degree in law; f. 202rv: Auriol's *Commentary on Book II tabula quaestionum*.⁴⁸

Pg: Parchment; fourteenth century; 310 × 210 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–110v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*.

Pb: Parchment; fourteenth century; 325 × 210 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–116v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*.

Pc: Parchment; fourteenth century; 310 × 210 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–140v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*; ff. 141r–208r: Petrus Aureoli, *Quodlibet*.

Pj: Parchment; fourteenth century; 321 × 218 mm; two columns; ff. 3r–113v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book IV*; ff. 114r–240v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*; ff. 241r–248v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book III*.

Vg: Parchment; fourteenth century; 225 × 325 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–82r: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*.

Vi: Parchment; fourteenth century; 370 × 250 mm; two columns; ff. 1r–95v: Petrus Aureoli, *Commentary on Book II*.

In contrast, **A**; **B**; **VI**; **Vm**; **Vn**; **VQ** pass down either an abbreviated version of Auriol's *Commentary on Book II* (**O**; **Vm**; **Vn**), or a list of question from Auriol's *Commentary on Book II* (**A**; **B**; **VI**; **VQ**).

Pi is a different story altogether. It is a composite manuscript, that gathers together scattered questions from the works of Antonius Andrea, William Alnwick, Peter Auriol, James of Viterbo, Duns Scotus and maybe (the attribution is uncertain) Thomas of Cataloña.⁴⁹ However, as Doucet⁵⁰ rightly shows, out of the 22 questions that the manuscript hands down as Auriol's questions on

⁴⁷ See also Mazurek, Ott, 2011.

⁴⁸ See also Cenci, 1978, p. 398.

⁴⁹ For the manuscript description, see Marangon, 1997, pp. 229–230.

⁵⁰ Doucet, 1936, pp. 415–416.

Metaphysics, only nine are openly found in Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II, namely, questions 11–15 and 17–20.⁵¹ The remainder, although it is found among questions which are clearly from Auriol, is still to be ascribed to him.⁵²

Ratio Edendi

This semi-critical edition of Auriol's distinction 9, question 2, article 1 presented here should be taken as introductory. Following the hypothesis on the family tradition formulated by Chris Schabel,⁵³ eight manuscripts have been singled out, because of the date of composition and the quality of the text.⁵⁴ These are: **Fb; Fc; N; Pg; Pc; Pj; Vg; Vi**. As Schabel argues, there is no sign of a clear stemma.⁵⁵ Still, I agree with Schabel that **Fb** and **Pg**, due to their quality, can be considered as exemplars of the two families, which preserve Auriol's *Commentary on Book II*. As Schabel puts it:

On slim evidence one can group FbPbPcPiPj against DFcNPgVgViX [...] Fb has few enough errors that it could be the exemplar from which stem all other witnesses [...] No subgroups emerge. Ranking the groups from best to worst: PgDViFcNVgX [*scil.* the printed edition], X having many significant minor variants; and FbPjPiPcPb, Pb being quite a bit worse. Overall ranking: FbPjPgPiPcDViNfcVgXPb.⁵⁶

In general, all the manuscripts offer a better text than the one offered by the printed edition of 1605 (labelled as X in the edition), which is, in contrast, poor and unreliable. Besides providing significant corrections to some grammatical inconsistencies, they have been fundamental to make Auriol's thought clear and accessible to readers. I have chosen to follow Fb as the leading manuscript for this edition. It has been integrated especially with the often helpful reading of Pg, Pj and Pc, whenever Fb is grammatically incorrect, corrupted or inconsistent. Note, however, that they basically overlap. In the few cases where Fb and the other manuscripts have different, but paleographically similar and semantically

⁵¹ Note that question 15 in Pi (ff. 221va–222vb) corresponds to Auriol's II *Sententiarum*, d. 9, q. 3, art. 2; a text which is strictly connected to the text edited here.

⁵² I am currently working on this manuscript, trying to see whether q. 7 and q. 9 are in fact attributable to Auriol.

⁵³ Schabel, 2000, pp. 155–157.

⁵⁴ Note that **D** is a fifteenth century manuscript, while **Pb**, as Schabel points out, has a worse quality than the printed edition **X**.

⁵⁵ Schabel, 2000, pp. 155–157.

⁵⁶ Schabel, 2000, pp. 155–156.

substitutable words, I occasionally opt for a reconstruction according to the sense. The main criterion I have followed to build up this text is to offer the reader a reliable and easily understandable version of one of the most significant discussions Auriol makes about his view on how ontology and epistemology are intertwined. By following the editorial rules supplied by Lauge Nielsen and Cecilia Trifogli, and Luigi Campi,⁵⁷ I have thus identified four types of variants: inversions, omissions, additions and substitutions. With the exception of the inversions, all the variants of all the eight manuscripts have been included in the apparatus. In order to provide an overall evaluation of the manuscripts, however, variants have been distinguished from scribal errors throughout the manuscripts' analysis. Given the lack of a clear stemma,⁵⁸ an error is considered here as a clearly wrong reading. The most frequent cases are grammatical mistakes, omissions which make the meaning of a given passage opaque or unintelligible and the use of words which are plainly inconsistent with the larger context. As it has appeared, the manuscripts selected offer in general a few errors.

Inversions

Inversions consist in the reversal of the word-order in a given sentence. While they are quite recurrent in the manuscripts I have taken into account, they do not modify the meaning of the text. As a general rule, I have therefore found reasonable and economically convenient to my purpose here to remove them from the apparatus. The rare exceptions which have been included concern just a small number of inversions, i.e., inversions combined with omissions and/or significant substitutions.

Omissions

All the omissions in all the manuscripts have been included in the apparatus. The reader will thus find what I have labelled long/short omission and genuine/conditioned omissions.⁵⁹ Long omissions are omissions of three or more words (words ≥ 3). Short omissions, in contrast, are omissions of two or

⁵⁷ Thomas Wylton, *On the Intellectual Soul* (ed. Nielsen, Trifogli, 2010, pp. x–xxxix); John Wycliff, *De Scientia Dei* (ed. Campi, 2017, pp. lxix–lxx).

⁵⁸ Schabel, 2000, p. 155.

⁵⁹ Although all the omissions (as well as substitutions and additions in all the manuscripts considered here) have been included in the apparatus, I still thought it appropriate to draw here the distinction between genuine and conditioned omissions (substitutions and additions), as it reflects the analysis work done on the manuscripts and may also provide useful (although provisional) indications of their quality, given the lack of a clear stemma and of a solid knowledge of the textual tradition of Auriol's commentary on Book II.

fewer words (words ≤ 2). Both long and short omissions are further divided into genuine omissions, when they cannot be explained for paleographical reasons, and conditioned omissions, such as omissions *per homoteleuton*. As a general rule, omissions are considered as errors, whenever they modify the text, by making it obscure and hard to understand.

Additions

As in the case of omissions, the additions of all the manuscripts have also been reported. The additions found in the apparatus comprise both long additions (words ≥ 3) and short additions (words ≤ 2). While long additions are rare, short additions are usually recurrent. Besides, note that the additions (either long or short) included in the apparatus comprise both what can be called (long/short) genuine additions (i.e., additions which cannot be explained on paleographical grounds) and (long/short) conditioned additions (i.e., dittographies or errors by polyptoton).

Substitutions

Substitutions are variants in the most canonical sense. As a general rule, only genuine substitutions have been included in the apparatus. Genuine substitutions are one or more words which are replaced by non-paleographically similar words, i.e., words that cannot be reduced to an error of the scribe, such as dittographies, errors by polyptoton and thereby alter the meaning of the text. Conditioned substitutions are one or more words that are replaced by paleographically similar words, which, in contrast, do not modify the general meaning of the text. The most frequent cases of conditioned substitutions concern the use of pronouns like *ista/illa/ipsa/iste/ille/ipse* etc. Since conditioned substitutions are quite common, while genuine ones are not, I have therefore found convenient to my purpose here to integrate Fb's text with just those (conditioned) substitutions, whose meaning, while being nearly the same with Fb's, provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the text. As it appears, these are just rare cases. Besides genuine substitutions, then, the apparatus will also include few conditioned ones.

In the apparatus, gaps (*lacunae*) are indicated as []; integrations are indicated as < >. As to the *ergo/igitur* alternative, I have always opted for Fb's reading.

Petrus Aureolus
Commentarium in II Sententiarum, d. 9, q. 1, art. 1

De hierachiis et ordinibus eorum

5

[1] **Fb 38vb/Fc 39va/N 137rb/Pc 43vb/Pg 34va/Pj 150rb/Vg 29ra/Vi 30rb/** Postquam visum est de actibus hierarchicis angelorum, videndum est nunc aliud de ipsis hierachiis et ordinibus eorum, et primo quantum ad distinctionem. Et quia duplex distinctio reperitur in angelis, videlicet multorum angelorum unius ordinis et hierachiae ad invicem et ipsarum hierarchiarum et ordinum inter se, ideo primo videndum est de distinctione angelorum inter se unius hierachiae, quae est distinctio personalis. Et ut melius appareat propositum, videndum est in generali de distinctione individuorum sub specie, et primo de communitate naturae specificae in individuis, secundo de formali principio individuationis quod contrahit speciem ad determinatum individuum. Quantum ad primum quaero quattuor quaestiones. /**X 103a/**

10

15

Prima est utrum unitas specifica sit unitas alicuius rei communis extra animam in individuis existentis.

20

Secunda est utrum unitas specifica sit unitas rei indifferentis.

Tertia est utrum unitas specifica sit unitas tantummodo similitudinaria et qualitativa.

Quarta est utrum unitas specifica sit in re /**Pc 44ra/** vel in intellectu tantum.

25

Articulus primus

[2] Quantum ad primam quaestionem arguo primo quod unitas specifica est unitas rei alicuius existentis extra intellectum sic quia impossibile

30

8 aliud] aliquid NPg *om.* Fc 9-10 multorum] malorum N 12-13 angelorum ... distinctione] *om.* Vg 14 specificae] *om.* Vg 15 individuationis] individuis *add.* N 16 determinatum] terminatum Vg 17 quaestiones] *om.* N 20 in] *om.* Vg | individuis] individui Vg 22-23 tertia ... qualitativa] *om.* Fc 24 quarta] tertia Fc | in¹] nam Pj 25 tantum] *om.* FcVg 29 quantum] <q> quantum Fc | quaestionem] *om.* FbFcNPcP-jVg | arguo] *om.* N 30 unitas] uni[] Fc | existentis] ex[] Fc | quia] *om.* Vg

est aliqua eadem realiter convenire et differre, sed si non detur unitas alicuius realis extra intellectum, sequitur quod aliqua eodem reali omnino conveniant realiter et realiter differant, quare etc. Minorem probo, quia haec albedo et haec albedo differunt inter se realiter et certum est quod
 5 conveniunt realiter in albedine, circumscripto actu intellectus, magis enim ex natura rei convenit haec albedo cum hac albedine /X 103b/ quam cum hac nigredine, et haec convenientia non est nisi in unitate specifica, igitur etc.

Contra. Si talis unitas rei alicuius daretur, esset unitas rei universalis,
 10 sed universalia non sunt extra animam, quare etc., quia universalia in solis nudis, purisque intellectibus secundum Aristotelem ut recitat Porphyrius.

Respondeo. Haec fuit opinio Platonis, quae duravit usque ad tempora Philosophi, in qua iudicio meo multi hodie /Fc 39vb/ realiter incidunt. Dicuntⁱ enim quod alia est realitas in qua conveniunt Socrates et Plato,
 15 et aliae sunt realitates per quas differunt; sed dimissis multis opinionibus ponam propositionem intentam primo, deinde instabo.

Propositio est ista: quod unitas specifica non potest esse unitas alicuius rei existentis extra /N 137va/ animam realiter in individuis. Hanc probo primo rationibus fundatis /Pj 150va/ super intentionem Philosophi,
 20 deinde aliquibus aliis.

[3] Prima ratio est adducens ad impossibile, quia si talis unitas daretur, Deus non posset aliquod unum individuum sub una specie annihilare,

1 eadem] eandem Vg ita rem *add.* Vg | realiter] realitate N *om.* Vg | differre] distinctae N realiter *add.* Vg 2 realis] rei Fc extra *add.* N | eodem] eadem FeN | reali] realiter Fc realitate N 3 minorem] minoris Vg | probo] probatio Vg 3–4 quia ... albedo'] [] Fc 4 quod] quia Vi 5 realiter] naturaliter N 2–5 quod ... albedine] [] Fc 7 convenientia] differentia Fc 10 universalia] sunt *add.* NPjVg 11 nudis] meris FbPgVi | recitat] tractat FbPgVi 12 haec] hic Fb 13 qua] quam NVg 14 quod] quia Pg 16 ponam] pono FeNVgVi | primo] *om.* PgVi | deinde] *om.* N 17–18 alicuius] actus Fc 18 in] *om.* Pc 19 intentionem] intentione FbN 21 adducens] ducens Vg

ⁱ Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1 (ed. Balić, Barbarić, Bušelić, Hechich, Modrić, Nanni, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1973, nn. 29–42, pp. 402–410); John Duns Scotus, *Lectura*, II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1 (ed. Modrić, Bušelić, Hechich, Jurić, Percan, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1982, nn. 28–38, pp. 236–239); cf. Walter Burley, *Expositio libri De anima*, lib. I, q. 3, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat. lat. 2151, f. 10ra–vb; Roger Bacon, *Quaestiones supra libros primae philosophiae Aristotelis* (ed. Steele, 1930, pp. 241–244); cf. T. Wylton, *Quodlibet*, q. 5 (ed. Nielsen, Noone, Trifogli, 2003, p. 353: 341–348).

quin eo ipso annihilaret omnia individua eiusdem speciei. Consequens est falsum, igitur etc. Probo consequentiam, quia si annihilaret totum individuum: aut tollit /**Fb 39ra**/ totam suam realitatem, et tunc cum realitas illa specifica sit in aliis individuis, quae /**X 104a**/ est in isto quod annihilatur, igitur oportet eam in aliis annihilari; vel si non, igitur tota entitas ipsius individui non est annihilata. 5

[4] Consimile argumentum in consimili forma sit quod Deus non poterit creare unum individuum nisi creet omnia individua illius speciei, quia creare est de nihilo facere. Tunc capio animam quae creatur. Quando creatur, quaero aut realitas aliqua communis est in anima alia quae prius fuit creata isti quae nunc creatur vel non. Si non, ergo nulla est communitas alicuius rei extra. Si erat iam in alia anima, igitur, cum in ista anima sit creata, quia anima ista creatur secundum totam suam realitatem, igitur in alia anima creatur, et sic in omnibus istis individuis. 10

[5] Dices quod ratio ista procedit ac si illa unitas esset unitas numeralis, quod non est de mente opinionis alterius, sed est unitas specifica et communis, et tunc verum est quod totum creatur in illo quod creatur, quod est unum unitate numerali. Similiter totum corrumpitur in illo quod corrumpitur quod est unum unitate numerali; et tamen adhuc manet ista alia realitas communis communitate specifica. 15

[6] Haec responsio confirmat propositum, quia illa realitas, quae est una existens /**Vi 30va**/ et eadem in multis, non tollit creationem unius sine alio, non potest esse realitas existens extra animam. Da enim quod esset extra animam: ex quo esset in alio iam posita, non posset creari de novo in isto, alias /**Pc 44rb**/ idem bis crearetur, creare enim est de nihilo facere; ista autem realitas secundum te iam praeest in alio. 25

2 si] *om.* Fc | totum] unum *add.* Vg 3 tollit] tollet Vg 6 ipsius] totius Pg 8 creet] crearet Pg | illius] ipsius Pg 10 aliqua communis] quae Vi | alia] illa N *om.* Vg 11 fuit] est communis *add.* Vi 12 extra] animam *add.* Fc | erat iam] [] Fc | in²] *om.* Pg Vg 13 ista] illa FcNPcPg 14 alia] aliqua Vg | anima] non *add.* Vi | istis] *om.* Fb *om.* Vg 15 ac] aliter N 18 numerali] numerali *add.* N | corrumpitur] corpus N | illo] illud N 18–19 in ... corrumpitur] *om.* Pc 19 corrumpitur] corpus N | manet] remanet Fc | ista] illa FbFcPcPg Vg 21 propositum] propositionem | quia] si *add.* Vi | quae] quia Fc qua N | est] *om.* FbNPc 22 existens] una Fc *om.* Vg | eadem] ex *add.* Fc | sine] secundum Fb 24 ex] a N 25 in isto] alio Vi 26 ista] alia FcPc | autem] enim Vi | praeest] sed N

[7] Secunda ratio est Philosophi, 7 *Metaphysicae*, quia si ponatur aliqua talis res communis in pluribus, sequeretur quod in homine essent duae humanitates. Hoc est falsum, quia tunc unus homo esset duo homines. Probo consequentiam, quia homo iste datus particularis per te habet humanitatem, veram rem quae est communis alteri. Certum est autem quod habet humanitatem propriam quam nullus alius habet, quia substantia cuiuslibet rei est propria sibi, sicut substantia qua Socrates est Socrates est propria sibi. Cum igitur Socrateitas sit quaedam humanitas, quia Socrates in existendo est quidam homo, igitur humanitas Socratis est substantia Socratis; et sic dicam de Platone /Pg 35ra/. Igitur quilibet est homo per propriam humanitatem. Sed secundum te est alia communis istis, igitur etc.

[8] Sequitur etiam ex hoc consequenter quod sit dare tertium hominem /Vg 29rb/ a Socrate et Platone—hoc est inconueniens, ad quod Aristoteles adducit, 7 *Metaphysicae*.ⁱⁱ

[9] Dices: illa communis realitas non est humanitas distincta ab ista, sed fit propria et determinata per proprietatem hypostaticam isti, quae quidem proprietas trahit eam ad esse individui, et ideo individuum super illam non dicit aliam humanitatem, sed tantum dicit proprietatem illam contrahentem, et ambo sunt una propria substantia ipsius individui.

[10] Haec solutio non valet, quia quaero post illam appropriationem factam utrum sit verum dicere quod aliqua res sit communis Socrati et Platoni vel non. Si sic, cum illa humanitas appropriata per te sit communis, sequitur quod Socrates et Plato non differant /X 104b/ substantialiter, sed solum hypostate, quia per proprietatem hypostaticam qualis distinctio

3 duae] differentiae Pc 7 socrates] si socrates *add.* et *del.* Pg 7–8 sicut ... propria] *om.* N 8 est] socrates *add.* Vg | sibi] *om.* FcN | sit] *om.* N 9 quidam] *om.* N | humanitas] substantia N 11 alia] [] Fc alias N 13 sequitur] [] Fc | consequenter] cum dicitur Fc *om.* N 14 inconueniens] id est *add.* Vg 16 communis] haec *add.* Vg | ab ista] ad istam N | ista] illa Pg 17 sed] si *add.* N | propria] *om.* Vg | isti] istis PcPj 18 individuum] diuiduum NPj 20 substantia] extra *add.* Pj | contrahentem ... ipsius] [] Fc 21 non valet] [] Fc | illam] istam FbPjVg 22 dicere] *om.* Pg | quod ... res] [] Fc 23 si sic] *om.* N | sic] sit Fb | cum] tamen N | illa ... sit] [] Fc 24 differant] differunt FbN 24–25 substantialiter ... proprietatem] [] Fc 25 quia] qua Fb

ⁱⁱ Cf. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica*, Z, 6, 1032a 2–4; Z, 13, 1039a 2–3; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Metaphysica*, lib. I–XIV. *Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 7, cap. 13 (ed. Vuillemin–Diem, 1995, p. 159: 749–750).

ponitur inter personas in divinis. Si dicis quod, facta appropriatione et determinatione, non remanet communis sed haec, et prima est alia /Pj 150vb/ totaliter, tunc sequitur quod vel nulla erit realitas communis, vel si sit aliqua alia communis ab illa propria humanitate, tunc unus homo erit duo homines, ut prius. 5

[11] Tertia ratio est, quia sicut ponitur secundum hoc una natura communis extra intellectum, ita per eandem rationem oportet ponere de omnibus generibus, et sic erit animalitas communis extra intellectum, et similiter corporeitas, et sic de aliis. Consequentiam probo, quia Socrates et Brunellus realiter conveniunt in animalitate, circumscripto omni intellectu, plus convenit Socrates cum Brunello quam cum planta. Hoc non potest esse nisi sit unitas alicuius rei extra animam in qua conveniunt Socrates /Fb 39rb/ et Brunellus. Consequentia est falsa, quia sic essent multae substantiae distinctae in una substantia, impossibile est autem quod una substantia per se constituatur ex pluribus substantiis distinctis, sed homo est per se una substantia, igitur etc. 10 15

[12] Quarta ratio est ista: quaero de ista realitate communi aut praedicatur identice et formaliter de ista realitate propria et de qualibet cui est communis aut non. Verbi gratia: ut utrum sic praedicetur homo de Socrate et Platone quod verum sit dicere 'haec humanitas est Socrateitas' et e converso, aut non praedicatur identice de ipsis ut non sit verum dicere quod humanitas sit Socrateitas et Platoneitas, sed sit res quaedam in Socrate et Platone. Non potest dari primum, quia tunc una res praedicaretur identice de pluribus differentibus realiter, quod nos male intelligimus etiam in divinis, immo esset quasi una res /Pc 44va/ communis realiter pluribus, sicut est in divinis. Nec potest dari secundus modus, quia tunc cognoscendo humanitatem, nihil in toto mundo cognoscerem de Socrateitate, quia alia /N 137vb/ omnino est. 20 25

1 dicis] dicas Pj 2 prima] illa FbPjVi 1-3 ponitur ... totaliter] [] Fc 2-3 sed ... communis] om. N 4 si sit] significat Fb | illa] ipsa FbPj [] Fc 5 ut prius] om. Vg 6 est] om. FbFcNPcPjVi 7 ita] item N 8 et²] ut FcNPc 9 similiter] sic add. Vg 10 omni] enim Fb 12 potest] om. Pc | esse] om. Vg | nisi] sit Fc om. N | sit] potest Fc | animam in] om. Fc 13 et] plato add. Pj 14 distinctae] discretas Fb 15 distinctis] discretis Fb om. NVi 17 ista²] illa FcNPcPg | aut] ut Pj 18 ista] illa FcNPcPg | realitate] identice Fc 19 communis] om. Fc | homo] et add. Pj 22 socrateitas] sortalitas N | et] vel N | quaedam] quadam Vg 25 quasi] quod Fc 26 nec] non Fb 27 cognoscerem] cognosceret VgVi 27-28 socrateitate] socrate Vg om. Vi 28 alia] alius N

[13] Confirmatur, quia si est communis, tunc quando Socrtaes generat Platonem, vel non generaret totum Platonem, vel idem generaret se, nisi dicatur quod generatio non est aliud quam communicatio essentiae per transfusionem in alio, sicut dicimus de essentia in divinis. Et haec est ratio Aristotelis:ⁱⁱⁱ generans enim non generat idem, sed generat tale, quale ipsum est.

[14] Nunc pono instantias et difficultates quae occurrunt circa hoc. Et prima quidem est quia omni uni potentiae correspondet unum obiectum formale sub una ratione,^{iv} sed visus est una potentia circumscripto actu intellectus, igitur correspondet sibi unum obiectum formale sub una ratione. Illud est color et non hic color, igitur color, in quantum abstrahit ab hoc colore, est aliud in rerum natura. Probatio minoris, quia si hic color sub ratione huius coloris esset obiectum visus, non posset visus cognoscere /Vi 30vb/ aliquid nisi sub ratione huius coloris signati. Et confirmatur, quia sensus non decipitur circa proprium obiectum, sed visus decipitur circa unitatem numeralem obiecti, igitur color sub unitate numerali non est obiectum formale ipsius visus. Probo assumpta,^v /X 105a/ quia visus tendit in radium solarem, qui continue est alius et alius, sicut in unum radium, igitur non attingit visus radium ut hic radius est, sed ut radius in communi.

2 non] om. Vg | generaret¹] generat FcNPgVi | se] om. Vg 4 de ... in] om. Fc | essentia] individuum add. Vg | divinis] divinum Fb 7 pono] propter N 9 formale] formaliter N | sub] sed N | actu] in add. N 10 intellectus] intellectu N 11 igitur] sed N | igitur color] om. PgFc 12 aliud] aliquid FcPc | probatio] probo N | minoris] minorem N 14 coloris] corpus Pc 15 quia] quod Pg | proprium] propositum N 16 numeralem] add. ut Vg 18 radium] radicem Fb | qui] nisi N 19 visus] om. Vg

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica*, Z, 8, 1033b 16–30; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Metaphysica*, lib. I–XIV. *Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 7, cap. 13 (ed. Vuillemin-Diem, 1995, pp. 146–147: 391–410).

^{iv} Cf. Aristoteles, *De anima*, B, 4, 415a 16–20; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *De anima*. *Recensio Guillelmi de Morbeka*, lib. 2, cap. 6 (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 91: 6); cf. John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicarum Aristotelis*, lib. 7, q. 13 (ed. Andrews, Etzkorn, Gál, Green, Kelley, Marcil, Noone, Wood, 1997, n. 71, p. 243).

^v Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1 (ed. Balić, Barbarić, Bušelić, Hechich, Modrić, Nanni, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1973, nn. 22–27, pp. 400–401); John Duns Scotus, *Lectura*, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1 (ed. Modrić, Bušelić, Hechich, Jurić, Percan, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1982, nn. 19–21, pp. 234–235).

[15] Secundo sic. Haec est vera: ‘Socrates est homo’. Quaero tunc aut praedicatur pura ratio fabricata per intellectum, aut Socrateitas de Socrateitate (sive Socrates de seipso), aut res realiter distincta et disparata, aut res communis non realiter distincta.

[16] Non potest dari primus modus, quia tunc una ratio fictitia praedicaretur de vera re. Nec secundus modus videtur possibilis, quia tunc praedicaretur idem de se et non esset aliud dicere ‘Socrates est homo’ quam ‘Socrates est Socrates’. Nec potest dari tertius modus, /Pg 35rb/ quia tunc propositio esset falsa, nam hoc modo res distincta praedicaretur de re distincta praedicatione, quae dicit ‘hoc est hoc’. Oportet ergo 10 dare quartum: quod illud quod praedicatur ibi sit res ipsa aliquo ei addito, quo est Socrates /Pj 151ra/.

[17] Tertio, quia definitio est vere alicuius definibilis rei verae, quia non definitur pura ratio, tunc sic: illud habet veram entitatem realem quod vere definitur, sed definitio est unitatis specifica, non individui, igitur etc. 15

[18] Quarta ratio est ista. Cuicumque reali passioni correspondet subiectum adaequatum, ex primo *Posteriorum*,^{vi} sed risibilitas est passio realis, igitur habet subiectum adaequatum primum reale. Hoc non est aliquod individuum, quia non sibi adaequatur, ergo est aliquod commune, 20 puta natura speciei.

[19] Quinta ratio est ista: illud a quo incipit divisio realis est vere entitas realis habens unitatem realem, sed realis divisio incipit a ratione generis /Vg 29va/, et sic per differentias reales, igitur in genere erit aliqua unitas realis.

2 aut¹] quod Pj 3 socrateitate] socrate FcNPcPgPj | sive] aut Vg 4 disparata] separata FcNPcPgPj 5 dari] dici FcPcPg | fictitia] [] Fc 6 vera] una N | secundus] unus N 7 idem] socrates Pg | et non] nec Vi 8 tertius] secundus Vi 9 esset] est Vi 11 quod¹] quia N | res] ad ipsum *add.* Vg | ipsa] idipsa FbFcPc ad ipsam N *om.* Vg alia ab ipsa Vi 12 quo] alio *add.* N sortes *add.* Vg 13 vere] vera Vi | verae] *om.* Vg 14 entitatem] identitatem Vg | quod] quae N 19 aliuquod¹] quantum *add.* Vg 21 ista] illa Fc *om.* Pc 22 realis¹] *om.* Vi

^{vi} Cf. Aristoteles, *Analytica Posteriora*, I, 7, 75a 23; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Analytica posteriora. Translationes Iacobi, Anonymi sive 'Ioannis', Gerardi et Recensio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 1, cap. 7 (ed. Minio-Paluello, Dod, 1968, p. 293: 26).

[20] Sexta sic: quando aliqua comparantur in una forma, oportet illa habere unitatem realem, unde 7 *Physicorum*^{vii} comparatio non est secundum genus propter aequivocationem. Sed in /Fb 39va/ dividua comparantur secundum unitatem specificam, igitur illa erit realis.

5 [21] Septima sic:^{viii} cuilibet rationi mensuranti convenit aliqua unitas, 10 *Metaphysicae*,^{ix} sed ratio mensurae convenit rei secundum rationem /Pc 44vb/ specificam, non secundum rationem individui, nam unum individuum respectu alterius non habet rationem mensurae, cum inter individua non sit magis vel minus, prius vel posterius,^x igitur ratio
10 specifica habet propriam aliquam unitatem. Sed unitas mensurae non est unitas rationis, ergo etc.

[22] Haec sunt rationes fundamentales cuiusdam opinionis, quae fuit valde communis et famosa usque ad tempora Aristotelis, et fuit opinio
15 Platonis. Sed secundum rei veritatem non fuit opinio Platonis quod ideae essent separatae subiecto et loco, sed erant separatae separatione reali, quia erant realiter aliud ab individuis quibus erant communes, et erant

1 sexta] secundo Fc sexto Vi 3 aequivocationem] aequivocationes N aequipollentiam Pc 4 secundum] sed Vg 5 septima] tertio Fc | mensuranti] mensuranti Pg | convenit] om. N 6 10] 4 NPc 7 rationem¹] naturam FcPc 9 vel¹] et PjVgVi | vel²] et VgVi | posterius] post Fb prius N 12 haec] hoc Pg 13 valde ... fuit] om. Fc 14 sed] om. FbFcNPcPjVi | non] enim add. FbFcPcVgVi | ideae] ipsae add. Vg 16 aliud] om. N

^{vii} Cf. Aristoteles, *Physica*, H, 4, 248b; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Physica. Translatio Vetus*, lib. 7, cap. 4 (ed. Bossier, Brams, 1990, pp. 269–270: 5–10).

^{viii} Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1, (ed. Balić, Barbarić, Bušelić, Hechich, Modrić, Nanni, Rosini, Ruiz de Loizaga, Saco Alarcón, 1973, nn. 11–15, pp. 396–397); John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicarum Aristotelis*, q. 13 (ed. Andrews, Etkorn, Gál, Green, Kelley, Marcil, Noone, Wood, 1997, n. 70, pp. 242–243).

^{ix} Cf. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica*, I, 4–6, 1053a 37–1054b 9; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Metaphysica*, lib. I–XIV. *Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 10, cap. 13 (ed. Vuillemin-Diem, 1995, pp. 146–147: 391–410).

^x Cf. Aristoteles, *Praedicamenta*, 2b 7–3a 6; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Categoriae vel Praedicamenta. Translatio Boethii, Editio Composite, Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka, Lemmata e Simplicii commentario decerpta, Pseudo-Augustini Paraphrasis Themistianae*, cap. 5, pp. 8–9; pp. 88–89 (ed. Minio-Paluello, 1961); cf. Simplicius, *Simplicii In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* (ed. Kalbfleisch, 1907, pp. 89–90); cf. Simplicius, *Simplicius in Categorias*, cap. 5 (ed. Pattin, vol. 1, p. 121: 26–55).

hoc modo ingenerabiles et incorruptibiles et per communicationem talis
 realitatis communis isti et illi, et iste et ille erant homines et sic de aliis
 individuis aliarum specierum. Et hunc intellectum tangit Philosophus,
 2 *De generatione et corruptione*,^{xi} qui dicit quod apud istos generatio
 fiebat per ingressum et /X 105b/ egressum, et ita mens eorum erat quod
 5
 idea erat realitas intra individuum, sed tamen extra, non per separationem
 localem, sed entitativam, quia realiter distincta ab individuo. Et realitas
 istius ideae communis fiebat huius et illius particularis per materiam
 contrahentem, et hoc modo Callias et Socrates non differunt nisi per
 materiam, et sic procedit Aristoteles contra istam opinionem ad istum
 intellectum, 7 *Metaphysicae*.^{xii} 10

[23] Ad difficultates quae adduncuntur dico quod omnes procedunt
 ex rationibus communibus et logicis, et ideo sunt difficiles ad solvendum,
 tamen ex rationibus logicis non debet iudicari verum, posito quod appareat
 aliquod inconueniens secundum rationem logicam. 15

[24] Tunc ad primum dico quod ratio supponit falsum, scilicet
 quod actus sensationis terminetur ad aliam realitatem quam individui;

1 hoc modo] omnino Fc ideo N huiusmodi Vg ideae omnino *add.* Vg | commu-
 nicationem] communitatem N 2 communis] *om.* N | et iste] *om.* Pc | et³] *om.*
 FcPgPj 4 qui] cum FbPjVgVi | istos] illos Pg 5 et²] *om.* FbNpCpJvi | ita] quod
add. FbPcVg 6 tamen] cum hoc Fc | extra] scilicet individui *add.* Fc | per] sed N
 7 sed] *om.* N | realiter] formaliter Vi | individuo] individua N 8 huius] haec FcN-
 PcPjVgVi | illius] illa FcNpCpJvGvi | fiebat ... particularis] et hoc modo callias et
 socrates Fb 10 istam] unam Pc 11 intellectum] intellectus Vg | metaphysicae] est
 nunc *add.* Fc tunc *add.* NPcPgVi 12 dico] contra istam opinionem *add.* Vg 13 ratio-
 nibus] rebus Fb | communibus] quibusdam Fc | et¹] *om.* FbVgFc | logicis] locis Pg
 14 debet] habet Vg 16 primum] argumentum *add.* Fc autem *add.* N | scilicet] *om.*
 FcPcPgVg 17 actus] ratio FcPc

^{xi} Cf. Aristoteles, *De generatione et corruptione*, B, 9, 335b 8–24; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *De generatione et corruptione. Translatio Vetus*, lib. 2, cap. 9 (ed. Judycka, 1986, pp. 73–74); cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *De generatione et corruptione. Recensio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 2, cap. 9 (ed. Judycka, 2003).

^{xii} Cf. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica*, Z, 8, 1034a 4–8; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Metaphysica, lib. I–XIV. Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka*, lib. 7, cap. 8 (ed. Vuillemin-Diem, 1995, p. 147: 416–419).

secundum enim Aristotelem^{xiii} intellectus est universalium, sensus vero particularium, et ideo radius qui terminat visum est hic radius numeralis.

[25] Tunc ad formam: cum dicitur “uni potentiae /N 138ra/ correspondet unum formale obiectum,” dico quod potentia comparatur ad
 5 obiectum per actum suum mediante quo attingit obiectum. Sicut igitur est de actibus individuus in ordine ad obiectum, sic de potentia ad actum; sicut igitur actus numeraliter sunt distincti et habent unitatem specificam, sic a parte obiecti color, qui aspicit actus numeraliter distinctos, est hic color et hic color secundum unitatem numeralem. Color vero qui aspicit
 10 actus ut sunt unum specie habet unitatem communem speciei sive generis, sic ergo unitas obiecti correspondet unitati potentiae mediante actu, et ideo mediante actu numerali respicit hunc colorem numeralem. Mediante vero actu communi respicit colorem secundum rationem communem, secundum autem /Vi 31ra/ rationem specificam actus est obiectum color
 15 abstractus, quam quidem abstractionem non facit sensus, sed intellectus, et per consequens intellectus est qui dat sibi illam unitatem.

[26] Ad illud de radio, quod visus non /Pj 151rb/ decipitur in unitate propria /Pg 35va/ sui obiecti formalis, concedo, et ideo actus ille numeralis non decipitur circa hunc radium. Quot enim sunt radii, tot sunt visiones, et
 20 ideo sicut annihilatur et evanescit radius, sic annihilatur et evanescit visio quae erat respectu illius. Et cum dicit “sensus iudicat per totum decursum esse unum radium”, nego de sensu particulari, sed verum est de sensu communi, ille enim iudicat esse unum radium, et ratio est quia omnes /Pc 45ra/ sunt apti facere unam impressionem, /Fc 40va/ et sunt similia

2 qui ... numeralis] qui terminat visum est hic radius numeralis *add.* Fc | numeralis] universalis N 5 quo] qua FbNpcPj 5–6 sicut ... actum] *om.* Vi 6 ad actum] *om.* FeNpcPgVg 7 actus] actus *add.* Fc communi *add.* FcPgVg | sunt] *om.* Vi | distincti] distincta N | et] *om.* PgVi | et habent] ad hanc FcN | unitatem] uniformalitatem Pj | specificam] distinctam FcNpcPg 8 qui] quae Fb 9 hic color] *om.* Vg | vero] *om.* Fc enim Pg 11 et] *om.* N 12 numeralem] sed *add.* PgVgVi 12–13 mediante ... communem] *om.* Vi 13 vero] *om.* Pg | communi] qui *add.* Vg 14 actus] alicuius N 17–19 in ... decipitur] *om.* N 19 circa] contra N 20 ideo] *om.* FbPjVgVi | visio] *om.* N 23 iudicat] deiudicat Fc dicat N | radium] *om.* Pg 24 et] *om.* Pg

^{xiii} Cf. Aristoteles, *Analytica Posteriora*, A31, 87b 37–39; cf. Aristoteles Latinus, *Analytica posteriora. Translationes Iacobi, Anonymi sive 'Ioannis', Gerardi et Recensio Guillelmi de Moerbeka* (ed. Minio-Paluello, Dod, 1968, p. 317: 10–11); cf. *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis* (ed. Hamesse, 1974, p. 319).

et eiusdem rationis. Et ideo ibi decipitur sensus communis, sed non sensus particularis, cuius hic radius est proprium obiectum, ut hic et hic.

[27] Ad illud de praedicatione dico quod non praedicetur alia res quam Socrateitas, cum dicitur /Fb 39vb/ ‘Socrates est homo’. Ad inconveniens quod adducitur quod idem praedicaretur de se, dico quod quantum ad rem ita est vere, enim secundum rem eadem est res quae ponitur in subiecto et quae ponitur in praedicato. Sed loquendo de re in ordine ad intellectum qui cognoscit eandem rem alio et alio conceptu, cum accipit Socratem ut Socratem et ut hominem—quaelibet enim res singularis /X 106a/ nata est facere de se alium et alium conceptum, et unum notio-rem altero, per quem declarat illum—et sic eadem res sub conceptu noto praedicatur de se sub conceptu ignoto, est enim res omnino una sub utroque conceptu, et intellectus ponit per eandem similitudinem confusam omnia individua <sub> unum conceptum specificum.

[28] Dices ergo pura ratio et purus conceptus praedicabitur de vera re, et erit falsa praedicatio.

[29] Respondeo: rationem praedicari de re potest intelligi dupliciter. Uno modo quod pura ratio praedicetur sic quod sit illud quod praedicatur, et tunc curret inconveniens /Vg 29vb/ quod adducitur. Secundo modo quod ratio non praedicetur, sed sit aliquid inclusum necessario in praedicato, quia cum praedicatio sit actus intellectus, impossibile est rem praedicari nisi sub concipi passive, et tunc praedicatio est impossibilis nisi praedicatum et subiectum accipiantur sub alio et alio concipi, qui faciunt alium et alium conceptum, et per consequens aliam et aliam rationem, et sic res est quae praedicatur, concipi autem est illud quod concurrit ad illud quod subicitur et quod praedicatur. Et sic totum praedicatur de toto. Nec propter hoc est praedicatio entis per accidens, quia non potest intellectus praescindere intelligi rem et suum concipi sine contradictione. De hoc quaero plenius cum agebatur de ratione generis et differentiae.^{xiv}

1 rationis] *om.* Fc 2 cuius] et sunt Fc 3 praedicetur] praedicatur FbPcPj 8 rem] sub *add.* Vg 9 res] *om.* Vi 10 alium et] *om.* N | et ... conceptum] *om.* Fc | notio-rem] nobiliorem Vg 11 quem] quam Pg 15 pura] puta Fb 17 respondeo] dico Vi | ratio-nem] rei Vi 18 quod²] *om.* Fb non *add.* Vg | sit] *om.* Fb 19 curret] curreret PcPj 22 concipi] conceptu Pg 25 quae] qua N | praedicatur] ponitur Fc | autem] aut PgFc | concurrit] concipit FcNVgVi | illud²] idem N 26 et²] quod *add.* et *del.* Fb 28 intelligi] intellectus Pc inter Vi 29 quaero] dictum est Pg quaesivi Vg quaerebatur Vi

^{xiv} Cf. Petrus Aureoli, *II Sententiarum*, d. 3, q. 2, art. 4 (Fb, ff. 25va–27vb).

[30] Dico igitur quod quando ibi praedicatur homo de Socrate et Platone, homo non est res alia a Socrate et Platone, nec tamen est una res in ipsis nisi unitate rationis, quae consistit in uno concipi, quia omnes istae res, puta Socrates et Plato, et sic de aliis, conveniunt in uno concipi
5 passive, et ideo sub illa ratione attinguntur unica intellectione et uno intelligi. Et ideo est una ratio quae non est aliud quam unitas conceptus, nec istud concipi, ut dictum est alias,^{xv} respicit rem ut substratum, sed per indivisionem, quia intellectus rem concipi non potest resolvere in duo, sed quantumcumque accipiat rem praecise, semper ibi includit concipi.

10 [31] Ad aliud de definitione, dico quod definitio vera est singularium, ut Commentator dicit 2 *De anima*, commento 8,^{xvi} exponens mentem Aristotelis fuisse istam.

[32] Sciendum igitur quod circa rem circa quam intellectus negotiatur est duo considerare, scilicet rem ipsam et operationem intellectus. Definitio autem, cum sit actus intellectus, oportet esse in diffinitione et rem
15 ipsam et operationem intellectus. Res igitur, quae ibi est, est singularis et particularis, sed quia ibi concurrat operatio intellectus, ideo definitio est rei secundum communem conceptum quem res illa facit. Sic ergo ibi diffinitio est rei particularis, sed secundum coexplicationem unitatis
20 quam facit intellectus. Diffinitio est rei sub concipi.

[33] Ad illud de passione quod habet subiectum adaequatum respondeo: sic est de passionibus, /**Pc 45rb**/ sicut de subiectis, quia sicut hic homo et hic homo faciunt unum communem conceptum, /**Pj 151va**/ quia quodlibet istorum est res cum tali concipi, sic haec risibilitas et haec.
25 Et ideo haec risibilitas adaequatur huic humanitati et illa illi. Risibilitas

1 igitur] *om.* FcPc sic N | quando] *om.* Pc | ibi] *om.* FbFcNVi autem Pc 3 quae] [] Fc *om.* N | quia] igitur *add.* Pg | omnes] *om.* Pg 5 attinguntur] sub *add.* Vg 6 aliud] ad N 7 alias] et *add.* Pg 8 rem] esse et Fb 10 quod] *om.* N | vera] negativa FcPcVg 14 ipsam] illam FcPcPg 15 et] *om.* Fc 16 ipsam] illam PgFc istam N | res] *om.* N 18 quem] quam Fc | sic] si Fb 19 ibi] *om.* FbN *add. et del.* Pg | coexplicationem] participationem FcPc explicationem NPgPjVgVi 22 est] *om.* Pg | subiectis] substantiis Pg 24 istorum] illorum PgFc | res] *om.* N 25 haec] scilicet Vg

^{xv} Cf. Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum I*, d. 23, art. 2 (ed. De Rijk, 2005, pp. 718–719; pp. 737–738).

^{xvi} Cf. Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, II, comm. 8 (ed. Crawford, 1953, pp. 142–143).

autem simpliciter adaequatur humanitati simpliciter ita quod quaelibet realitas sit sub uno communi /**X 106b**/ concipi passive. Et sic adaequantur passiones subiectis proportionaliter hinc inde. /**Pg 35vb**/

[34] Ad aliud de divisione reali /**N 138rb**/ concedo maiorem et minorem nego, illa enim non est realis divisio per differentias, nec incipit ab unitate rei absolute, sed ut cadit sub concipi. 5

[35] Ad illud de comparatione dico quod comparatio fit secundum unitatem conceptus, non rei.

[36] Ad probationem de Philosopho dico quod si illa esset intentio Philosophi, ita diceret quod comparatio sit secundum genus, sicut secundum speciem; nam /**Fc 40vb**/ generi, secundum istos, correspondet propria /**Vi 31rb**/ realitas quam non importat /**Fb 40ra**/ differentia, et rationes suae aliquae potissimae, ita probant de genere, sicut de specie. Et tamen Philosophus negat comparationem secundum genus, et concedit secundum speciem. 10 15

[37] Dico ergo quod ad comparationem sufficit unitas in concipi, sub qua intellectus ponens omnia potest comparare illa in illa ratione conceptus. Potest enim intellectus habere unam speciem omnium individuorum, et ideo potest habere actum unum, et per consequens unum concipi et unum conceptum generis, et secundum illum erit comparatio. 20

[38] Sed quare non sic sit comparatio individuorum secundum unum conceptum generis, sicut speciei, respondeo: unitas conceptus generis provenit a quodam concipi diminuto et imperfecto, qui sequitur actum imperfectum, qui est a specie quadam diminuta proveniente ab imperfecta impressione quam nata sunt facere individua in intellectu. Et hinc est quod conceptus generis expectat semper differentiam contrahentem, quia non est secundum concipi simpliciter sed imperfectum. Et hinc est quod genus est aliquid medium inter potentiam et actum, et quia comparatio 25

1 simpliciter¹] *om.* Pc 2 communi] *om.* Vg 3 subiectis] substantiis Pg 4 maiorem] *om.* VgFc 5 realis] realiter Pg 6 unitate] reali *add.* Vg | ut] et Pj 9 probationem] probatio Fb | quod] *om.* FbPjVi 10 philosophi] si *add.* Vi | ita] ibi Vg | quod comparatio] *om.* Vg | sit] sic Vg 11 generi] generari FcN | correspondet] corrumpit Pg 12 non] *om.* N 13 potissimae] positivae Pg | probant] probant *add.* Fb | genere] generatione N 14 secundum] sed N 20 unum] *om.* Vg | generis] *om.* FcPcVgVi 21 quare] *om.* Fb | sic] *om.* FbNPj 23 qui] quod Vg | sequitur] speciem *add.* FbFcN-PcPjVg speciem sed *add.* Vi 26 semper] per Fb 27 simpliciter] singulariter N | et] *om.* Fc | hinc] hoc N 28 est] et Fc *om.* N

est inter habentia unum concipi simpliciter. Ideo inter individua non est comparatio secundum genus.

[39] Ad illud de mensura dico quod mensura non accipitur secundum unitatem alicuius rei communis, sed tantum in intellectu et in concipi.

5 Et ideo intellectus facit illam mensurationem, quae metitur plura secundum unitatem aliquam quae est tantum in intellectu, licet proveniat a re mediante uno concipi, qui est per unum actum, qui provenit ab una specie, quam causant plura individua ratione unius impressionis quam apta nata sunt facere in intellectu.

10 [40] Ad argumentum in oppositum, cum dicitur quod per idem re non potest aliquid convenire cum alio et differre, respondeo: aut loqueris de convenientia et differentia formaliter. Et tunc concedo maiorem, quod per idem formaliter non possunt aliqua convenire et differre; quae enim conveniunt, conveniunt formaliter per relationem convenientiae, et
15 quae differunt, differunt formaliter per relationem mutuam differentiae. Quia ergo non est eadem relatio convenientia et differentia, ideo non eodem formali quo aliqua conveniunt differunt.

[41] Si vero loquaris non formaliter, sed fundamentaliter, tunc maior non est vera, quia per eandem /Vg 30ra/ realitatem albedinis, haec albedo
20 convenit magis cum hac albedine, et minus convenit cum /X 107a/ hac nigredine. Unde realitas eadem huius albedinis est illud quo haec albedo fundat convenientiam ad albedinem illam, et illud quo caret haec albedo tali gradu convenientiae /Pc 45va/ ad nigredinem ita quod ex parte fundamenti non est aliquis gradus distinctionis rei et rei, nec formalitatis et
25 formalitatis, sed per idem omnino convenit cum isto tantum, et cum alio non. Gradus autem distinctionis est tantum penes relationes convenientiae et disconvenientiae formaliter.

1 simpliciter] et add. NPgVi om. Vg 3 mensura¹] mensuratio Vg | non] om. Vg 5 quae] qui PgFcVi 6 licet] sed Fb 7 qui¹] quod VgFc 8 quam¹] om. N | impressionis] impossibilis N | apta] acta Vg 10 cum] quod Pc | cum dicitur] om. FcVg 11 cum alio] composito N 12 concedo] concludo Pc 11–13 respondeo ... differre] om. N 13 differre] quia add. Vi 14 enim] etiam FcNPcPgPjVg; om. Vi | conveniunt²] om FcNPcPg 15 differunt¹] om. Fc 16 ideo] immo Pg igitur Vi 17 differunt] differentia N | albedo] om. N 20 convenit²] concludit Pc 19–21 haec ... nigredine] om. Fc 21–22 illud ... illud] om. Vg 23–24 fundamenti] fundati add. N 24–25 et formalitatis] om. Vi 26 non] tantum add. FbNPcPjVi

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Abstract

This paper comprises two parts. The first part is an introduction to Auriol's moderate conceptualism, as it is presented in his *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1. The second part is an edition of the text. In the introduction, I focus on Auriol's use of the noetic tool of connotation. My thesis, in particular, is that connotation is a necessary prerequisite to his moderate conceptualism. To this purpose, the first part of this introduction will be devoted to a brief presentation of Auriol's conceptualism. In the second part, Auriol's theory of essential predication will be presented. In the third part, I will present my claim that Auriol's theory of essential predication can only be made sense of when read against the background of his theory of connotation as applied to intellectual cognition. Finally, I will offer a collation of Auriol's *Commentary* on Book II of the *Sentences*, distinction 9, question 2, article 1, obtained by collating eight manuscripts, which hand down Auriol's text, that is, Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, ms. Conv. Soppr. B.6.121, Firenze, ms. Conv. Soppr. A. 3.120, Napoli, Biblioteca nazionale, ms. VII.C.3, Padova, Biblioteca Antoniana, ms. 161, scaff. ix, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. latin 15867; Pelplin, Biblioteka Seminarium duchownego, ms. 46/85, Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Borgiano 404, Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica, ms. Vat. lat. 942.

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THE MIDDLE COLOR: A HISTORY OF A PROBLEM
IN THIRTEENTH CENTURY OXFORD COMMENTARIES
ON *DE SENSU ET SENSATO***

Keywords: Natural Philosophy, Medieval Aristotelianism, Commentaries on *De sensu et sensato*, Adam of Buckfield, Geoffrey of Aspill

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Introduction

Aristotle did not write any work devoted exclusively to color. Passages in which he discusses the theory of color and color perception are dispersed in several of his writings, including *De anima*, *Meteorologica*, some works on zoology; in the most elaborate form, it is presented in *De sensu et sensato*.¹ All these works became available to Western scholars in Latin translations between the late twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries at the latest. Aristotle's teaching on color was supplemented with other newly translated treatises on perspective, such as Euclid's *Optica* and *Catoptrica (De speculis)*, Alkindi's *De aspectibus*, and Alhazen's *De aspectibus* (also known as *Perspectiva*). All of them soon became the basis for scholastic works on the same subject, e.g., by Roger Bacon and John Peckham. Although their approach to the problem of visual perception was far from the Aristotelian one, they were sometimes utilized by those willing to comment on Aristotle's views on color by employing a mathematical model based primarily on the rules of refraction and reflexion. The group of secondary texts often included the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De coloribus*, a treatise written by an anonymous scholar from the Peripatetic school in the third century BC.² Because some of its medieval readers were not entirely convinced that the theory of color presented in *De coloribus* is fully compatible with Aristotle's views on the issue, it was used sparingly when commenting on the latter.³

Other source texts on visual perception notwithstanding, *De sensu et sensato* remained the most important text for the thirteenth century scholars who discussed Aristotle's theory of color in general and the problem of the so-called middle color (*color medius*), the main subject of this paper, in particular. The scholastics' problems with the notion of the middle color can be divided into two groups. First, there are strictly philosophical problems, such as establishing the number of colors between white and black and whether there is a middle color *par excellence*, i.e., the one in which the

¹ For more on the sources of Aristotle's theory of color, see Pastoureau, 2018, pp. 192–193.

² Dod, 2008, pp. 49, 85.

³ E.g., Galfridus de Aspull, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 57, *Utrum elementa sint colorata* and q. 59, *Utrum quattuor qualitates primae sint principia coloris*.

proportion of the extremes is even etc.⁴ Second, there are the philological ones, which result from the very nature of Latin color terminology available at the time. When commenting on Aristotle's theory of color, medieval commentators of *De sensu et sensato* had to deal with lamentably imprecise color terms, which, to make matters worse, did not have fixed meanings yet. Those terms could refer not only to several "modern" colors at a time but also included some qualities other than color, such as luminosity, saturation, smoothness of the object's surface and many more.⁵

This paper aims to reconstruct the earliest attempts to comprehend Aristotle's concept of the middle color undertaken by the thirteenth century Oxford commentators of *De sensu et sensato*. It is focused on the relationship between philological choices made by the first translator of the treatise and the philosophical interpretations and questions triggered by them. My interest is restricted exclusively to Oxford scholars of the thirteenth century for several reasons. First, the earliest stage of *De sensu et sensato*'s reception in the Latin world is the time in which the problem of the middle color was especially significant. Second, the commentaries' authors wrote almost exclusively literal expositions, whose main objective was an understanding of the text. They probably formed a group of scholars discussing the same problems with one another rather than referring to commentaries written in other academic centres. This is visible in the doctrinal content of their works: there is a number of references to their colleagues' works but almost no references to any Parisian commentaries on *De sensu et sensato*, not even to Bacon's. Third, they share references to other works instead, such as medical texts and even art manuals, and make extensive use of those non-philosophical works, which makes their solutions to the middle color problem even more interesting.

⁴ The term "the middle color," as medieval scholars understood it, was equivocal, for it might have stood both for any color between white and black and for the middle color *par excellence* between these two extremes. As we shall see, this equivocation caused some problems of interpretation for the earliest commentators of *De sensu et sensato*.

⁵ For some examples of difficulties concerning studying Latin color terminology, see Pastoureau, 2018, pp. 25–27.

The First Translation of *De sensu et sensato*

Roger Bacon, who is believed to be the first Latin commentator of Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato*, is well known for his critical attitude towards translations of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy. He complained about numerous passages he found ambiguous, nonsensical or contradictory to statements that he had found in other writings by Stagirite, and fiercely attacked translators for their apparent lack of skill.⁶ He saw them as ignorant, because they restricted themselves to word-for-word translation, disregarding the specificity of Latin syntax, and abused transliteration of Greek terms instead of looking for their Latin counterparts.⁷ He also frequently criticized their stylistic choices. Reading Bacon's scathing remarks, one may wonder whether the translations were really so bad. After a closer look at the first Latin translation of *De sensu et sensato*, the so-called *translatio vetus*, one must but agree.

Very little is known about *De sensu et sensato*'s translator and the date of his work. Griet Galle compared the lexicographical and stylistic features characteristic of this anonymous translation with the ones from all other early translations of Aristotle. Her aim was to establish whether the translation of *De sensu et sensato* shares any similarities with other translations and, if so, whether its translator could be identified with anyone we know. Her conclusion was negative: *De sensu et sensato* differs stylistically from other works so much that it should be considered unique.⁸ It must have been that particular translator's only attempt to render Aristotle's text into Latin. There is no doubt he had little knowledge of how to do it. His translation is full of mistakes: for instance, David Bloch noticed that he often used the same case in Latin as in Greek, even when it was inappropriate in the

⁶ For the most elaborate critiques of bad translations, found in the third part of his *Opus Maius*, which is devoted to theory of language and translation, see Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius* (ed. Bridges, 1897, pp. 66–96). Some remarks on the consequences of bad translations of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy are also present in the second part of the same work. Cf. Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius* (ed. Bridges, 1897, pp. 38–41). He also wrote a Greek grammar for Latin speakers. Cf. Roger Bacon, *Grammatica Graeca* (ed. Nolan, Hirsch, 1902).

⁷ Cf. Parkhurst, 1990, pp. 159–161.

⁸ Cf. Galle, 2008b, pp. 105–108, 136.

former, and introduced some phrases that were meaningless in Latin, which may indicate that the translator was Greek himself.⁹

The *terminus ante quem* of the translation is 1232, when the references to *De sensu et sensato* appear in the anonymous *De potentiis animae et obiectis*.¹⁰ Some time later, probably in the early 1240s, it was commented upon by Roger Bacon in Paris.¹¹ There is, however, no consensus concerning its *terminus a quo*. Some scholars suggest that the translation could have been done by the second half of the twelfth century.¹² According to them, its poor early reception may have been caused by the scholars' focus on other newly-translated works in psychology and physiology or by problems with its understanding without the help of other works on the subject, such as Averroes commentaries, which were not translated until the 1230s.¹³ Some other researchers support a hypothesis that it was completed no sooner than the beginning of the thirteenth century, pointing to the fact that none out of the 92 known manuscripts containing the *translatio vetus* dates from the twelfth century and there is no testimony of its knowledge in the authors of that period.¹⁴

Problems with Aristotle's Theory of Color

No matter when it happened, the Western scholars who laid their hands on this translation had to struggle with the artless style of Aristotle made worse by a poor translation. The problems they encountered are evident especially in the theory of color. As they could learn from *De sensu et sensato*, Aristotle claims that there are two so-called extreme colors, sc. black and white, and a number of so-called middle colors, such as red and green, which are somehow derived from the first two. The specific terminology that Aristotle employs when talking about colors reflects his opinion that colors form a sequence which has white and black at its extreme points and

⁹ More information about this hypothesis and linguistic problems in the translation of *De sensu et sensato* can be found in Bloch, 2008, p. 87.

¹⁰ Galle, 2008b, p. 108; cf. Callus, 1952, pp. 131–170.

¹¹ Cf. Roger Bacon, *Liber De sensu et sensato* (ed. Steele, 1937).

¹² Cf. Raizman-Kedar, 2007, p. 372.

¹³ Cf. Galle, 2008b, p. 107.

¹⁴ Galle, 2008b, p. 107; cf. Galle, 2008a, p. 198.

five middle colors placed at intervals along it.¹⁵ Each of the middle colors is fixed at a point between the extremes according to a specific ratio of whiteness to blackness proper to it.¹⁶ Then, Aristotle enumerates the middle colors. The *translatio vetus* runs as follows:

Fere enim equales et humorum species et colorum sunt; septem enim utrorumque species quis ponat; quare rationabiliter lividum album quid esse. Sequitur enim flavum quidem albi esse, quemadmodum unctuosum est dulcis, puniceum vero et alurgon et viride et kianos in medio albi et nigri, alii vero inter istos.¹⁷

For the thirteenth century Oxford scholars this passage turned out to be a veritable puzzle. On the whole, there were three problems with which they had to struggle. First, they did not know what colors or hues hid behind the transliterated Greek terms *kianos* and *alurgon*. Scholars who were not as fortunate as Roger Bacon with his fluent Greek¹⁸ were forced to guess their meanings from the context. Second, in his text, Aristotle actually enumerates eight colors rather than seven; what should be done about the extra one? Third, if Aristotle claims that there are seven colors in total, there is an implicit problem concerning the middle color *par excellence*, sc. the one in which the ratio of whiteness to blackness is even. To the best of my knowledge, the last problem, which was genuinely philosophical, was new at the time and attracted commentators' attention for at least a few decades until its doctrinal relevance finally vanished.

¹⁵ Cf. Aristoteles, *De sensu et sensato*, 3, 439b14–440b26 (ed. Peeters, TAGL.13.1, ALDatabase).

¹⁶ Parkhurst, 1990, pp. 158–159.

¹⁷ Cf. Aristoteles, *De sensu et sensato*, 4, 442a19–25 (ed. Peeters, TAGL.13.1, ALDatabase).

¹⁸ I do not include Roger Bacon in my paper for several reasons. First, according to Robert Steele, who was the editor of the single manuscript containing the commentary on *De sensu et sensato*, it bears no author's name and was ascribed to Bacon because of some doctrinal similarities to his other works. Almost nothing is known about when and where it was written, but the most probable place of its origin is Paris. Finally, from the doctrinal point of view, his commentary had very limited, if any, influence on upon Oxford commentators in the thirteenth century. For more information on the authorship and the description of the manuscript, see Steele, 1937, pp. v–vii, xi–xii.

Oxford Commentators of *De sensu et sensato* in the Thirteenth Century

The first scholar to address those problems in Oxford was Adam of Buckfield.¹⁹ He was among the earliest commentators of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy there. The first mention of him in Oxford is 1238, when he received the king's exceptional permission to temporarily leave the university regardless of the prohibitions imposed on scholars after the attack on the papal legate.²⁰ The break in his studies, however, could not have lasted long, for we know that he obtained his MA degree by 1243²¹ and then continued teaching at the Faculty of Arts. There, he soon became a man of a high reputation and eventually attracted the attention of Adam Marsh, who recommended him to Robert Grosseteste as a good candidate for the rector of the church of Eure (Evere, Eure), now Iver in Buckinghamshire, not far from Heathrow Airport.²² As a result, Adam of Buckfield, who was presumably a master of theology at that time,²³ got the position. Some time later, he was also made a canon and prebendary of Lincoln cathedral.²⁴ Moving to Lincoln apparently ended his teaching career in Oxford, which spanned about 15 years in the 1230s and 1240s. In some later documents, he appears as a collector of papal tithes in Lincoln, an executor of Richard of Munfichet's

¹⁹ His surname was written in so many ways (Bocfeld, Butrefeld, Buchphiz, Bonefeno, Bouchermefort, Bochesmefore, etc.) and there were so many works ascribed to him that some twentieth-century scholars put forward a hypothesis there were actually two Adams: an Englishman, who was called Adam of Buckfield (Bocfeld) and a Frenchman, namely Adam of Bouchermefort. This hypothesis, however, was soon abandoned and a general agreement was reached. For more details of this debate, see Thomson, 1944, pp. 55–57.

²⁰ Emden, 1957, p. 297. There was an attack upon the papal legate on his retinue at Oseney Abbey in Oxford by a number of clerks from the University of Oxford. The legate's brother was killed and the legate himself was forced to flee for his life. As a result, the members of the university were forbidden to enter or leave Oxford under the king's interdict.

²¹ Emden, 1957, p. 297.

²² Cf. Brewer, 1858, p. 165. Marsh called Adam of Buckfield a scholar of "commendable excellence of manners, of divine eloquence and skills in human letters."

²³ Cf. Russell, 1936, p. 3.

²⁴ Cf. Noone, 1992, p. 308.

will, and an administrator of some church estates.²⁵ He died between 1278 and 1294.²⁶

Adam of Buckfield was a prolific writer. Although he composed, presumably for didactic purposes, literal commentaries on the whole *corpus Aristotelicum vetustius*,²⁷ his main philosophical interest lay in Aristotle's works on natural philosophy.²⁸ In his commentaries, he offered a very detailed system of structural divisions and subdivisions of the commented text (*divisio textus*) followed by explanations or paraphrases of problematic passages. Many of Buckfield's writings are preserved in more than one redaction. This is also the case of his exposition of *De sensu et sensato*. It used to be considered to have two redactions: the first one, found in six manuscripts (Cambridge, Lisbon, Madrid, Milan, Oxford, and Philadelphia),²⁹ was believed to be authentic, while the other, preserved in three manuscripts (Erfurt, London, and Vatican),³⁰ was treated as spurious by some scholars. More recently, Griet Galle modified this division. First, she singled out the Lisbon manuscript, formerly put in the first redaction, arguing that it should be considered a separate, third redaction. She also suggested that the first redaction should cover only four manuscripts (Madrid, Milan, Oxford, and Philadelphia). The Cambridge manuscript and yet another manuscript from Erfurt are supposed to contain some anonymous abbreviations of this text.³¹ In her opinion, the authenticity of all texts beside the first redaction

²⁵ Cf. Russell, 1936, p. 3.

²⁶ Emden, 1957, p. 297.

²⁷ Callus, 1943, pp. 29–30.

²⁸ As for now, we know of more than 60 manuscripts containing some of his works spread throughout the European and North American libraries. Cf. Lohr, 2013, pp. 3–9; Lohr, 1967, pp. 317–23.

²⁹ Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 506 (384), ff. 282r–293r (C); Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional, Alcobaça 382, ff. 126va–141rb (Li); Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España 3314, ff. 100r–110v (Ma); Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana H.105 inf., ff. 1r–18r (Mi); Oxford, Balliol Coll. 313, f. 132r–144v (O); Philadelphia, Free Library, Lewis European 53, ff. 52ra–57vb (Phi).

³⁰ Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Ampl. F. 318, ff. 150r–161r (E); London, Wellcome Hist. Med. Libr. 3, ff. 53v–60r (W); Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5988, ff. 34ra–41va (V).

³¹ Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 506 (384), ff. 282r–293r (C); Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, q. 312, ff. 69va–73vb (E₂).

is uncertain.³² My preliminary research of the passages devoted to the theory of colors complies with Galle's findings. I have compared samples from all three redactions with one another; they demonstrate differences which are so numerous and so significant that it is hardly possible that texts have a common source.

It is interesting to note that the ideas found in the so-called second redaction seem close to those of yet another thirteenth-century English scholar, Adam of Whitby, an otherwise obscure person who composed several commentaries on Aristotle's works and might have been somehow related to Adam "de Withebi", who was sheriff of London in 1210.³³ It seems highly probable that he was a colleague, maybe a little younger, of Adam of Buckfield in Oxford, for they evidently share the same philosophical background and commenting style.³⁴ Even more interesting but truly challenging is the analysis of doctrinal contents of the third redaction of the commentary, because the quality of the text transmitted by its only copy is so poor that it hardly makes any sense at all.³⁵ Nevertheless, the fragments I have deciphered so far seem to support the hypothesis that it is closer to the first redaction than to the second one.

For these reasons, my paper considers only the first redaction, as established by Galle to be the genuine commentary on *De sensu et sensato* by Adam of Buckfield. My interpretation of its most confusing passages is complemented with glosses from the anonymous Cambridge abbreviation of this

³² Cf. Galle, 2008a, pp. 204–208. The defenders of the authenticity of all redactions ascribed to Adam of Buckfield explain that the differences support the hypothesis that the author was dissatisfied with the original results of his commentary work and rewrote some of his lectures several times. Cf. Thomson, 1958, p. 25.

³³ Cf. Russell, 1936, p. 10.

³⁴ We know of three manuscripts containing Adam of Whitby's commentary on *De sensu et sensato*: München, Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14522, ff. 149rb–154vb (M); Paris, BN, lat. 16149, ff. 62ra–67ra (P); and Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. G 3 464, ff. 73vb–78ra (Fi). Cf. Lohr, 1967, p. 324; cf. Weijers, 1994, p. 31; cf. Köhler, 2017, p. 52. In my paper, I will take into account only the last copy, namely Fi, because M lacks the whole passage on the theory of colors (it suddenly breaks in the middle of the commentary and the continuation does not cover these considerations) and I did not have access to P.

³⁵ The bad quality of Li has already been noticed by Galle, who doubts whether it is possible to read it without the editor's far-reaching intervention in the text and multiple conjectures. Cf. Galle, 2008a, pp. 207–208.

redaction. The second, unauthentic redaction of Buckfield's commentary and the exposition by Adam of Whitby are analyzed together as they seem to complement one another doctrinally. The third redaction is used in fragments only but, as we shall see, it presents some ideas that seem to be unrelated to any other known commentaries on *De sensu et sensato* from that period and, for that reason, offers some unique insights. On the basis of these commentaries, I present a survey of the opinions of Oxford scholars on the idea of the middle color in the first period of the reception of *De sensu et sensato* (ca. 1230–1245). The picture is completed with an analysis of a question-commentary by Geoffrey of Aspall, who wrote his commentary in the late 1250s or at the beginning of the 1260s. Aspall, who was a generation younger than Adam of Buckfield, is sometimes considered as a student of the latter. His commentary was considered the most developed and elaborate work on the topic in his times. At the same time, it was the last interpretation of the *De sensu et sensato* before William of Moerbeke revised the *translatio vetus*.³⁶

Oxford Interpretations of the Problem of the Middle Color

In the first redaction of the exposition on *De sensu et sensato*, Adam of Buckfield states that there are two extreme and five *notable* (*notabiles*) middle colors. All other ones, the so-called “less notable colors,” can be easily reduced to the notable ones; for instance, crimson, burgundy and carmine can be reduced to red, whereas teal and emerald to green. Such a division makes one think of the “notable” colors as some general categories and the

³⁶ On the dating of Aspall's professional activity, see Geoffrey of Aspall, *Questions on Aristotle's Physics* (ed. Donati, Trifogli, 2017, p. xi). Galfridus de Aspall, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 68, *Utrum colores medii sint finiti an infiniti*, Oxford, Merton College Library, 272, f. 273va (M); Todi, Biblioteca Comunale Lorenzo Leoni, 15, f. 117ra–rb (T). There are two more copies of the text, but Cambridge, Gonville and Caius 509/386, ff. 287–302 (C) breaks off in the middle of q. 55 and I was not able to consult Oxford, New College 285, ff. 164–189 (N). Galfridus de Aspall, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rbv.

“less notable colors” as particular hues. Following Averroes,³⁷ Buckfield claims that there are precisely seven notable colors (two extreme and five middle ones); their hues which occur in nature, however, are infinite in number.³⁸ The five notable middle colors form a sequence in which the ratio between the extremes gradually changes in favour of black in the subsequent middle colors until white is completely eliminated in black itself. According to Buckfield, there is a color in which the proportion between white and black is perfectly even. This color should be then placed right in the middle of the sequence. Yet he does not point explicitly to any particular color; instead, he makes a reference to an ongoing argument between scholars who favour red and those who favour green.³⁹ Regrettably, he does not cite the reasons they give in favor of their choices. Still, as we can see in subsequent passages, Buckfield seems to have tacitly accepted purple or deep red (*punicus*) as the middle color *sensu stricto*.

Another problem is the color terminology. Buckfield first enumerates the colors he found in the *translatio vetus* of *De sensu et sensato* so that he can analyze them later.

Similiter etiam enumerat colores medios quinque,⁴⁰ scilicet lividum sive flavum, puniceum, alurgon,⁴¹ viride et kianos⁴² qui sunt medii inter

³⁷ Averroes, *In De sensu et sensato* (ed. Shields, Blumberg, 1949, p. 18): “Et quia colores fiunt ex albo et nigro secundum magis et minus et diversantur in hoc diversitate infinita secundum materiam, ideo fuit necesse ut colores sint infiniti in natura.”

³⁸ Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. I, Ma, f. 105rb; Mi, f. 10ra–rb; Ba, f. 139ra; Phi, ff. 54rb–55ra: “Consequenter, cum dicit *solus igitur*, in speciali determinat numerum et multitudinem saporum iuxta numerum et multitudinem colorum. Et est intentio illius partis quod saporum non excedunt numerum septenarum secundum speciem sicut nec colores [...]. Et isti sunt saporum notabiles sub quibus comprehenduntur omnes alii saporum qui sunt secundum naturam, ut praehabitu est a Commentatore, qui sunt infiniti. Sic igitur species saporum notabilium sunt septem, sicut et species colorum.”

³⁹ Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. I, Ma, f. 105rb; Mi, f. 10rb; Ba, f. 139ra; Phi, f. 55ra: “Quis tamen sit color simpliciter medius aut sapor simpliciter medius inter extrema non est certum, quia diversi diversimode sentiunt in hoc. Rubeum enim secundum quosdam est medium simpliciter inter colores extremos, secundum quosdam autem viride.”

⁴⁰ medios quinque] *inv.* Ma

⁴¹ alurgon] alurgen MaPhi albugon Mi

⁴² kianos] quianos BaMi

album et nigrum. Et forte intelligit per alurgon⁴³ colorem subpuniceum qui magis habet de albo quam de nigro, per kianos⁴⁴ autem colorem medium inter rubeum et nigrum, accedentem magis ad nigredinem.⁴⁵

It seems that the Greek terms he found in the *translatio vetus* confused Adam greatly⁴⁶ for he tried to figure out what colors hid behind the enigmatic names. His way of reasoning looks as follows: if the very middle color divides the sequence into two even groups, there must be two middle colors closer to white and two middle ones closer to black. Consequently, he places *lividum* or *flavum* and *alurgon* in the first group and *viride* and *kianos* in the other. Thus, *alurgon* has to be darker than white and brighter than purple (the actual middle color *sensu stricto*) while *kianos* has to be darker than purple and brighter than black.

The actual hue of *kianos* remains a mystery. In the description provided by Buckfield, only one thing is certain: it is a dark color other than green (*viride*).⁴⁷ By contrast, *alurgon* is more precisely identified as a color that is “somewhat purple” or “less than purple” (*subpuniceus*), which suggests that Buckfield believed it to be light red, orange or, perhaps, pink. His guess, however original it may be, is nevertheless inconsistent with how the term was usually rendered in Latin. As we can read in the Latin translations of Aristotle’s *Meteorology* and Pseudo-Aristotelian *De coloribus*, *alurgon* was translated as *purpureus*, *puniceus* or *muriceus*, all meaning deep red or purple.⁴⁸ It is worth noting that the text of *De sensu et sensato* itself prevented Adam of Buckfield from simply identifying *alurgon* with red: this place was already occupied by *purpureus* and *rubeus*.

Apart from problems with guessing the meaning of Greek terms used in the *translatio vetus*, Adam of Buckfield encountered yet another

⁴³ alurgon] alurgen MaPhi alurgon Mi

⁴⁴ per kianos] perlixanos (!) Mi

⁴⁵ Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. I, Ba, f. 139ra; Ma, f. 105rb; Mi, f. 10rb; Phi, f. 55ra.

⁴⁶ Judging from the variations of writing *alurgon* (*aluggon*, *alubgon*, *alurgen*, *alugon*) and *kianos* (*quiannos*, *quianos*, *kiannos*, *kyanos*) in the manuscripts we possess, the scribes who copied his text must have shared his confusion.

⁴⁷ Of course, my translation of *viride* as green is a simplification as well. In fact, this color covered various hues, “since in the whole of Latin tradition, one can find *viride* associated with grass, skies, parrots, sea, trees.” Eco, 1985, pp. 157–158.

⁴⁸ Beullens, 2014, p. 179.

problem with Aristotle's list of colors. He noticed that Aristotle set the number of colors as seven but enumerated more colors (eight), which made his list look suspicious. Our commentator tried to get out of the problem by identifying two colors, namely *flavum* and *lividum*, with one another, even though Aristotle himself probably thought them to be distinct. The word *flavus* employed by the first translator of *De sensu et sensato* was an unfortunate choice, since it is equivocal. Modern dictionaries usually explain *flavus* as standing for the whole category of "yellow". Its vagueness is manifested by the examples conventionally given by authors writing in Latin, such as fair hair, the faint beards of adolescent males, turbid water and rivers, the underside of olive trees, sand, honey, wax, fields, golden coins and dishes, clearly not all of them being yellow.⁴⁹ What they all seem to have in common is that the term *flavus* does not designate any particular color of the spectrum but indicates some other features that are often associated with yellow objects, namely "fair", "delicate", "bright", "fresh" or "shiny".

Adam of Buckfield must have been aware of the equivocality of the term *flavus*, because in his text he tried to nail its meaning by pairing it with yet another term, which he considered synonymous to it, namely *lividus*. This was rather unfortunate, because *lividus* means bluish-grey. In a figurative sense, it is usually associated with negative feelings and actions, especially with envy, malice and death.⁵⁰ As a result, we do not know how Buckfield actually envisaged Aristotle's sequence of colors. Moreover, it is difficult to apply simultaneously both *flavus* and *lividus* to the same object; for instance, somebody's face being ruddy and livid at the same time is very hard to imagine. In turn, if we try to interpret Buckfield's position suggesting that he wanted to use these two terms *in sensu diviso*, we have to admit that there are not seven notable colors but eight. This makes the discussion on the middle color *par excellence* completely unintelligible—if the number of colors is even, there cannot be such a color.

Buckfield left this problem unsolved. There are some texts, however, viz. abbreviations inspired by his commentary preserved in Erfurt⁵¹ and Cambridge,⁵² which make it possible to search for some interpretative

⁴⁹ Cf. Bradley, 2009, pp. 3–7.

⁵⁰ Cf. Lewis, Short, 1879, p. 1073.

⁵¹ For the description of this codex, see Wood, 2003, pp. 33–41.

⁵² Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll. 384(506), ff. 282r–293r.

hints. The first one repeats Buckfield's way of reasoning and solutions without adding anything new but the other provides us with an extra explanation concerning the identification of *flavum* with *lividum*. A marginal gloss informs us that the terms were treated as synonyms by Aristotle himself, because they both designate colors closest to white.⁵³ This last remark gives us some idea of how to interpret Buckfield's proposition: he calls a color *flavum* or *lividum*, because from his point of view it is not so important which hue of the spectrum it actually designates. He simply locates the place it occupies in the sequence between white and black. It can be literally any hue in which whiteness predominates; we can actually call it whatever name we want—bluish, yellow, light pink or greyish—as long as the designate is a sufficiently bright and unsaturated color.

The spurious second redaction of Adam of Buckfield's commentary on *De sensu et sensato* contains one more remark on the identification of *flavum* with *lividum* which may be interesting to us. Its author explains that although both terms designate colors very close to white, they nevertheless cannot be identified just as some shades of white; they are no doubt distinct colors. The need to stress it may seem odd at first, but the author had a good reason to do so. This was because he believed that in Aristotle there is a symmetry between the number of colors and tastes, which would otherwise be at risk, since, according to him, some physicians added an extra taste to Aristotle's list of seven, namely "tasteless" (*insipidum*).⁵⁴ Our commentator disregarded "tasteless" as a distinct taste, yet called it "almost" (*fere*) a taste. He must have foreseen that if he uses an argument of this kind with respect to taste, somebody else can reverse it and aim it at the distinction of *flavum* and *lividum*: if they are so close to white that are "almost white", they can

⁵³ Cf. Anonymous, *Commentarium in De sensu et sensato*, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll. 384(506), in marg. dex. 287r: "Nota quod idem intelligit per lividum et flavum et quod immediate sequitur album."

⁵⁴ For more on the notion of "tasteless" in medical text, see e.g., Anonymus, *Proble-mata*, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 233, ff. 21r–31v, q. 30 (ed. Lawn, 1973, p. 338): "Cur quedam sapore carent ꝑut dicantur; ꝑ ut aqua et similia. Responsio. Eorum que sapore carent quedam sunt simplicia ut aqua, quedam composita ut albumen ovi. Simplicia carent sapore quia sicut invenitur in Dietis, simplicia non agunt in compositis quod composita in compositis. Cum ergo simplicia adhibemus lingue, quia non sunt ei affinia lingua non sic attrahit ea ut passio fiat in ipsa, per quam immutata saporis habeat discretionem. Licet ergo insipida simplicia saporem teneant, dum de eis non habetur discretio iudicantur insipida."

be identified with it. He argues that the analogy is superficial here. The situation with *flavum*, *lividum* and white reminds him more of the relationship between sweet and fatty tastes, which are distinct registers beyond doubt but in some aspects seem alike (for instance, both sweet and fatty foods are usually pleasant).⁵⁵

Moreover, the disagreement between philosophers and physicians of those times seems to go deeper than that. Adam of Whitby notes that some authors of medical writings suggest that there are nine colors rather than seven Aristotelian ones. Regrettably, though expectedly, he does not provide us with any further information on this topic, so we are unable say which particular nine colors they have in mind, let alone whose opinions he refers to.⁵⁶ Adam of Whitby concludes that, contrary to physicians, philosophers used to accept Aristotle's sequence of colors with two extreme and five middle ones.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, what he says is only an empty framework, for

⁵⁵ Cf. Ps.-Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. II, V, f. 37ra–rb; E, ff. 155vb–156ra; W, f. 56va: “Consequenter determinat numerum istarum specierum intendens quod septem sunt species saporum sicut et colorum, scilicet duae extremae et quinque mediae. [...] Dicit tamen in littera ‘fere’ propter saporem insipidum de quo non fecit mentionem quem ponunt medici esse saporem. Non enim est insipidus sapor proprie sapor sed potius privatio saporis. Sunt igitur album et nigrum extrema in colore. Lividum autem sive flavum, licet sit medius color, tamen propter sui vicinitatem ad album non ponunt in numero cum albo, sicut nec pinguis sapor in dulci.”

⁵⁶ Cf. Adam de Whitby, *Commentarium in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Fi, f. 76ra: “Secundum autem medicos est iste numerus in novenario, et hoc quia ipsi numerant duos medios inter extremos et aequidistantem: primum medium plus accedens ad ipsos extremos.” Curiously enough, Roger Bacon in his commentary on *De sensu et sensato* states that there are nine colors with red as the middle color *par excellence*. I doubt, however, that Adam of Whitby had this particular work in mind here, because he would have probably not classified it as medical writing. Cf. Parkhurst, 1990, p. 164.

⁵⁷ A similar enumeration of seven colors occurs in the treatise by Jehan le Begue written almost two centuries later. What is interesting for our current considerations, he claims that the number of colors is correlated with the number of planets. Cf. Jehan le Begue, *Tabula de Vocabulis Sinonimis et Equivocis Colorum* (ed. Merrifield, 1849, p. 23): “Color similiter est vocabulum universale pro omnibus coloribus, et Graece cromia dicitur, et quot sunt planetae, tot sunt colores, videlicet septem, qui sunt primo duo extremi, albus et niger, et reliqui quinque qui intermedii dicuntur, videlicet caelestis seu lazurius, rubeus, croceus seu aureus, viridis, et sanguineus seu purpureus aut violetus vel fulvus de quorum singulis reperies in hac tabula [...] et de quorum etiam interruptionibus ad invicem infinitae diversitates colorum ad placitum humani ingenii distinguuntur.”

he does not mention any particular set of colors.⁵⁸ Luckily, the framework is filled by the author of the so-called second redaction of Adam's of Buckfield commentary on *De sensu et sensato*. In it, red (*rubeus/puniceus*) is put precisely in the middle of the sequence. On its sides, there are, respectively, two colors close to white: *lividum* and *alburgon*, and two close to black: *viride* and *kianos*. As one may expect, its author, like many thirteenth-century commentators, is not sure of the meaning of the Greek terms, but apparently identifies their designates in a different way than Adam of Buckfield. For him, *alburgon* cannot stand for "purplish" or "less than purple" (*subpuniceum*). He claims that *subpuniceum* is an independent species of color, even if this does not emerge explicitly from Aristotle's text, and as such it should be placed very close to red in the sequence of colors. As a consequence, *alburgon* loses its meaning proposed by Buckfield: it is deprived of its place close to red in the sequence of colors and thus can no longer be light red, orange or pink. It is placed in the middle between red and white and somewhat surprisingly, identified as "perhaps sky-blue" or "perhaps greenish-blue" (*forsan caeruleus*). What is more, the term *flavum sive lividum* known from Buckfield's list is now reduced to *lividum*, meaning bluish grey alone. As for *kianos*, the color described as the middle one in the sequence between red and green, we may suspect that it designates violet or, maybe, a color close to today's cyan.⁵⁹ If our interpretation of the meaning of these terms is correct,

⁵⁸ Cf. Adam de Whitby, *Commentarium in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Fi, f. 75vb: "Est autem opinio sua quod sicut duo sunt colores extremi per quorum commixtionem fiunt medii, sic duo sunt sapes extremi per quorum commixtionem fiunt medii et quod colores et sapes medii non excedunt septenarium. Sunt enim duo extremi et quinque medii tam in saporibus quam in coloribus. Ipsorum autem mediorum primus est aeque distans ab extremis ipsis, alii autem quattuor medii sunt inter ipsos extremos et primum medium aequidistantem, duo enim inter unum extremum et primum medium aequidistantem, quorum unus est aequidistans inter extremum et primum medium aequidistantem, alius plus accedens ad primum medium aequidistantem. Non est aliquis plus accedens ad extremum, quia talis diversitas non est notabilis omnino. Similiter sunt duo medii inter reliquum extremum et <medium> aequidistantem primum."

⁵⁹ Cf. Ps.-Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. II, V, f. 37ra–rb; E, ff. 155vb–156ra; W, f. 56va: "Puniceus vero color est virtute medius inter album et nigrum qui forte idem est quod rubeus. Alburgon autem est color medius inter puniceum et album, cuiusmodi est forsans caeruleus. Inter album autem et alburgon est lividum quod non ponit in numero cum albo, sed inter alburgon et puniceum est color medius qui subpuniceus dicitur de quo non facit mentionem. Similiter inter puniceum et nigrum est viride directe in medio inter quod et nigrum, licet possit esse alius color medius,

we get a sequence of colors where yellow is completely absent and there are as many as three hues of blue instead. This seems to corroborate the earlier hypothesis that the early thirteenth-century commentators of *De sensu et sensato* were interested not so much in hue itself, but rather in the brightness and saturation of a color.

In the spurious third redaction of Buckfield's commentary on *De sensu et sensato*, *kianos* (seen probably as deep blue) plays yet another role. The author notices that philosophers disagree which color to call the very middle one, mainly because Aristotle did not specify it, which makes some of them think it is red while others choose other colors of the spectrum, adding offhand that in some books *kianos* is said to play this role.⁶⁰ This casual remark is extraordinary, since it adds a new contestant for the title of the perfect middle color, i.e., the one with an even ratio between white and black, beside red and green. The candidate was not supported either by philosophers or physicians but, as we know from other sources, it was praised by medieval artists above any other color. For that reason, it is quite probable that our anonymous commentator may have referred to some texts on the art of illuminating manuscripts or some manuals for producing dyes for artistic use.

Such elevation of blue was quite a novelty even in treatises on art at that time, since the growth of its importance dates back to the mid-twelfth century and its spread, to the first decades of the thirteenth century.⁶¹ The process may have been caused by the progress in pigment and dye production, as the artists were finally able to produce beautiful, vibrant and luminous hues of blue rather than the dull and dark tones of the earlier period.⁶² The idea of blue as the middle color did not come from medieval

tamen non ponitur, differens ab extremo propter sui vicinitatem ad extremum. Sed inter viride et puniceum est *kianos* medius color. Et ita sunt quinque medii et duo extremi.”

⁶⁰ Cf. Ps.-Adam de Buckfield, *Expositio in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, Red. III, L, f. 133rb–va: “Et sic ex aequali proportione albi et nigri generatur unus color medius, qui dicitur puniceus (puniceus] *corr.* ex punctus MM), ita quod ex aequali proportione dulcis et amari generatur sapor medius qui dicitur aequidistans. De quo medio <notandum>: eius <color> sic vel alio nomine nominatur, <quia de hoc> non est littera apud philosophos. Et hoc est *puniceus enim*. Et quidam libri habent in illa parte <puniceum> et alii scilicet hanc litteram <intelligunt aliter> et quod per hoc intelligit <Philosophus> colores alios inter album et nigrum. Aliqui autem libri habent *quiannum* [...]. Et alii sunt medii inter extremos et colores dictos.”

⁶¹ Cf. Pastoureau, 2017, p. 86.

⁶² Pastoureau, 2017, p. 86.

illuminators or painters, however, because they were not interested in setting any sequence of colors ranging from white to black, since they were probably ignorant of Aristotle's teaching on the subject and focused on the beauty and the material value of particular dyes instead. Blue was regarded as the most precious color because it was one of the dyes that was the most difficult to produce.⁶³ It was also seen as the strongest color, which meant that if it was mixed with some other paint, it made the whole mixture turn bluish.⁶⁴ The only similarity with Aristotle found in the treatises on painting from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries concerns the division of colors into extreme (white and black) and middle ones. In contrast to Aristotle but in agreement with medical writings, the latter group is divided into seven; this sets the total number of colors at nine: white (*album*), red (*rubeum*), green (*viride*), yellow (*croceum*), purple (*purpureum*), deep green (*prasinus*)⁶⁵, blue (*azur*)⁶⁶, indigo/violet (*indicum*), and black (*nigrum*).⁶⁷ This set, with

⁶³ Cf. Anonymus, *Tractatus qualiter quilibet artificialis color fieri possit* (ed. Thompson, 1935, p. 459): "Tractatus qualiter quilibet artificialis color fieri possit atque duplari, et quomodo unus color misceri cum alio possit, et cognosci valeat, prout scio et ab aliis intellexi et audivi et expertus sum, in hoc opusculo breviter declarabo. Et primo de lazurio, tamquam nobiliori et cariori colore, incipiendum est." There are several recipes in this treatise for producing at least two hues of blue (*lazurium citramarinum* and *lazurium transmarinum*).

⁶⁴ Another thirteenth-century anonymous treatise on the art of producing paints for artistic use, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30, cod. 29, f. 72ra, accentuates this feature of blue (*azurus*): "Fit enim coloratio quae azura vocatur et est nobilior ceteris coloribus in quantum nobilior omnibus, quia superposita aliis coloribus scilicet super omnes colores per se colorantur, quia ad solem quilibet (quaelibet *ms.*) illuminabitur, quia quod desiccatur numquam color removetur loco. Et si clarificare volueris, ablu aqua, et melius apparebit, et hoc patet super omnes picturas. Nam super pergamenum cum ponatur, oportet ut fiat in tentorio cum illinitur." Cf. Thorndike, 1960, pp. 57–58.

⁶⁵ Cf. Jehan le Begue, *Tabula de Vocabulis Sinonimis et Equivocis Colorum* (ed. Merrifield, 1849, p. 33): "Prasinus est color rubeus; alii dicunt quod habet similitudinem viridis coloris et nigri, sed Catholicon dicit quod prasin Graece, Latine dicitur viridis."

⁶⁶ Cf. Jehan le Begue, *Tabula de Vocabulis Sinonimis et Equivocis Colorum* (ed. Merrifield, 1849, p. 18): "Azurium vel lazurium est color; aliter caelestis vel caelestinus, aliter blaucus, aliter persus, et aliter aethereus dicitur."

⁶⁷ Cf. Eraclius, *De Coloribus et Artibus Romanorum* (ed. Merrifield, 1849, p. 245): "Colorum alii sunt albi, alii nigri, alii sunt medii. Et albi quidem species, caerusa, calx, alumen. Nigri vero, fuscus, et qui ex sarmentis componitur. Medii, rubeus, viridis, croceus, purpureus, prasinus, azur, et indicus; quorum expressio per se cuiuslibet pulchra est, sed interdum sic invicem permixti pulchriores fiunt, quia sua varietate gratiam alter

its well-identifiable color terms, is clearly better than any proposal found in the thirteenth-century commentaries on *De sensu et sensato*.

It is tempting to assume that the anonymous author of the so-called third redaction of Adam of Buckfield's commentary knew treatises on painting. Two problems appear here, however. First, the majority of texts on color mixing in his times, numerous as they were, were of Italian or French origin. We know very little of their reception in England, so we cannot say whether he had any chances to consult them. Second, assuming that he had known them, it seems odd that he had not benefited from them more, for a careful reading would have allowed him to replace the enigmatic Greek color names with their Latin equivalents. It is more likely, therefore, that the information about the value of blue reached him by way of personal contact with a professional illuminator. Anyway, we should not disregard this sign of possible influence on philosophers not only by physicians but also by artisans.

The speculation concerning the sequence of colors and the middle color reached its peak in the 1240s and 1250s. In the years that followed, the solutions known from the first redaction of Adam of Buckfield's commentary on *De sensu et sensato* became widely accepted as a sort of *via communis doctorum* and those problems of the theory of color ceased to be widely discussed. In the late 1250s or early 1260s, when Geoffrey of Aspall composed his questions on *De sensu et sensato*, the fashion for analysing them in detail was seemingly over; only two out of almost 100 questions in his commentary refer to the problem of the sequence of colors and its middle point:⁶⁸ *Whether colors are finite or infinite in number*⁶⁹ and *If we assume that they are infinite, whether all of them can be discerned by our sight*.⁷⁰ What is more, even the titles show that Aspall was attracted by other

alteri praestant: Dein compositi aliud monstrant, nam ut in medicinae confectionibus species sibi permixtae invicem conferunt, sic colores non eiusdem qualitatis, ut partem ex alterius natura, partem ex sua trahant, et quam plurimas eorum varietates pulchras et delectabiles reddant, simul commiscuntur.”

⁶⁸ For the list of questions, see Ebbesen, Thomsen Thörnqvist, Decaix, 2016, pp. 66–70.

⁶⁹ Galfridus de Aspall, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 68, *Utrum colores medii sint finiti an infiniti*, M, f. 273va; T, f. 117ra–rb.

⁷⁰ Galfridus de Aspall, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb.

aspects of this problem: he switched his interest towards cognitive issues, such as our ability to perceive different colors.

In his commentary, Aspoll adopts Averroes's idea that there are seven species of color which have an infinite number of hues;⁷¹ this statement is also in agreement with Adam of Buckfield's views.⁷² He realizes, however, that even if there is an infinite number of colors in nature, humans are actually able to distinguish—and, supposedly, name—only a limited number of them.⁷³ In his solution to the question, he may refer to Buckfield's division of the spectrum once again and states that we can see differences between seven “more notable” colors more clearly than between the infinite number of the “less notable” ones.⁷⁴ Aspoll's commentary also provides us with an explanation as to why there are seven colors. He states that there are three pairs of aspects (*proprietates*) responsible for color

⁷¹ See note 31.

⁷² Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 68, *Utrum colores medii sint finiti an infiniti*, M, f. 273va; T, f. 117ra: “De numero colorum mediorum quaerendum est, et sic intendit Aristoteles generaliter, utrum scilicet sint sub numero finito an infinito. Et videtur quod sub infinito, quia dicit hic Commentator quod colores medii sint infiniti per naturam, et ideo ut dicit ratio extrinseca sive ars non potest super omnes colores super quos potest ratio extrinseca sive natura. Item, Aristoteles dicit hic quod colores medii generantur ex extremis secundum numeralem proportionem, sed numerales proportiones procedunt in infinitum sicut et numerus, quare etc.”

⁷³ Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 68, *Utrum colores medii sint finiti an infiniti*, M, f. 273va; T, f. 117ra: “Ad oppositum Aristoteles capitulo de sapore: si sapes essent infiniti, sicut figurae secundum quosdam sunt infinitae, tunc non immutaretur gustus ab istis, eodem modo arguo a parte colorum: si essent infiniti, tunc visus non immutaretur ab aliquo illorum [...]”. Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb: “Item ad oppositum, visus est virtus corporea operans per instrumentum corporeum, igitur eius potentia limitata est et finita, sed si infiniti colores possent visus immutare, non esset eius potentia limitata immo esset infinita, quare etc.”

⁷⁴ Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb: “Ad ista dico quod ubi sunt contraria extrema et media in extremis est completa distantia specialis, in mediis vero non sed secundum plus et minus. Diversitas etiam specialis incompleta quaedam est magis notabilis, quaedam minus. Cum igitur dicat Aristoteles septem esse species colorum, loquitur de diversitate colorum magis notabili. Completa enim diversitas specialis colorum et incompleta magis notabilis consistit in numero septenari, incompleta tamen diversitas minus notabilis constat in numero infinito.”

variation. The transparent medium in which the coloration takes place can be either pure or impure and the external light can be clear or obscure, concentrated or diffused. When the medium is pure and the external light is clear and concentrated, the color is white. By contrast, an impure and obscure medium, and diffused light produce the color black.⁷⁵ All the remaining colors are also characterised by the three aspects, yet they vary as to the presence or absence of purity (*puritas/impuritas perspicui*), clarity (*claritas/obscuritas lucis*) and concentration (*multitudo/paucitas lucis*).⁷⁶ It is somewhat startling that an application of these criteria produces six rather than five middle colors. Even though Aspoll did not mention his source explicitly, the similarity between his view and Robert Grosseteste's theory of colors in his *De operatione solis*⁷⁷ and *De colore*⁷⁸ is too strong to be a coincidence. The tacit reference to Grosseteste is both rare and refreshing in the discussion on the number of colors.

With respect to the problem of the middle color *par excellence*, Aspoll declares that neither the Philosopher nor the Commentator admitted the existence of a color in which the proportion of white and black is perfectly even and, following their authority, states that there is little sense in looking for such a color, because either white or black always has to be dominant in the mixture. One can only name a "seemingly middle color" (*color quasi medius*).⁷⁹ For Geoffrey of Aspoll, it does not matter which color is considered

⁷⁵ Cf. Raizman-Kedar, 2007, p. 375.

⁷⁶ Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb: "Aliter autem accipitur numerus colorum a parte suorum principiorum, scilicet perspicui et lucis. Duae enim sunt proprietates perspicui, scilicet puritas et impuritas, quattuor autem lucis, scilicet claritas et obscuritas, multitudo et paucitas. Secundum autem proportionem illorum proprietatum sunt tantum septem colores, ita quod puritas perspicui cum claritate lucis et multitudine facit albedinem, impuritas autem perspicui cum obscuritate et paucitate lucis facit nigredinem. Et secundum ulteriorem proportionem illarum proprietatum fiunt ceteri colores."

⁷⁷ Cf. Robertus Grosseteste, *De operatione solis*, cap. 17 (ed. McEvoy, 1974, p. 78).

⁷⁸ Cf. Robertus Grosseteste, *De colore* (ed. Dinkova-Bruun, 2013, p. 16).

⁷⁹ Cf. Galfridus de Aspoll, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb: "Vel posset dici quod colores procedunt in infinitum materiali diversitate, formali autem diversitate sunt finiti, quia tantum septem, sicut accidit in genere complexionum quod sunt quattuor formales, infiniti vero materiales per declarationem speciei ad esse aliquod. Numerus

the middle one and, consequently, he does not select any. He is similar to Adam of Whitby in not presenting any concrete sequence of colors.⁸⁰

Conclusion

A Shift in the Focus of Research after Moerbeke's Revision of the *translatio vetus*

The two short questions by Geoffrey of Aspall are the last remarkable contribution to the discussion of colors in the thirteenth-century commentaries on *De sensu et sensato* in Oxford. Their author not only gathered and synthesized ideas and problems on this subject matter from earlier commentaries and other source texts but also decided which problems were really important and which were only philosophical phantoms without much importance. There were no more questions on the number of colors, or whether they are finite or infinite, or which colors form the sequence of colors and which one is precisely in the middle of it. The lack of any attempts to explain color terminology in the commentaries that followed is surprising if we bear in mind the problems which the first interpreters of Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato* had with Greek and Latin terms for colors. What is even more puzzling, the explanation for it cannot be attributed to the clarification offered by William's of Moerbeke revision of the anonymous *translatio vetus* of *De sensu et sensato*, which was completed in the mid-1260s. An experienced translator of Aristotle's works, such as Moerbeke, would also be expected to

autem colorum sic accipitur: duo sunt extremi, scilicet albedo et nigredo, per quorum commixtionem fiunt medii colores quinque. Si enim commisceantur quasi secundum aequalitatem, faciunt colorem quasi aequidistantem. Et dico 'quasi', quia secundum Aristotelem et Commentatorem impossibile est invenire medium aequidistans ab extremis."

⁸⁰ Cf. Galfridus de Aspall, *Quaestiones in De sensu et sensato Aristotelis*, q. 69, *Utrum visus posset ab omnibus coloribus immutari*, M, ff. 273vb–274ra; T, f. 117rb: "Si vero dupletur albedo respectu nigredinis, faciunt colorem medium multum propinquum albedini, diversum tamen ab albedine notabili diversitate, et, si plus apponatur de albedine, non erit diversitas notabilis. Similiter si dupletur nigredo respectu albedinis, fiet color propinquus nigredini. Si vero sic commisceantur quod plus sit de albedine, non tamen dupletur albedo, fiet color medius propinquus colori medio quasi aequidistanti, et erit inter colorem quasi aequidistantem et albedinem. Si vero tantum de nigredine respectu albedinis, fiet color medius propinquus colori medio quasi aequidistanti, et erit inter ipsum et nigredinem."

update the terminology in the translations he corrected. Surprisingly, his version of the passage containing the line of colors goes as follows:

Fere enim aequales humorum species et colorum sunt: septem enim amborum species si quis ponat, sicut rationabile, lividum nigrum aliquid esse; relinquitur enim flavum quidem albi esse sicut unctuosum est dulcis, puniceum vero et alurgon et viride et cyanum in medio albi et nigri.⁸¹

As can be seen, the changes introduced by Moerbeke are minor and the color terminology is hardly modified. In fact, his only intervention was to make the Greek terms, *kianos* and *alurgon*, look more Latin. He changed the ending of *cyanos* into *cyanus*, making it possible to decline it according to Latin declension rules. Such a decision may mean that the two terms had already achieved fixed meanings for the Latin users and, for that reason, he felt no need to substitute purely Latin color terms for them, since he could expect that his readers would know their meanings. Nevertheless, his word-choice contributed to consolidating meanings of these terms in Latin and thus, at least partially, to transmitting *cyanus* to modern English as *cyan*.

A side effect of growing popularity of Moerbeke's revision of *De sensu et sensato* translation in the academic centres of Europe was that scholars no longer blamed their problems with Aristotle's sequence of colors on a bad translation. As a result, doubts started arising about Aristotle's color theory. The scholars found it inconsistent with their everyday experience and gradually stopped trying to save it by all means. The question they asked then was not how Aristotle's theory was to be understood but whether it was correct or not. As a result, all earlier questions were replaced by a single one: whether any middle color can be produced from the mixture of white and black. Moerbeke's revision marked a shift in the focus of research to some other problems and the interpretative tradition of the middle color in the 13th century reached its end.

⁸¹ Cf. Aristoteles, *De sensu et sensato*, 4 (ed. Leonina, 1985, p. 58; 442a19–25).

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Abstract

The intersections between philology and philosophy are visible in the interpretations of passages of Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato* devoted to the so-called middle color (*color medius*) by several philosophers active in Oxford in the middle of the thirteenth century, such as Adam of Buckfield, Adam of Whitby and Geoffrey of Aspall. In their work, they had to struggle not only with problems originating from *De sensu et sensato* itself, but also with others caused by the poor quality of its only translation available at that time. They also discussed a new philosophical problem emerging from Aristotle's text: if there is a sequence of colors stretched between white and black, where middle colors are evenly distributed throughout it according to the ratio of whiteness and blackness in each of them, there must be a color in which the ratio is perfectly even and, therefore, it has to occupy the position in the very middle of the sequence. My paper presents their search for the middle color *par excellence* and intense discussions on the nature of the middle color.

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NEGATIO NON COGNOSCITUR NISI PER AFFIRMATIONEM:
SOME REMARKS ON NEGATION PARASITISM
IN JOHN DUNS SCOTUS'S WRITINGS

Keywords: John Duns Scotus, Negation, Asymmetrical Account of Negation,
Negation Parasitism, Negation Eliminativism

John Duns Scotus's Asymmetrical Account of Negation

According to Laurence Horn, philosophical inquiries about the topic of negation can be sorted into two main groups: symmetricalist and asymmetricalist accounts. Given a couple of negatively opposed elements of any kind, such as “man” and “not-man” or ‘a man is an animal’ and ‘a man is not an animal’ etc., symmetricalist accounts of negation would grant the same dignity to both the extremes, not acknowledging any priority in time, dependence

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or meaning to either of them. Asymmetricalist accounts would instead bestow a kind of priority, marking one of the extremes, usually the positive one, as paramount. The latter position tends therefore to understand the negative element as “parasitic” or dependent on the positive, independent element. Moreover, a stronger kind of asymmetricalism is concerned with the “elimination” of the negative element through a process of reduction to its positive counterpart, endorsing for instance that the world and its facts can be described only through positive language.¹ Employing Horn’s terminology, this paper aims to assess some theological and epistemic consequences of John Duns Scotus’s asymmetrical or parasitic account of negation. Specifically, it will be shown (i) that Scotus endorses some asymmetricalist general theses and (ii) how this asymmetricalism is radically applied in his conception of the theological inquiry. In *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, in fact, he develops two different strategies to delegitimize negative theology by reducing it to its cataphatic counterpart. It will be also shown how the first strategy in particular can be widened over the scope of theology, marking a claim for general epistemology.

Asymmetricalism constitutes the most common approach to negation throughout the history of western philosophy, given also the many shades it can assume.² Horn provides a useful historical survey which notes how Aristotle’s position ranges from asymmetricalism to symmetricalism,³ as several

¹ Horn, 2001, pp. 45–79.

² Horn provides a list of nine theses that characterise an asymmetrical account of negation: each of these is a sufficient condition to mark an account as asymmetrical, while their possible cumulation determines the kind and the strength of the whole account as it is. The nine theses are: “(i) affirmation is logically prior, negation secondary; (ii) affirmation is ontologically prior, negation secondary; (iii) affirmation is epistemologically prior, negation secondary; (iv) affirmation is psychologically prior, negation secondary; (v) affirmation is basic and simplex, negation complex; (vi) affirmation is essential, negation eliminable; (vii) affirmation is objective, negation subjective; (viii) the affirmative sentence describes a fact about the world, the negative sentence a fact about the affirmative; (ix) In terms of information, the affirmative sentence is worth more, the negative worth less (if not worthless).” Horn, 2001, pp. 45–46.

³ Horn, 2001, p. 44: “Included in the asymmetricalist faction as leaders, proselytizers, acolytes and camp followers are Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle (sometimes), Saint Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Goethe, Hegel, Bergson, the neo-Hegelian idealists, Russell (usually), Strawson, Tesnière, Givón, and a variety of psycholinguists; the symmetricalist camp claims Aristotle (sometimes), Frege, Royce, Russell (occasionally), Wittgenstein (perhaps), Ayer and Geach. It will be observed that the two pivotal figures in

textual passages from his *Organon* and *Metaphysics* witness. For instance, the call for symmetricalism can be found in the *Prior Analytics*, where the Stagirite points out that to any positive assertion, a negative one is correlated.⁴ The accordance with an asymmetrical account is instead expressed in some passages from the *Posterior Analytics*,⁵ where the epistemic priority of the positive pole is formulated, and from the *Metaphysics*,⁶ where is granted a higher degree in knowing what something is, rather than in knowing what something is not. In the commentaries on the Aristotelian writings, Scotus intercepts both claims. In his second work on the *Perihermeneias*, for instance, it is considered evident that “cuiuslibet unius affirmationis est una negatio,”⁷ which matches perfectly with the Aristotelian symmetricalist thesis marked by Horn. However, the *littera* shows how the asymmetrical account is favored by the *Subtilis*. Within the same commentary, in fact, negation is generally understood through the concept of “remotion”⁸ and usually grounded in a positive element:

the history of negation, Aristotle and Russell, stand astride the field with one foot in each camp.”

⁴ Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, I.46, 51b 35 (ed. Barnes, 1984, p. 54): “Therefore it is clear that ‘it is not-good’ is not the denial of ‘it is good’. If then of every single thing either the affirmation or the negation is true if it is not a negation clearly it must in a sense be an affirmation. But every affirmation has a corresponding negation. The negation then of this is ‘it is not not-good’.”

⁵ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I.25, 86b 30–38 (ed. Barnes, 1984, pp. 35–36): “Again, if the universal immediate proposition is a principle of deduction, and the universal proposition is affirmative in the probative demonstration and negative in the negative, and the affirmative is prior to and more familiar than the negative (for the negation is familiar because of the affirmation, and the affirmation is prior, just as being the case is prior to not being the case)—hence the principle of the probative is better than that of the negative; and the one which uses better principles is better.”

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III.2, 996b 14–16 (ed. Barnes, 1984, p. 30): “[...] the science of substance must be of the nature of wisdom. For as men may know the same thing in many ways, we say that he who knows what a thing is by the characteristics it has knows more fully than he who knows it by the characteristics it has not, and in the former class itself one knows more fully than another, and he knows most fully who knows what a thing is, not he who knows its quantity or quality or what it can by nature do or have done to it [...]”

⁷ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in duos libros Perihermeneias*, pars II, qq. 6–9, n. 7 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 2004, p. 208).

⁸ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in duos libros Perihermeneias*, pars I, q. 4, n. 2 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 2004, p. 157): “Item, ‘negatio alicuius est remotio alicuius ab

Verbum aggregatur ex duobus, ex re scilicet et compositione qua significatur aliquid esse vel non esse. Verbum autem infinitum fit per additionem negativae particulae, quae removet verbum secundum se. Cum igitur additur nomini, removet quod significatur per verbum ‘esse’ de alio. Non autem ob aliud est propositio negativa nisi quia removetur aliquid de esse ad non esse. Igitur verbum infinitum est verbum intellectum cum negatione, quod non accidit ex parte nominis.⁹

Being the result of a remotion, any negation relies on an already given element and marks a shift towards the *non esse*. In the commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, this approach is made even more explicit. Before remarking that any affirmation is better known than its correspondent negation, Scotus states in fact that ‘bonum non est malum’, a negation, is true only because ‘bonum est bonum’, a positive assertion, is true.¹⁰ A further application of this claim is found in *Metaphysics*, IV where an adnotation marks how the principle of non contradiction, modally expressed as ‘impossibile est idem simul esse et non esse’, can be inferred by two affirmative tautological premises, namely ‘ens est ens’ and ‘non-ens est non-ens’. Given those, in fact, it would be possible to conclude that ‘non est idem ens et non-ens’, understood as equivalent to the modal form at stake.¹¹ From these positions expressed in the commentaries on Aristotle, at least three asymmetrical theses can be

aliquo’; igitur negatio adveniens homini aliquid ab eo removet; et si hoc, aliquid tollit et aliquid derelinquit; [...]”

⁹ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in duos libros Perihermeneias*, pars II, q. 1, n. 10 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 2004, p. 195).

¹⁰ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super librum Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. II, qq. 2–3, n. 55 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1997, p. 217): “Item, omni propositione negativa prior est affirmativa, II Perihermeneias, cap. ultimo. Haec enim ‘bonum non est malum’ est vera, quia haec affirmativa prior est vera ‘bonum est bonum’. Et Philosophus IV huius: “notior utique erit dictio quam opposita negatio” [...]”

¹¹ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super librum Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. IV, q. 3, n. 36, *adnotatio interpolata* (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1997, p. 375): “Nota quod aliter posset probari quod non sit istud principium primum simpliciter in complexis ‘impossibile est idem simul esse et non esse’. Tum quia est propositio negativa, quod patet ex suis oppositis quae sunt affirmativae: ‘contingit idem simul esse et non esse’ et ‘necesse est idem simul esse et non esse’. Nulla autem propositio negativa est simpliciter prima, in fine II Perihermeneias. Sed omnis talis reducitur ad affirmativam priorem. Tum quia ista propositio potest concludi ex prioribus propositionibus syllogistice sic: ‘ens est ens, et non-ens est non-ens, ergo non est idem ens et non-ens’, vel ‘impossibile est idem simul esse et non esse’. [...]”

inferred: (i) negative expressions are not syntactically independent, since they are the result of the application of a negative particle to other linguistic elements from which they remove something; (ii) negative assertions are not semantically independent, since their truth-value depends on the truth-values of other positive assertions; (iii) negative assertions are epistemically weaker than positive ones.

A fourth thesis can be found in the theological writings, where Scotus resorts to the recurrent expression *aliquid positivum* to deal with negation in metaphysical frames, involving also major topics such as individuation or matter.¹² In these contexts, Scotus argues that negation cannot constitute any positive being (*entitas*) since not only it requires a positive grounding, but also it does not bestow any degree of perfection upon the being to which it is applied.¹³ This introduces therefore another asymmetry claim, namely that (iv) negations are ontologically weak, since negative properties fails in bestowing any ontological perfection to its subject. Having assessed that Scotus's asymmetricalism involves at least four theses, we can address the specific theological arguments.

The First Strategy to Deal with Negation in Theology: An Elimination Scheme

The first part of *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3 is devoted to a theological and epistemic inquiry, namely the possibility for the human intellect to know God. Differently from the parallel section of the *Lectura*, however, in this writing Scotus introduces the first two questions with a series of preliminary statements. The very

¹² About Duns Scotus's conception of matter: Duba, 2005; King, 2003; Pasnau, 2011.

¹³ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Lectura*, lib. II, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, n. 50 (ed. Modrić et al., 1982, p. 243): “Praeterea, numquam per negationem constituitur entitas, nam negatio semper praesupponit aliquid positivum in quo fundetur; si igitur prima substantia non habet nisi naturam et negationem duplicem, et ista negatio non addit perfectionem supra naturam, sequitur quod prima substantia non dicet maiorem perfectionem quam substantia secunda,—quod falsum est, quia ‘prima substantia maxime et proprie dicitur’, sicut dicit librum praedicamentorum.”

first element of this list is utterly relevant for the topic of negation since its interpretation leads towards an assessment of eliminativism:¹⁴

In prima quaestione non est distinguendum quod Deus possit cognosci negative vel affirmative, quia negatio non cognoscitur nisi per affirmationem, II *Perihermeneias* in fine et IV *Metaphysicae*. Patet etiam quod nullas negatione cognoscimus de Deo nisi per affirmationes, per quas removemus alia impossibilia ab illis affirmationibus.¹⁵

The first question at stake asks whether God can be known naturally by the intellect of a still living human being (*viator*), and the quoted text cuts a most problematic knot for the medieval tradition, namely the distinction between a negative kind of theology, concerned with knowing what God is not, and a positive one.¹⁶ Scotus's claim is neat: discerning between a positive and a negative theological approach is irrelevant, since the asymmetrical account of negation holds independently to the specific object of knowledge. According to this, each negatively expressed knowledge that human beings can reach about God depends ultimately on a precedent and affirmative knowledge about that same object. The formulation that follows the Aristotelian claim suggests a schematic way to eliminate negative propositions resorting to a conditional. Scotus writes in fact that any negative knowledge about God depends on a different positive knowledge, to which the former removes what is impossible with the latter. For instance, we can take the paradigmatic sentence 'God is not a stone' and suppose that it is renownedly true. According to the quoted text, if we know that 'God is not a stone', then we are required to know that God is something, and then to assess that 'being a stone' marks an impossible propriety with what we already knew about God. We can translate this example in a semi-formal expression, where 'A' and 'B' stand generically for two different predicables:

¹⁴ As already mentioned, "elimination" marks a strong kind of asymmetricalism which refuses to assign any independence to the negative elements in a specific context, resulting in strategies that aim to reduce such negative elements to other positive ones.

¹⁵ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. 1, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, n. 10 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, p. 4).

¹⁶ For more on the position held by Scotus on the topic of positive, negative and superlative theology, see Cezar, 2008; Mann, 2003; Ninci, 1995; Schönberger, 1996.

If I know 'God is not A' then I know 'God is B and A is impossible with B'

Two questions arise immediately from this formulation, namely whether such an attempt is effectively sustained by Scotus's philosophical and theological frame, and whether this scheme can be generalized and applied in any epistemic context, substituting the specific subject 'God', which marks a most peculiar object of knowledge, with a generic one. To assess the consistency of this scheme, we need to assume the antecedent as true and then try to assess the truth of the conjunction in the consequent. Hence, at least two questions must be answered, namely (i) what can be predicated about God in a positive manner and (ii) what it means that a predicable is impossible with another.

(ia) Suitable Predicates for God: Infinity

In *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 2, Scotus faces the problem of understanding and defining the notion of 'infinite'. Even though the strict closeness between the ideas of God and infinity is standard within the medieval tradition, Scotus's speculative assumptions and gains are not without innovation. Specifically, he endorses a positive conception of infinity, establishing a critical dialogue with other authors, mainly Henry of Ghent.¹⁷ About this, the first and second questions of d. 2 call, respectively, for the existence and intelligibility of an actual infinite being. God is explicitly involved: to the *Subtilis*, asking about the intelligibility of an infinite being is in fact the same as asking how we know that God exists.¹⁸ Scotus also states that even if it is not possible to provide a *propter quid* proof for the existence of the divine, infinite being, a demonstration *quia* is feasible at any rate. Starting from this, he produces a famous argument in natural theology, displayed almost identically in the *Tractatus de primo principio*,¹⁹ by which God is identified with the first efficient cause, the ultimate final cause and the most eminent being.

¹⁷ Biard, 2004, pp. 388–389.

¹⁸ Johannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 2, p. 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 1, 10 (ed. Balić, et al., 1950, pp. 125, 128, 131): "Utrum in entibus sit aliquid existens actu infinitum [...] Utrum aliquod infinitum esse sit per se notum, ut Deum esse [...] Primo respondeo ad secundam quaestionem, quae inquit de modo cognoscendi istam 'Deus est'."

¹⁹ About Scotus's proof, see Flores, 2000; Ross, Bates, 2003.

Furthermore, Scotus states that the most proper connotation for the divine principle is precisely infinity, either in power, intellect, or magnitude. For what concerns the human understanding of God, therefore, ‘infinite being’ is the best expression to describe it.²⁰ Therefore, and for our current aim, ‘infinite’ must be considered as a suitable predicate to occur in ‘God is B’.

This speculation about God as the positively infinite being is furtherly developed in *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, where it gets intertwined with the univocist account of predication endorsed by the Author, a topic about which many studies have been produced.²¹ The elaboration of this univocist account in the comments on the *Sententiae* is mainly motivated by theological reasons, since it allows Scotus to explain how it is possible for humans, despite being *in via*, to have a concept of God by which the divine being is understood *per se et quidditative*.²² In the same passages, the *Subtilis* provides his famed connotation of ‘univocal concept’ as a concept “which is so unified that its unity is enough for a contradiction in affirming and denying it of the same subject” and for which this unity “is also enough to play the part of a middle term in a syllogism.”²³ Relatively to the concept human beings can have about God, the theme of infinity is once again reintroduced, however, more radically: even if now Scotus considers several concepts that can be grasped about God, in fact, he declares that the most perfect and simple available

²⁰ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 2, p. 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 145–147 (ed. Balić, et al., 1950, pp. 213–215): “Ex dictis patet solutio quaestionis. Nam ex primo articulo habetur quod aliquod ens existens est simpliciter primum triplici primitate, videlicet efficientiae, finis et eminentiae, et ita simpliciter quod impossibile est aliquid esse prius. Et in hoc probatum est esse de Deo quantum ad proprietates respectivas Dei ad creaturam vel in quantum determinat dependentiam respectus creatorum ad ipsum. Ex secundo articulo habetur quadruplex via quod illud primum est infinitum: primo videlicet quia primum efficiens, secundo quia primum cognoscens omnia factibilia [...], tertio quia finis ultimus, quarto quia eminens. [...] Ex praemissis conclusionibus, probatis et ostensis, arguitur sic ad quaestionem: aliquod ens tripliciter primum in entibus existit in actu; et illud tripliciter primum est infinitum; ergo aliquod infinitum ens existit in actu. Et istud est perfectissimum conceptibile et conceptus perfectissimus, absolutus, quem possumus habere de Deo naturaliter, quod sit infinitus, sicut dicitur distinctione 3. Et sic probatum est Deum esse quantum ad conceptum vel esse eius, perfectissimum conceptibilem vel possibilem haberi a nobis de Deo.”

²¹ For instance: Dumont, 1998; Hoffman, 2013; Pasnau, 2011; Pini, 2005.

²² Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 25–26 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, pp. 16–18).

²³ King, 2003, p. 58.

to human intellect is that of infinite being. Scotus believes in fact that this concept is even more simple than the transcendental predicates, because while “good”, “true” and so on are fully-fledged predicates, “infinity” is understood as an intrinsic mode of being. Specifically, the *Subtilis* argues that the concept of infinity bestows on its apparent subject the highest possible degree of perfection, which is positively infinite, and thus he understands the whole expression *ens infinitum* not as a composition of subject and predicate such as *ens bonum*, but rather as authentically simple.²⁴ Therefore, and to our current aim, rather than asserting that ‘God is infinite’, as the conclusions of the former distinction had suggested, a more precise formulation would be ‘God is the infinite being’ or ‘God is being at its highest degree of perfection’, because it is clear that Scotus is concerned to make a distinction between simple predicates and infinity as a mode.

(ib) Suitable Predicates for God: Transcendentals

Transcendentals can surely be predicated of God; anyway, the traditional concepts of *unum*, *verum*, *bonum* do not saturate the class of transcendental concepts as conceived by Scotus. Over than extending the *status* of transcendental to disjunctive properties,²⁵ in fact, the *Subtilis* sets the condition

²⁴ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, n. 58 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, p. 40): “Quarto dico quod ad multos conceptus proprios Deo possumus pervenire, qui non conveniunt creaturis—cuiusmodi sunt conceptus omnium perfectionum simpliciter, in summo. Et perfectissimus conceptus, in quo quasi in quadam descriptione perfectissime cognoscimus Deum, est concipiendo omnes perfectiones simpliciter et in summo. Tamen conceptus perfectior simul et simplicior, nobis possibilis, est conceptus entis infiniti. Iste enim est simplicior quam conceptus entis boni, entis veri, vel aliorum similium, quia ‘infinite’ non est quasi attributum vel passio entis, sive eius de quo dicitur, sed dicit modum intrinsecum illius entitatis, ita quod cum dico ‘infinite ens’, non habeo conceptum quasi per accidens, ex subiecto et passione, sed conceptum per se subiecti in certo gradu perfectionis, scilicet infinitatis,—sicut albedo intensa non dicit conceptum per accidens sicut albedo visibilis, immo intensio dicit gradum intrinsecum albedinis in se. Et ita patet simpliciter huius conceptus ‘ens infinite’.”

²⁵ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 8, p. 1, q. 3, n. 115 (ed. Balić et al., 1956, pp. 206–207): “Hoc patet ex alio, quia ens non tantum habet passiones simplices convertibiles—sicut unum, verum et bonum—sed habet aliquas passiones ubi opposita distinguuntur contra se, sicut necesse esse vel possibile, actus vel potentia, et huiusmodi. Sicut autem passiones convertibiles sunt transcendentes quia consequuntur ens in quantum non determinatur ad aliquod genus, ita passiones disiunctae sunt transcendentes [...]”

for transcendentality not in the coextensivity with the concept of being as such, but rather in the fact that the concept of being must be the only superior predicate to the transcendental at stake.²⁶ Because of this, some transcendentals might not be suitable for being predicated of everything. This is the case of absolute perfections²⁷ (*perfectiones simpliciter*) which, according to the *Lectura*, are nothing but all the perfections that the divine nature instantiates:

[...] quidquid est in essentia divina, est perfectionis simpliciter. Sed ‘perfectio simpliciter’ est talis perfectio quae in quolibet ‘melius est ipsum quam non ipsum’, quod intelligendum est respectu cuiuslibet sibi impossibilis; et ideo licet sapientia sit perfectionis simpliciter, non tamen melius est cani esse sapiens, quia destruit naturam; unde illud est simpliciter perfectionis quod in quolibet melius est quolibet sibi impossibili.²⁸

In *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3 it is also evident how absolute perfections fall in the sway of Scotus’s univocism. It is in fact stated that there must be a common ground for creatural and divine perfections, since accepting the existence of strictly creatural or strictly divine perfections would lead to controversies. Such common ground is marked as a *ratio communis Deo et creaturae*, which allows Scotus’s metaphysics to proceed smoothly from the formal *ratio* of creatural perfection to the divine one: thanks to univocism, in fact, the formal *ratio* is always kept the same and only its degree of perfection changes, being limited and partial for the creatures, highest for God.²⁹ Examples of this absolute perfections are the intellect and the will.

²⁶ Alliney, 2012, p. 64.

²⁷ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 8, p. 1, q. 3, n. 115 (ed. Balić et al., 1956, pp. 206–207): “[...] Ita etiam potest sapientia esse transcendens, et quodcumque aliud, quod est commune Deo et creaturae, licet aliquod tale dicatur de solo Deo, aliquod autem de Deo et aliqua creatura. Non oportet autem transcendens, ut transcendens, did de quocumque ente nisi sit convertibile cum primo transcendente, scilicet ente.”

²⁸ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Lectura*, lib. I, d. 2, p. 2, qq. 1–4, n. 250 (ed. Balić et al., 1966, p. 208).

²⁹ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 38–39 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, pp. 25–26): “Item, quarto, potest sic argui: aut aliqua ‘perfectio simpliciter’ habet rationem communem Deo et creaturae, et habetur propositum, aut non sed tantum propriam creaturae, et tunc ratio eius non conveniet formaliter Deo, quod est inconveniens; aut habet rationem omnino propriam Deo, et tunc sequitur quod nihil

Lastly, two classes of predicates are positively suitable for God: the simple concept of “infinite being” and any transcendental concept, either “traditional” or absolute perfections. Instances of those possibilities are then ‘God is an infinite being’, ‘God is one or true or good’, ‘God is intelligent or rational’, ‘God is willing’.

(ii) The Relation of Impossibility between Predicates

Moving now to the second element of the conjunction, ‘A is impossible with B’, we need to understand the meaning of impossibility which, as shown, it is also essential to define what absolute perfections are. Impossibility is not a simple or monadic predicate but a relation that involves two different predicables. Moreover, the analysis of this relation usually occurs in passages where Scotus develops modal concepts,³⁰ strongly linked with the concepts of impossibility and possibility.³¹ The root for impossibility can be found in the seemingly primitive concept of *repugnantia*, which marks a form of incompatibility between either terms or natures. In a question devoted to the theme of divine power, for instance, Scotus presents a definition of logical power as *non repugnantia terminorum* and extends it to the effective natural power of generation available to the trinitarian God. According to the logical definition, it is concluded that for God as the Father it is possible to generate, while for God as either the Son or the Holy Ghost such an act is impossible. The thesis is argued as such: since the terms “Father” and “generation” are not “repugnant” to each other, while the terms “Son” or “Holy Ghost” and “generation” are, then the definition of the logical power compels the assignation of the positive modal to the Father, the negative to the other Persons.³² In the forty-third distinction of both *Lectura*

attribuendum est Deo [...] Confirmatur etiam haec quarta ratio sic: omnis inquisitio metaphysica de Deo sic procedit, considerando formalem rationem alicuius et auferendo ab illa ratione formali imperfectionem quam habet in creaturis, et reservando illam rationem formalem et attribuendo sibi omnino summam perfectionem, et sic attribuendo illud Deo. Exemplum de formali ratione sapientiae (vel intellectus) vel voluntatis [...]. Ergo omnis inquisitio de Deo supponit intellectum habere conceptum eundem, univocum, quem accepit ex creaturis.”

³⁰ Some references for Scotus’s modal theory are: King, 2001; Normore, 2003.

³¹ Mondadori, 2004, p. 327.

³² Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 7, q. 1, n. 27 (ed. Balić et al., 1956, p. 118): “Uno enim modo dicitur ‘potentia logica’, quae dicit modum compositionis factae

and *Ordinatio*, then, it is possible to find a connotation of absolute impossibility (*simpliciter impossibile*) according to which an object is absolutely impossible only if it is intrinsically incompatible or repugnant with existence, such as a chimera. Impossibility is treated as an entirely formal matter, since it does not involve any other element over the nature of the object itself, while possibility is just its specular and positive equivalent, expressed by the concepts of compatibility or non-repugnance. To exemplify this purely formal conception of impossibility, Scotus presents an analogy resorting to the opposite predicates of “black” and “white”. Neither of them is an absolute impossible thing, since white things and black things can exist, yet they are intrinsically impossible one with the other, regardless of the substances to which they might inhere as properties.³³ The example of black and white, however, still fails in conveying a precise meaning to the relation of impossibility as such. In the same distinction, Scotus explains that to be impossible one to the other, two elements must satisfy the precondition of being possible in themselves, which entails that an absolute impossible being cannot be compossible or impossible to anything else. Assumed the intrinsic possibility of two given things, then, those are impossible one to the other only if (i) they cannot constitute a unitary being and only if (ii) they cannot produce a third element distinguished from them both.³⁴ Without relying on the relation of contrariety, this development explains far

ab intellectu,—et ista notat non-repugnantiam terminorum [...]. Et si hoc modo quaeratur de ‘potentia’ in divinis, dico quod ipsa est, comparando generationem ad quemcumque actum non-repugnantem generationi: et tunc potentia, vel possibilitas, est Patris vel Dei ad hoc praedicatum quod est generare, quia isti termini non repugnant; impossibilitas autem est quod Filius vel Spiritus Sanctus generent, quia isti termini repugnant.”

³³ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 43, q. unica, n. 5 (ed. Balić et al., 1963, p. 353): “Nihil est simpliciter impossibile nisi quia simpliciter repugnat sibi esse; cui autem repugnat esse, repugnat ei ex se primo, et non propter respectum aliquem affirmativum vel negativum eius ad aliquid aliud primo [...] sicut album et nigrum per se ex suis rationibus formalibus contrariantur et habent repugnantiam formalem, circumscribendo per impossibile omnem respectum ad quodcumque aliud. [...] possibile, secundum quod est terminus vel obiectum omnipotentiae, terminus vel obiectum omnipotentiae, est illud cui non repugnat esse et quod non potest ex se esse necessario.”

³⁴ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 43, q. unica, n. 16 (ed. Balić et al., 1963, p. 359): “[...] Quod intelligo sic: ‘impossibile simpliciter’ includit impossibilia, quae ex rationibus suis formalibus sunt impossibilia, et ab eo sunt principiative impossibilia, a quo principiative habent suas rationes formales. Est ergo ibi iste processus, quod sicut Deus suo intellectu producit possibile in esse possibili, ita producit duo entia

better why black and white are impossible properties. It is also evident that the relations of impossibility and compossibility are symmetrical, so if ‘A’ is compossible or impossible to ‘B’, the opposite holds as well.³⁵

According to this, the quoted example from the *Lectura* where Scotus marked the impossibility between the absolute perfection of *sapientia* and the canine nature is totally sound. Since every dog is an irrational animal, in fact, its nature is impossible with the rational requirements of intellectual knowledge, and therefore not only it cannot be better for a dog to be *sapiens*, but it is formally or intrinsically impossible for any dog to be it.

Assessing the Soundness of the Scheme

There are now enough elements to test the soundness of the eliminative conditional. Let’s take the negative sentence ‘God is not a dog’ as an instance. In order to eliminate the negation, we introduce the eliminative conditional, obtaining: if it is known that God is not a dog, then it is known that God is rational and that the predicable “dog” is impossible with the predicate “rational”; the antecedent is assumed to be true and the consequent is proven by the characterization of absolute perfections and the univocist account of predication. Moreover, the same strategy can be effectively applied to any term that stands for an inanimate being, such as the paradigmatic stone. It is also evident that the “traditional” transcendental concepts are hardly useful in this process: they are in fact predicable of everything and their occurrence in the relation of impossibility will therefore be irrelevant. It is also clear that the opposite verse of the conditional holds, and this is because: if I know that God is a rational being and I know that

formaliter (utrumque in esse possibili), et illa ‘producta’ se ipsis formaliter sunt impossibilia, ut non possint simul esse unum, neque aliquid tertium ex eis; [...]”

³⁵ I am aware of the fact that talking about ‘symmetrical relations’ is anachronistic in this *milieu*, since it requires us to understand relations as types and polyadic predicates (Marenbon, 2016, pp. 534–535). The standard realistic conception of relations in the late 13th century, instead, understands them as tokens, specifically conceiving each relation as an accident grounded in an element and pointing towards another one (Mugnai, 2016, pp. 534–535). Scotus is no exception in that; therefore, when I state that ‘A is impossible to B’ is symmetrical, I simply mean that its inverse, namely ‘B is impossible to A’, holds as well. For the same reason, I chose to keep this formulation instead of ‘A and B are impossible’ which, despite being more intuitive, could be misleading.

being rational is impossible with being a dog, then I know that God is not a dog, since the concept of God falls in the extension of “rational being”, while the concept of “dog” does not at all.³⁶

A strategy only based on absolute perfections, however, finds some difficulties in dealing with the case of intelligent and willing beings such as humans or angels, since those creatures are compossible with a few of the absolute perfections and instantiate them. To deal with these cases, we can resort to the concept of *ens infinitum*, because it notes a neat demarcation between divine and creatural being, as the following passage witnesses:

Secundo sic: ens videtur sufficienter dividi—tamquam in illa quae includunt ipsum quiditative—in ens increatum et in decem genera, et in partes essentielles decem generum; saltem non videtur habere plura dividenda quiditative, quidquid sit de istis. Igitur si ‘unum’ vel ‘verum’ includant quiditative ens, continebitur sub aliquo istorum. Sed non est aliquod decem generum, patet,—ne ex se est ens increatum, quia convenit entibus creatis; igitur esset species in aliquo genere vel principium essenziale alicuius generis: sed hoc est falsum, quia omnis pars essentialis in quocumque genere, et omnes species cuiuscumque generis, includunt limitationem, et ita quodcumque transcendens esset de se finitum, et per consequens repugnaret enti infinito, ne posset dici de ipso formaliter, quod est falsum, quia omnia transcendentia dicunt ‘perfectiones simpliciter’ et conveniunt Deo in summo.³⁷

The incompatibility between the finite and the infinite being, depending on the distinction between increate and creatural being, is hence stated. This repugnance allows us to solve the cases for ‘God is not a human’ or ‘God is not an angel’, both of which hold because God is the infinite being, and the simple concept “being infinite” is incompatible with any kind of finite

³⁶ A relation of impossibility entails, by definition, that it is impossible for its extremes to produce anything unitary altogether. According to this, the extremes at stake cannot be predicated one of the other. Assuming that “dog” and “rational” are impossible, therefore, the sentence ‘a dog is rational’ will be contravalid, while its opposite ‘a dog is not rational’ will be always true. The scheme for our already proven conditional is: ‘if God is not A then (God is B and A is impossible to B)’. Inverting this, we obtain: ‘if (God is B and A is impossible to B) then God is not A’. In our case, A—“dog”—, is impossible to B—“being rational”—, therefore it is always true that ‘A is not B’. Also, we assume that God is B, therefore we can conclude that God is not A.

³⁷ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 3, n. 135 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, p. 84).

being, namely with any creatural aspect that necessarily belong to one of the ten Aristotelian categories.

Extending the First Strategy from Theology to General Epistemology

We will now try to generalize the original conditional scheme, extending it beyond the scope of theological inquiry. To do so, the term denoting God will be substituted with a general predicable, resulting in the following formulation:

If I know 'C is not A' then I know 'C is B and A is impossible to B'

Although we could not find any explicit instance of this general formulation, there are nonetheless some textual passages to which the scheme can be applied. Already quoted is a passage from the questions on the *Metaphysics* where Scotus states the dependence of the negative sentence *bonum non est malum* on the positive one *bonum est bonum*. The passage belongs to a question that asks whether the human intellect *in via* can grasp a kind of knowledge about immaterial substances, and more precisely to a section in which Scotus provides arguments against a thesis that denies such an ability in humans. According to the opposing thesis, there are only two possible ways for the human intellect to know and understand immaterial substances: either through a *quia* kind of knowledge, or negatively, which means that humans can only know what the immaterial substances are not (*quid non sunt*). Each of these options depends on the idea that separate, immaterial creatures have a higher degree of perfection than their material counterparts.³⁸ Opposing the second alternative, Scotus introduces his argument exemplified by the case of good and bad, which leads to an

³⁸ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. II, qq. 2–3, nn. 49–50 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1997, p. 215): “Ad alias quinque rationes contra positionem respondetur quod vel concludunt quod cognoscimus de substantiis separatis ‘quia sunt’, vel in quantum sunt causae istorum inferiorum, non autem ‘propter quid’, cum effectus deficiens non sufficiat ut per ipsum cognoscatur ‘quid est’ causae. Vel aliter respondetur quod cognoscimus de eis quid non sunt, quia scilicet non sunt aliqua istorum inferiorum, propter hoc quod cognoscimus ipsas esse causas excellentes respectu horum.”

interesting remark: given the epistemic preeminence of positive assertions, if the human intellect knows what an angel is not, then it must already know what an angel is.³⁹ This asymmetrical statement, of course, supports the elimination scheme: introducing impossibility, which is missing in the *littera*, Scotus's conclusion would be in fact better explained.

The same writing presents another interesting, similar case. In the questions on *Metaphysics*, IV, Scotus argues against the assertion that the truth-value of affirmative and negative propositions depends on the identity or diversity of the propositional extremes:

Responsio: hic est ordo: primo concipitur 'homo' et concipitur 'asinus'; secundo concipitur 'homo est homo' et 'asinus est asinus', et per has primas affirmativas, vel per altera istarum, concipitur negativa 'homo non est asinus'. Haec habentur, non concipiendo aliqua extrema aliorum generum. Post haec concipitur 'homo est unus', 'asinus est unus', ac post haec 'asinus est idem sibi' et 'homo sibi'. Deinde, quia 'unus' et 'unus homo' et 'asinus' sunt multa consequenter diversa, unde falsum est illud: 'veritas affirmativae est identitas extremorum, et negativae est diversitas'; immo magis est e converso, ut patet ex dictis.⁴⁰

The negative sentence 'a man is not a donkey' is understood as dependent on two positive ones, namely 'a man is a man' and 'a donkey is a donkey'. However, the inference is not logically consequent: given in fact only the premises 'A is A' and 'B is B', it is not correct to conclude that 'A is not B'. Moreover, Scotus suggests that each of the two premises is itself sufficient to generate the negative conclusion, thus reproducing the same pattern that we have already met in the case of *bonum* and *malum*. At the same time, however, the textual passage offers no explicit metaphysical explanation to uphold this conclusion, and yet a theoretical solution can once more be provided resorting to the concept of "impossibility". It must be noted that in the commentary on the *Metaphysics* there are a few occurrences of the terms "repugnance", "compossibility" and "impossibility" and still, even when

³⁹ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. II, qq. 2–3, n. 55 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1997, p. 217): "Et Philosophus IV huius: 'notior utique erit dictio quam opposita negatio.' Ergo si cognoscatur de angelo quid non est, oportet praecognoscere quid est."

⁴⁰ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. IV, q. 2, n. 76 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1997, p. 338).

they are employed, they are never defined nor punctually analyzed. Keeping therefore the connotation of impossibility as presented in the *Ordinatio*, we can fruitfully apply the elimination scheme to this case: ‘If I know that ‘a man is not a donkey’, then I know that ‘a man is a man’ and that ‘being a man is impossible with being a donkey’.⁴¹ Both “man” and “donkey” are intrinsically possible natures, thus they satisfy the precondition to occur within a relation on impossibility; they also cannot constitute a unitary thing nor produce a third element by interacting with each other, as the two special condition for impossibility demand. Therefore, ‘being a man’ and ‘being a donkey’ are impossible properties. The generalized scheme provides, hence, an explanation for at least two logically lacking examples in the commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

Independently from the *littera*, we can also note how the case of absolute perfections alone, exemplified by the case of “dog” and “rationality”, can easily be extended to all the rational creatures, namely to all the beings that share that same perfection with God. If the consequence if I know that ‘God is not a dog’ then I know that ‘God is rational’ and ‘being a dog is impossible with being rational’ holds, then similarly the consequences that we can obtain by substituting “God” with other predicables that stand for rational being, such as “man” or “angel”, and “dog” with other predicables that stand for irrational beings, such as “donkey” or “stone”, hold as well. This means that the eliminative strategy based on the account of absolute perfections can effectively be extended to some predicables over “God”, and this extension is also sufficient to explain why a man is not a donkey.

The last cases to consider are the one in which the terms at stake are all outside the scope of absolute perfections, for instance that ‘a dog is not a donkey’, and the other in which they are all within it, such as ‘a man is not an angel’. For both cases, the solution should depend only on the relation of impossibility whose definition, relying purely on the natures corresponding to the terms, allows us to test each specific case.

In conclusion, even if we cannot provide an unmistakably evident textual application of the generalized form, its confutation is not obvious

⁴¹ The generalised conditional was: if I know ‘A is not B’, then I know ‘A is C and A is impossible with B’. There is no assumption about the fact that A, B, C must be different terms, therefore the example about the man and the donkey, in which A and C are the same term, is not problematic.

either and, what is more relevant, such a generalization is theoretically sound and provides an effective explanation for some unargued textual instances.

The Second Strategy to Deal with Negation in Theology: An Attempted Algorithm

Returning to the preliminary remarks from which we extrapolated the elimination scheme, Scotus adds other two paragraphs to support his asymmetrical account of negation in theology. The first one matches with the renowned expression *negationes non summe amamus* and is left without any further support or development. The explanation for this assertion lies in the conception of God as the highest, infinite end that every willing creature is naturally prone to love.⁴² To our aim, it is rather the remaining and last paragraph to be utterly relevant, because in this passage Scotus strives unequivocally to eliminate any negative theological knowledge:

Similiter etiam, aut negatio concipitur praecise, aut ut dicta de aliquo. Si praecise concipitur negatio, ut non-lapis, hoc aequè convenit nihilo sicut Deo, quia pura negatio dicitur de ente et de non-ente; igitur in hoc non magis intelligitur Deus quam nihil vel chimaera. Si intelligitur ut negatio dicta de aliquo, tunc quaero illum conceptum substratum de quo intelligitur ista negatio esse vera, aut erit conceptus affirmativus, aut negativus. Si est affirmativus, habetur propositum. Si negativus, quaero, ut prius: aut negatio concipitur praecise, aut ut dicta de aliquo. Si primo modo, hoc aequè convenit nihilo sicut Deo; si ut dicta de aliquo, sicut prius. Et quantumcumque procederetur in negationibus, vel non intelligeretur Deus magis quam nihil, vel stabitur in aliquo affirmativo conceptu qui est primus.⁴³

⁴² Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Tractatus de primo principio*, cap. 4, n. 80 (ed. Porro, 2008, p. 194): “Sexta via ad propositum ex parte finis est talis: voluntas nostra potest omni fine finito aliquid maius appetere vel amare, sicut et intellectus intelligere. Et videtur inclinatio naturalis ad summe amandum bonum infinitum; nam inde arguitur inclinatio naturalis in voluntate ad aliquid, quia ex se sine habitu prompte et delectabiliter vult illud voluntas libera. Ita videtur quod experimur in amando bonum infinito: non videtur in alio perfecte quietari. Quomodo non illud naturaliter odiret, si esset oppositum sui obiecti, sicut naturaliter odit non esse.”

⁴³ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1–2, n. 10 (ed. Balić et al., 1954, p. 5).

The aim of this text is clear: it is epistemically futile to proceed negatively in the theological inquiry, because either (i) we do not say anything relevant about God, or (ii) we need to find a positive concept which is prior to any negative one we employ. Nevertheless, although the aim is clear, the argument is not. According to the text, there are two different ways to conceive negation: precisely and predicated about something else. The first case, exemplified by the expression “not-stone”, matches the case of infinite terms, and Scotus states that knowing that ‘God is a not-stone’ is meaningless, since an infinite term can be predicated of anything but its positive counterpart: everything but a stone is a not-stone. Also, this conception of infinite terms as predicable even of non-existent or impossible beings such as the chimera can be traced back to the earliest works of the *Subtilis*, such as the commentaries on the *Categorias*⁴⁴ and on the *Perihermeneias*;⁴⁵ therefore, this first part of the argument is quite sound. What is much less clear is the second section. It must be noted at once that we could not find any other occurrence of the expression *negatio dicta de aliquo* in the critical editions of the Author’s writing; therefore, such an expression might be a *hapax legomenon*. In order to suggest its meaning and given the fact that Scotus has already dismissed all the sentences such as ‘God is a not-A’ as epistemically vain, it is plausible that the remaining criticism will focus on phrasal negation, and therefore on sentences such as ‘God is not a stone’. Given ‘God is not A’ and supposing its truth, Scotus asks whether the “substrate concept” of this kind of negation is affirmative or negative. If such a substrate is positive, then the negation will be positively grounded, as it was meant to prove, while if the substrate is negative, the procedure must be repeated from

⁴⁴ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, qq. 37–38, n. 20 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1999, pp. 515–516): “[...]. Quod de negatione patet, quia licet illa dicatur de aliquo ente, ut ‘non-homo’ dicitur de asino, tamen secundum rationem qua contradicit homini non est ens nisi rationis. Per hoc patet quod licet contraria maneat, non existente intellectu, non oportet contradictoria manere secundum quod sunt contradictoria. Quia negado albi, prout contradicit albo, non est in nigro, quia ut contradicit, est dicibilis de ente et de non-ente.”

⁴⁵ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in Duos Libros Perihermeneias*, pars I, q. 4, n. 18 (Etzkorn & alii, 2004, p. 162): “[...]. Negatio enim adveniens termino finito privat formam finitam significatam per terminum et relinquit ens indeterminatum ad quodcumque intellegibile et apprehensibile sub ratione qualitatis determinatae. Et ideo ‘non-homo’ convenit cuilibet, cui convenit qualitercumque ens naturae vel ens intellegibile, prout intelligitur sub privatione qualitatis finitae importatae per hoc nomen ‘homo’ [...].”

the beginning, until a last positive element is reached. However, it is most unclear what this substrate is supposed to be: it might be either 'A' itself, since it would not make sense to further apply the algorithm⁴⁶ to God or to the propositional subject, or another concept 'B' on which 'A' depends. At any rate, we do not really understand how this application might be performed, since if we try to unfold it, we end up with several ambiguities.⁴⁷ Another possible option would be to consider the *negatio dicta de aliquo* as something like this: 'B is not A' given that 'God is not A'. This choice grounds 'A' in a substrate which is independent from being predicated of God, yet again all of this is unsatisfactory when the procedure is applied.

⁴⁶ I choose the notion of "algorithm" because this argument can be outlined resorting to a diagram:

- (1) If God is not A then either (i) "not A" is a *negatio concipitur praecise* or (ii) "not A" is a *negatio dicta de aliquo*.
- (2) If (i) then stop, cvd.
- (3) If (ii), either the *substratum* of "not A" is (iia) positive or (iib) negative.
- (4) If (iia) then stop, cvd.
- (5) If (iib), either the negation in the negative *substratum* is (iib,α) a *negatio concipitur praecise* or (iib,β) a *negatio dicta de aliquo*.
- (6) If (iib,α) then go to (2).
- (7) If (iib,β) then go to (3).

⁴⁷ Given 'God is not A', we must individuate a substrate concept, which might be 'A'. (ia) If A is a positive substrate, the negation will not be positively grounded. This is because if we consider 'God is not a man', the fact that "man" is positive does not reduce the negative form of knowledge expressed by the sentence to a positive one. (ib) If A is a negative substrate, then two cases are possible: (α) that A is a *negatio praecise dicta* and equals therefore not-C, so the sentence becomes 'God is not not-C', which again does not resolve the problem of eliminating the negative pole. (β) that A is a *negatio dicta de aliquo*, which is even worse, since we cannot find a grammatical way to express it: would it be 'God is not (is not C)'? We can also try to set a 'B' as the substrate concept. (iia) if B is the positive substrate, it may mean that that 'God is not A' becomes grounded in 'God is B', and in this case the elimination would occur. Yet it is unclear how 'A' and 'B' could be related: what kind of 'B' would allow us to ground 'God is not a man'? (iib) if B is the negative substrate, then two cases are possible: (α) that B is a *negatio praecise dicta* and it is then equal to non-C. Therefore, always supposing that 'God is not A' should be reduced to 'God is B', then the further passage would become 'God is not-C', and this would effectively satisfy the first argument about infinite negation. (β) that B is a *negatio dicta de aliquo*. This case, again, hardly makes sense, because if a *negatio dicta de aliquo* is a propositional kind of negation, how can 'God is not B' be translated grammatically?

Some light might be shed by *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 8 where Scotus resorts to a very similar argument, if not the same, but exploiting a different terminology:

Haec etiam est via Dionysii, quia quando per tertiam viam sive in tertio gradu, pervenerit ad illam ‘cognitionem per remotionem’, quaero an praecise cognoscatur ibi illa negatio,—et tunc non plus cognoscitur Deus quam chimaera, quia illa negatio est communis enti et non-enti; aut cognoscitur ibi aliquod positivum, cui attribuitur illa negatio,—et tunc de illo positivo quaero quomodo conceptus eius habetur in intellectu: si per via causalitatis et eminentiae non habetur aliquis conceptus, prius causatus in intellectu, nihil omnino cognoscetur positivum cui attribuat illa negatio.⁴⁸

Negative theology is delegitimized once again; however, this case is much clearer: the “substrate concept” of the former quote is now replaced by an explicitly positive element to which the second kind of negation is applied. Also, instead of introducing a double-fold conception of negation as before, Scotus explains the way in which the positive grounding must be obtained by the human intellect, namely resorting to positive or superlative theology to the detriment of the negative one. Surely, the first argument presents a more interesting, formal structure and witnesses an attempt by Scotus to produce an abstract procedure to eliminate any negative form of knowledge about God. Its structure can easily be outlined in a schematic way as a diagram, yet the argumentation supporting it is unfortunately unclear and prone to misunderstandings. The second and last quoted text provides instead an argument which, despite being less formal and exclusively referred to theology, is favorable in terms of clarity and supports altogether the same eliminative claim that motivates the first one.

Conclusion

Scotus’s writings display a variety of positions, four at least, that witness an asymmetricalist attitude towards negation. Moreover, a radical kind of asymmetricalism can be found in the *Ordinatio*, where Scotus is

⁴⁸ Iohannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 8, p. 1, q. 3, n. 73 (ed. Balić et al., 1956, p. 186).

eager to deprive negative theology of any independency and pursues this aim by resorting to two main strategies: an elimination scheme and an elimination algorithm. The elimination scheme provides a way to reduce any negative epistemic proposition about God to a conjunction of two positive assertions. Resorting to his univocist account of predication, Scotus marks a few concepts that can be positively predicated about God, namely transcendentals, either “traditional” or absolute perfections and, most of all, the simple locution *ens infinitum*. It has also been shown how these positive predicables can occur in a relation of impossibility, whose characterization is fundamental to assess the soundness of the scheme. Through a simple generalization on its terms, then, we managed to show how the scheme can be theoretically extended over the specific field of theological inquiry and how it can be employed to solve some logically unfounded arguments in the commentaries on the *Metaphysics*.

The second strategy, instead, has been proven less effective: despite the clear intention behind it, a significant part of the elimination algorithm, namely the regressive argument based on the conception of a *negatio dicta de aliquo*, is too ambiguous and barely comprehensible. Luckily, it has been possible to produce a different textual evidence which effectively presents a much more effective argument.

In conclusion, Scotus utilizes a remarkable amount of ink throughout his many writings to assess the preeminence of the positive on the negative, an effort which cannot be dismissed as secondary or accidental. The case of negative theology, specifically, intercepts and requires several of the most peculiar theoretical positions endorsed by the *Subtilis*, such as univocism and the redefinition of transcendental concepts. Furthermore, the theoretical consequences of his positions can be extended over the field of theological speculation, concurring to develop a general epistemic frame.

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to detect and assess some parasitic aspects that characterize John Duns Scotus's account of negation, with a major focus on epistemology and theology. The first paragraph introduces the concepts of asymmetricalism or negation parasitism and traces the occurrence of four asymmetricalist theses in the Author's production. The second paragraph presents and analyzes a first strategy to dismiss negative theology through an elimination scheme, namely a conditional which reduces negative epistemic propositions to positive ones. The third section attempts a generalization of such a scheme to make it suitable for any kind of negative knowledge foreign to the theological context. The fourth and last paragraph presents a different and more problematic eliminative strategy for negative theology and deals with the issues that arise from it.

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NATURAL REASON AND GOD’S INFINITE POWER:
DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES
IN THE LATE 13TH AND 14TH CENTURY COMMENTARIES
ON AVERROES’S *DE SUBSTANTIA ORBIS***

Keywords: *De substantia orbis*, Averroes, Averroism, Fernand of Spain, Maino de Maineri, Philosophy in Medieval Paris, Philosophy in Medieval Erfurt

Introduction

The concise set of treaties called *De substantia orbis* is a very modest work with quite serious pretensions. As Averroes says, he intended to take up problems moved by Aristotle in the works that perished and did not come

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to our times.¹ As such, this work encompasses a summary of the whole interpretation of the Aristotelian corpus made by the Cordovan philosopher and can be therefore viewed as the abstract of the most important issues in the philosophy of nature, cosmology in particular. Among Latin schoolmen, *De substantia orbis* established itself along with Michael Scot's translation in the 2nd half of the 13th century.² By the end of 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, though, *De substantia orbis* had already been perceived as a supplement, *annexus* to Aristotle's *De caelo*, and as a text complementary to *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *De generatione* and *Meteorology*, and by the end of the 13th century it became the material for academic lectures and philosophical exegesis.³ The commentaries on the *De substantia orbis*

¹ Averroes, *De substantia orbis* I (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 5vbK–L): “Declaratum est igitur ex hoc sermone quae est substantia caeli et hoc quod hic fuit dictum, enim quiddam eius invenitur probatum ab Aristotele in suis libris et quiddam sequitur ex suis dictis. Sed apparet ex verbis Aristotelis quod declaravit omnia ista in libris qui non pervenerunt ad nos. Vocetur ergo iste tractatus *Sermo de substantia orbis*. Dignior est enim hoc nomine quod intitulavit hoc titulo.” The Giuntina edition of the *De substantia orbis*, to which I am referring here, is highly imperfect, so it made me use three additional manuscripts to compare them with the renaissance edition: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6296; lat. 6506; lat. 15453. On printed edition of the *De substantia orbis* critically compared with its manuscript transmission, see Licata, 2019.

² On Latin version of the treatise compared to its Hebrew version, see Hyman, 1986 and esp. Licata, 2019; for an up-to-date list of known manuscripts containing Michael Scot's translation of the *De substantia orbis*, see Digital Averroes Research Environment (<https://dare.uni-koeln.de/app/>, last access: 5.01.2021).

³ Cf. Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis, prooemium* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 272va): “Et licet Philosophus de istis entibus nobilibus, videlicet corporibus caelestibus et eorum motoribus, principalius in dicto libro *Caeli et mundi* inquirat quam in alio loco naturalis philosophiae ob difficultatem, tamen eorum in pluribus aliis locis sua librorum multa de ipsis interserit, ut patet 8 *Physicorum*, *De generatione*, 1 *Metheororum* et in pluribus locis suae *Metaphysicae*, praecipue in 12. Et ideo sententia Aristotelis de natura caelestium corporum et eorum motoribus obscura necnon in quibusdam dubia esse videtur. Propter quod Averroes, commentator Aristotelis et eius philosophiae singularis emulator, quemdam libellum edidit quem *De substantia orbis* intitulavit in quo Aristotelis sententiam de natura caelestium corporum et eorum motorum necnon differentiam et convenientiam eorum ad generabilia et corruptibilia in substantia et in actionibus, tam ex parte corporum quam ex parte formarum breviter et optime explicavit, quaedam expressa ab Aristotele in diversis locis assumens, quaedam ex verborum eius intentione sillogizans.” Here and in the following pages I am referring to manuscript Vat. lat. 845, which, according to my research, is the most reliable and consistent witness in the manuscript tradition of Fernand's commentary. The cited text has been critically

cover what appear to be significant problems concerning the structure of transient beings compared with the structure of celestial bodies. The fragments of this opusculum, rendering the nature of the prime mover and the heavens, are especially significant in this regard.⁴ They refer to the subject matter that became the impulse towards setting the competition of natural reason and philosophy with faith and theology in investigating God and its attributes. In the kernel of this subject lies the question of how our natural faculties can acquire knowledge of God's power and divine causality by referring solely to the observation of local movement and non-experimental study of the substance of celestial spheres.

To illustrate the tension between natural cognition and conclusions of faith, I chose three commentaries on the *De substantia orbis*, two of which were written in Paris, one by Fernand of Spain in the last two decades of the 13th century and the other by Maino de' Maineri composed around 1315.⁵ The third commentary was anonymously composed in Erfurt

established by the author. For some of other manuscripts containing this commentary, see Weijers, 2003, p. 94; Iohannes de Ianduno, *Quaestiones in Physicam*, prologus (ed. Venetia, 1544, sine folio): "Considerandum est quod libris praenotatis in quibus traduntur partes scientiae naturalis annexi sunt quidam alii libelli Aristotelis et Averrois [...] liber autem Averrois *De substantia orbis* annexus est quodammodo libro *Caeli et mundi* quantum ad 1 et 2 <librum> et aliquid 8 *Physicorum*."; Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, principium (ed. Fioravanti, 2016, p. 223): "[I] tendo de corpore caelesti solum et de his quae ad eum (!) pertinent, de quo quamvis Aristoteles declaravit in primis duobus libris *Caeli et mundi* et in multis aliorum suorum librorum fecit mentionem, sicut in 2 *De generatione* et 8 *Physicorum* et 8 *Metaphysicae* et 12, tamen nihilominus Averroes commentator egregius verborum Aristotelis voluit nobis tractatum de hoc facere, aggregans quae ab Aristotele dicta sunt diffuse in aliis, quaedam tamen eliciens ex verbis Aristotelis de ipso caelo quae Aristoteles non expressit. Et hunc librum volo ad praesens repetere ad meam informationem." I classiced and unified the Latin in the last fragment. The popularity of the *De substantia orbis* is also attested by its critical reception in works of Giles of Rome and Hervaeus Natalis: Aegidius Romanus, *De materia caeli contra Averroistas* (ed. Venetia, 1500, ff. 85r–90v); Hervaeus Natalis, *De materia caeli* (ed. Venetia, 1513, ff. 33rb–53va).

⁴ See fragments discussed below on pp. 188–190.

⁵ Both authors are often mentioned in the context of Latin Averroism and its development after condemnation in 1277 in late 13th and early 14th century Paris. For literature concerning Fernand of Spain, see n. 23. For literature concerning Maino de' Maineri, see n. 39. From the extensive literature dealing with the historical context of Parisian condemnations in 1270 and 1277 with their meaning, the following positions need to be listed: Bianchi, 1990; Bianchi, 1999; Bianchi, 2009; Libera, 1991, pp. 193–220; Putallaz,

in the second half of the 14th century. I chose these commentaries due to the doctrinally different ways in which they tackle Averroes's treatise. For the sake of this article, I will label these two kinds of inquiry (1) an exegetical approach and (2) a critical approach on Averroes. The first two commentaries are examples of the former—they comment upon the *De substantia orbis*, adopting and consistently developing Averroes's solutions. In the third of the commentaries, although its author comments upon the *De substantia orbis* as an authoritative work, he does not follow Averroes's lead in choosing the answers but instead tends to perceive his work merely as a pretext for taking up philosophically important questions, disagreeing though with the solutions achieved by the Commentator.⁶

1995; Thijssen, 1998, pp. 40–56. For a general presentation of the intellectual climate and importance of Averroes at the Faculty of Arts in Paris at the beginning of the 14th century, see: Imbach, 1989, pp. 102–130; Riedlinger, 1967, pp. 12–67.

⁶ In this paper, I deliberately refrain from labeling these two approaches as Averroistic or non-Averroistic, even though the first two commentaries are commonly known as representing Latin Averroism and heterodox ideas. I do not intend to measure the “degree” of Averroism in these authors, but—for purposes of this article—I prefer to see in their works the exegesis of authoritative work that the *De substantia orbis* was at the Faculty of Arts in Paris and later at the studium generale in Erfurt. The problem of Averroism in the case of these exegetes has already partially been covered by scholars (see below n. 21 and n. 38), yet the relationship between the author's Averroism and the fact of commenting directly on Averroes has not been studied yet. As will be seen below, commenting on Averroes—just like it was in the case of commenting on Aristotle or other authoritative works—did not always presuppose Averroistic inclinations or the clearly exegetic intentions of the author. Also, commenting upon the *De substantia orbis*, even with an explanatory scope, did not always mean uncritical sympathy for the Commentator. The example of a philosopher doctrinally far from being Averroist, yet at times following Averroes quite closely is Henry Totting de Oyta. In his early questions, written in Erfurt, on the *De substantia orbis* (Erfurt, Biblioteca Ampnioniana 2° 297, ff. 149ra–158rb), he is an exegete just as he is an exegete in his later paraphrases and detailed expositions of Aristotelian corpus. However, his commentary lacks questions on God's infinite power or divine causality—usually discussed even by authors critical to Averroes, like in the case of the anonymous Erfurt author presented below—which might mark Henry's unwillingness to discuss such controversial issues in the context of the *De substantia orbis* without discarding other valuable aspects of this treatise at the same time. Some clues as to the status of Averroes' work and the teaching practice might be found in John Aurifaber of Halberstadt, who taught in Erfurt and Halberstadt. In his long and complex *Sophisma de dimensionibus* (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek 1444, ff. 149va–152va), Aurifaber covers almost every issue examined in the *De substantia orbis* and cites Averroes' treatise *in extenso* multiple times. He explains

The difference between these two approaches is readily apparent in the three questions lying in the intersection of philosophy with theology and causing several doctrinal controversies in the 13th and 14th centuries. These are (1) the question of the infinite power of the prime mover and (2) the question of efficient and final causality that comes with the prior. (3) The third issue I will analyze deals with the possibility of creation *ex nihilo*. Its conclusion is the consequence of the answers to the first two questions. To have a better insight into the character of the commentaries, I will present the outline of chosen aspects and excerpts from Averroes's works that were significant for Latin philosophers commenting on the *De substantia orbis*.

Doctrinal Background

One of the key concepts of Aristotelian physics is the axiom that everything that is in motion was previously moved by something else (*omne motum ab alio movetur*).⁷ For this reason, one of the most abstruse concepts in the medieval exegesis of Aristotle is the prime mover that is to be the origin of the eternal movement of the heavens and subcelestial world. Averroes puts the concept of prime mover in the middle of a discussion on the nature of the heavens and the whole subcelestial world, so in his commentaries and in the *De substantia orbis* it becomes one of the key concepts of the

that he intends to solve the problems discussed in accordance with Averroes' position because this way of proceeding provides an opportunity for better philosophical exercise (f. 150va): "Ne tamen propter hanc rationem quae valde longa est et tediosa aliquis recedat a via communi, ego intendo hic ponere duas solutiones forsan aliquid apparentes, fingens me in hoc de contraria opinione causa melioris exercitii, licet ex hoc aliquid praedictam videantur debilitare." All of these works require further research and are mentioned here only to present the complexity and ambiguity of the material and problems under scrutiny. For another example of such ambiguity, see n. 71. For further details on Henry Totting of Oyta, see Lorenz, 1989, pp. 185–200; Weijers, 2001, pp. 68–73. For the description of the manuscript Erfurt, Biblioteca Amploniana 2° 297, see Schum, 1887, pp. 201–203, 815. For further details on John Aurifaber of Halberstadt, see: Lorenz, 1989, pp. 224–239; Pinborg, 1985, pp. 137–192; Weijers, 2001, pp. 119–120. For problems with establishing differentia specifica of Averroism, see Kuksewicz, 1997, pp. 93–96. For the "historiographical myth" of Latin Averroism, see: Fioravanti, 1966; Imbach, 1991; Libera, 1991, pp. 98–142; Marenbon, 2012; Piaia, 1985.

⁷ For this principle, see Weisheipl, 1965.

philosophy of nature.⁸ For 14th century commentators, special attention was paid to the link between three causes only roughly sketched by Aristotle, i.e., (1) the last sphere of fixed stars—*subiectum motus*, or *primum mobile*—with its mover, the intelligence moving the spheres; (2) the lower celestial spheres with their movers; (3) the unmoved and unchanging prime mover, the first principle of the universe. All of these concepts were meticulously investigated in Averroes's long commentaries known in the Latin world from the early 13th century onwards. They were also briefly outlined in the *De substantia orbis*, where Averroes explains—often in various and slightly differing terms—the interaction between the prime mover and the celestial bodies.

According to the long commentary on the *Physics* VIII, the prime mover is not inhered in the matter but is subsistent, incorporeal, unmoved and does not have magnitude, so its action is infinite.⁹ The reason why it needs to be incorporeal is the following: If infinite power were applied to the body, it would follow that this body moved in no time (*in instanti*). On the other hand, if infinity were applied not to the body, it would be called neither infinite nor finite because these terms refer only to body and magnitude. Thus, no concept of finitude or infinity can be applied to it, since they refer only to bodies.¹⁰

⁸ For further details, see: Jung-Palczewska, 1997, pp. 47–49; Maier, 1955, pp. 227–234.

⁹ Averroes, *Commentum in Phys.*, lib. VIII, com. 78 (ed. Iuntina IV, f. 423vaI): “Motor primus non est in materia, sed subsistens per se.”; Averroes, *Commentum in Phys.*, lib. VIII, com. 86 (ed. Iuntina IV, f. 433vbK): “Concludit quod primus motor de quo declaratum est ipsum non moveri non habet corpus, id est non habet formam in materia [...] non potest habere magnitudinem, id est cum iam ostendimus quod omnis corporis finiti actio est finita et similiter omnis virtus in corpore et quod primi motoris actio est infinita, manifestum est quod primus motor non habet magnitudinem omnino.”

¹⁰ Averroes, *Commentum in Phys.*, lib. VIII, com. 79 (ed. Iuntina IV, f. 427rbE–F): “Finitum et infinitum solum de corporibus dici possunt et sic sola actio istorum dicitur infinita. [...] Si vero illam posueris in corpore, tunc non dicitur finitum aut infinitum eo quod non est in corpore. [...] Unde, si dixerimus potentias esse in corporibus, tunc actio earum erit proportionalis, scilicet quod proportio potentiae motivae ad potentiam motivam est sicut proportio velocitatis motus ad velocitatem. Existentibus autem non in corpore non est proportio, cum proportio solius est magnitudinis ad magnitudinem.”

In his long commentary on the *Metaphysics*,¹¹ Averroes takes up the question of the prime mover's nature, distinguishing three kinds of power: power in substance (*in substantia*), in alteration (*in alteratione*) and in the local movement (*in ubi*). The notion of infinite and finite might only be applied to the third one since the power Averroes is referring to is the force of movement.¹² This movement, he explains in the long commentary on the *Metaphysics* XII, has its source in two different movers: the prime mover, which is infinite and moves with finite motion, and the second mover, also identified with the intelligence of the first sphere, i.e., the sphere of the fixed stars. The prime mover does not move as an efficient cause, but as a finite cause, so, as such, it does not perform any action. Yet, the intelligence of the first heaven moves the lower spheres as an efficient cause in consequence of thinking and desiring the first principle, which is the most desirable principle of the universe every other sphere is heading towards.¹³

According to the long commentary on the *De caelo* II, due to proximity of the first principle, the intelligence of the first sphere—which is

¹¹ For further details on Averroes's concept of the prime mover and cosmology in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, see Genequand, 1986, pp. 33–48, 54–55.

¹² Averroes, *Commentum in Metaphys.*, lib. XII, com. 41 (ed. Iuntina VIII, f. 324raC–bD): “Est enim potentia in substantia, in alteratione et in ubi. [...] Corpus caeleste non habet potentiam nisi tantum in ubi. Si igitur potentia qua movetur hoc motu aeterno fuerit in eo, aut est finita aut infinita. [...] Sed non consequitur ex hoc quod omne corpus habeat omnem potentiam quia corpus caeleste non habet potentiam nisi tantum in ubi.”

¹³ Averroes, *Commentum in Metaphys.*, lib. XII, com. 41 (ed. Iuntina VIII, f. 324rbE–F): “Iste motus componitur ut declaratum est ex duobus motoribus quorum unum est finitae motionis et est anima existens in eo; et alter est infinitae motionis, et est potentia, quare non est in materia. Secundum igitur quod movetur a potentia finita movetur in tempore, cum dicere finitatem est habere proportionem terminatam ad motum rem et in sua substantia est aeterna.”; Averroes, *Commentum in Metaphys.*, lib. XII, com. 36 (ed. Iuntina VIII, f. 319raC–bD): “[S]i motor corporum caelestium est magis bonus omnibus, necesse est, ut sit desideratus magis bonis omnibus. Et intendebat <Aristoteles>, cum dicit et non existimatur, quia desideramus distinguere inter desiderium intellectus et sensus. In quo enim appetitus sensuum non dominatur super intellectum, reputatur desideratum esse bonum, quia est desiderabile. Et omnia ista dicit ad declarandum quod corpora caelestia, cum habent appetitum propter intellectum. Intellectus autem maius bonum ipso appetit, contingit necessario quod corpora caelestia appetunt in hoc motu aliquid magis bonum ipsis. Et cum illa sunt nobilissima corpora sensibilibus et meliora, necesse est, ut illud bonum quod appetunt sit nobilissimum eorum et maxime quod appetit totum caelum in motu diurno.”

also the second mover—is moved directly by the unmoved prime mover as an end of the movement and the intelligible object of desire. Thus, the second mover moves the heavens with a constant finite force, proportional to the force the third and every subsequent sphere can absorb in their eternal movement.¹⁴ Also, the proximity to the first mover determines the number of actions the spheres perform, i.e., the first sphere and its mover performs only one action to attain the goodness of the first principle, the next sphere needs two actions, and so every subsequent mover needs more action due to the distance from the goodness they are trying to achieve.¹⁵

In the *De substantia orbis*¹⁶ Averroes addresses the issue of the correct understanding of the term “infinity” once applied to the prime mover’s power, tackling it in a slightly different way. Among the distinctions concerning the

¹⁴ Averroes, *Commentum in De caelo*, lib. II, com. 38 (ed. Carmody, 2003, pp. 342–342, ll. 68–70, 78–82, 90–94, 98–102): “Et ob hoc quidem necesse est ut omnis motus naturalis et voluntarius habeat velocitatem terminatam, quia omnis motus habet motorem terminatum. [...] Et si potentiae eorum essent infinitae in vigore movendi, non esset proportio inter motorem et rem motam; et si hoc esset, non esset differentia inter eos, neque esset illic multitudo omnino, verbi gratia quia motor orbis Saturni et motor totius moveret tempore infinito. [...] Si ceteri orbis habuissent ex multitudine stellarum quod habet orbis stellatus, tunc motor eorum non posset movere eos in velocitate quam modo habent. [...] Potentiae moventium sunt terminatae proportionis ad corpora mota. [...] Causa in terminatione proportionum quae sunt inter potentias motorum et rerum motarum ab eis est diversitas formarum. [...] Haec infinitas sit communis formis quae sunt in materia et formis quae non sunt in materia.”

¹⁵ Averroes, *Commentum in De caelo*, lib. II, com. 62 (ed. Carmody, 2003, p. 393, ll. 34–40): “[P]rimum caelum, quod movetur motu diurno quod est nobilium eorum que sunt illius generis, necesse est ut acquirat nobilitatem que est in illo genere una actione, et quod illud quod est valde remotum ab eo aut acquirat ipsam magna operatione aut omnino non acquirat eam magna operatione neque parva, sed acquirat nobilitatem de qua habet naturam ut acquirat, et ea que sunt media acquirant operatione media.” Averroes, *Commentum in De caelo*, lib. II, com. 63 (ed. Carmody, 2003, pp. 395–396, ll. 46–54): “[I]am enim declaravimus illic quod additio potentiae motoris super potentiam moti non est infinita nisi in tempore et in aeternitate motionis, non in velocitate neque in multitudine motuum neque in magnitudine corporum, quoniam si esset in magnitudine corporum et motuum multitudine et velocitate motuum, esset possibile invenire motum non in tempore et corpus motum infinitum quod est impossibile; et quod est possibile ex istis non est nisi motionem esse infinitam, secundum quod dicitur quod potentiae istorum motorum sunt infinitae.”

¹⁶ For doctrinal importance of the treatise and its impact on the Latin world, see Lerner, 1996, pp. 139–164.

nature of the prime mover and its attributes, the twofold notion of infinity plays a key role, namely infinity as a force of infinite action and passion in time, but finite in itself that is finite in velocity and force; and infinity as a force of infinite action and passion in itself.¹⁷ In the former meaning, infinity is understood as the ability to cause movement of infinite duration but of a finite force. In the latter, it is the ability to cause movement which is infinite in its velocity and force. Averroes rejects the assumption that an infinite action of the like might be performed among corporeal bodies, so he states that the prime mover is infinite in duration—it causes the movement to last eternally—yet it is finite in its power since he cannot interact with infinite force on something which is of finite nature.¹⁸ In the *De substantia orbis* Averroes also develops a concept present later in his long commentaries, i.e., that celestial spheres with their intelligences have appetitive virtues that are the very reason they are leaning towards something desirable. And since the most desirable object is the prime mover, they are leaning towards it as to the final cause, thus continuing and preserving the movement of the inferior parts of the universe.¹⁹ As such, the celestial bodies as separate substances are also both final and efficient causes. As the former, they are

¹⁷ Averroes, *De substantia orbis* III (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 9rbF–vaG): “Et ad hoc dicamus breviter quod infinitum dicitur duobus modis quorum unus est virtus infinitae actionis et passionis in tempore et est finita in se, scilicet in velocitate et vigore; secundus est virtus infinitae actionis aut passionis in se.”

¹⁸ Averroes, *De substantia orbis* III (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 9vaH–I): “Infinitum igitur esse in vigore cuius causa est corpus secundum quod est corpus impossibile est in corporibus sive caelestibus sive aliis. Infinitum vero in tempore esse est necesse in corporibus caelestibus ex diversitate motoris et moti in eis a corporibus generabilibus et corruptibilibus. Et est impossibile in corporibus generabilibus et corruptibilibus, quia virtutes eorum motivae sunt motivae materiales et corpora sua quae moventur ab eis componuntur ex materia et forma.”

¹⁹ Averroes, *De substantia orbis* IV (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 10rbF): “Et cum consideravit de istis virtutibus, declaratum fuit ei ipsam esse virtutem appetitivam de virtutibus animae tantum. Et cum consideravit in virtutibus appetitivis caelestibus vidit eas moveri ad appetibile nobilius ipsis. Et cum consideravit de virtutibus appetitivis caelestibus, invenit eas esse finitarum potentiarum. Et cum consideravit in continuatione motus eorum, fuit declaratum quod causa continuationis non est ista qua movetur, sed illud quod largitur eis continuationem est aliud appetibile.”

the ends for lower spheres with their intelligences, and as the latter, they are direct causes of movement for subsequent lower spheres.²⁰

In summary, according to Averroes's view, the Aristotelian prime mover—identified by Arabic, Jewish and Christian philosophers as the God of religion—moves as a final cause, the most desirable principle, unmoved and unchanging, desired as an end by the whole of heaven. Yet these concepts may, to some extent, cause confusion, and some questions are still to be raised: what does it mean that the prime mover is neither finite nor infinite but moves with finite power? Is the prime mover merely a final cause or also, at least to some extent, an efficient cause? Since it is only a final cause, it does not actively interact with the universe he created. Furthermore, if it does not have infinite force or efficient causality, then God's ability to freely create various effects—including the creation of the world—can be questioned and challenged.

Fernand of Spain on the *De substantia orbis*

Fernand of Spain (Fernandus Hispanus) was a university master at the Faculty of Arts in Paris in the last two decades of the 13th and, probably, the first decade of the 14th centuries. He is known as the author of vast commentaries on the *Metaphysics* or the *Economics*, and he also composed a treatise, *De specie intelligibili*. Moreover, Fernand authored the commentary on the *De substantia orbis* that was traditionally ascribed to John of Jandun. In his works, he adopted some ideas characteristic of the Averroistic current of the late 13th and early 14th centuries, of which his commentary on the *De substantia orbis* appears to be a good example.²¹ In Fernand's commentary, there are several *quaestiones* that undertake

²⁰ Averroes, *De substantia orbis* I (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 5vaG): “Nihil est in corporibus caelestibus quo forma qua est motus differat ab ea ad quam est motus, immo sunt eadem forma et non differunt nisi dispositione.”

²¹ I undertake a detailed discussion on this attribution in my PhD thesis, so I omit further explanations on this subject. On general and rather scarce details about Fernand's biography, see: Weijers, 1996, pp. 87–89; Zimmermann, 1968; Zimmermann, 1994, pp. 214–216. Although there is no single article devoted to difficult and dubious attribution of this commentary to John of Jandun, there are, however, several articles where the problem was mentioned, see: Etzkorn, 1981, pp. 120–122; Hoffmann, 2001;

this issue and are accompanied by a heavily detailed *expositio textus*. To keep the article compact, I will focus solely on question X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem*; and question XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore*.²²

In his commentary on the *De substantia orbis* Fernand claims that many schoolmen perceive Aristotle, and the Commentator in particular, as remaining in opposition to the Catholic faith.²³ Many of them think that the Commentator states the first principle is limited in its power because the prime mover sets the heavens in motion with a limited velocity.²⁴ The fundamental problem underlying this misunderstanding, says Fernand, is the obscure concept of the prime mover and its nature that can be found in Averroes's long commentary on the *Physics* VIII.²⁵ Averroes writes in various places about separated movers (*motores separati*) as causing the eternal movement (*motus perpetuus*) and having a finite power (*vigor determinatus*). Fernand—after

Zimmermann, 1994, pp. 215–216; Zimmermann, 1995. On the doctrinal content of the commentary as attributed to John of Jandun, see: Lamy, 2012a; Maurer, 1990, pp. 283–285. On the debate concerning Fernand's Averroism, see: Galle, Guldentops, 2004, pp. 51–55; Kuksewicz, 1977, pp. 187–192; Van Steenberghen, 1974, pp. 548–550; Zimmermann, 1968.

²² In Fernand's commentary, there is also question XIII, *Utrum intelligentiae dependant a primo principio in ratione causae efficientis vel solum finis* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, ff. 299va–300rb) which takes up the discussed problems in a similar manner. For the purposes of this short presentation though these two questions provide enough material for analysis.

²³ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 294va): “De ista quaestione credunt multi magni viri in philosophia opinionem Philosophi et praecipue Commentatoris veritati fidei catholicae adversari.”

²⁴ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 294vb): “Et sic ex omnibus istis videtur esse de intentione Commentatoris, quod primum principium est finitum in vigore, quia ipsum est primus motor qui movet primum mobile in velocitate terminata.”

²⁵ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 294vb): “Sed opinio Commentatoris et Philosophi per consequens latet sic opinantes, ut statim apparebit. Causa autem huius latentiae, ut existimo, est duplex. Una est defectus termini demonstrationum 8 *Physicorum* quae communiter deficient de commento Averrois in quarum ultima istam quaestionem movet et determinat in propria forma. Et quia communiter non habetur, ideo communiter eius intentio ignoratur.”

reproaching some unnamed authors for the frequent error of transferring Averroes's investigations of the separated movers to the investigations of the prime mover—stresses that Averroes's solution is the following: the prime mover (*motor separatus*), is a power utterly separated that remains incorporeal (*potentia omnino separata*), while the other movers, however, are only partially separated and partially connected with matter (*quandoque separati*, also called *motores appropriati*).²⁶ Furthermore, it is unreasonable to accept infinite power in bodies (*in corpore*), for, if it were in bodies, the movement would occur in no time (*in instanti*), which is impossible since the movement is being caused within time. Also, the occurrence of infinite action in the body would result in contradiction, i.e., the existence of infinite power inhered in magnitude. Yet, the occurrence of infinite power not in the body (*non in corpore*) is also impossible, for the finite and infinite can occur only in relation to bodies and magnitude. Therefore, to avoid contradiction, the prime mover itself cannot be considered—properly speaking—by means of the finite-infinite categories, for it remains beyond the matter and moves with a finite force. It also cannot influence with infinite power the celestial body, i.e., the heavens and its movers, partially connected with bodies.²⁷

²⁶ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 294vb): “Altera est, quia—cum Aristoteles in 8 *Physicorum* probat motum perpetuum causari a motore separato qui non est corpus nec virtus in corpore—intelligit istum motorem esse primum principium, et ideo cum in 2 *Caeli et mundi* Commentator dicat quod omnes motores separati sunt vigoris determinati, creditur hoc extendi ad primum motorem omnino separatum, non advertens quod in eodem 8 et in 2 *Caeli et mundi* et in 12 *Metaphysicae* vocat primum principium potentiam omnino separatam quae non est in corpore, motores vero appropriatos vocat quandoque separatos, quandoque vero potentias in corporibus diversis respectibus. [...] Vocat ergo potentiam infinitam quae non est in materia primum principium et dicit ipsum non esse in materia respectu motorum appropriatorum, quasi innuens motores appropriatos esse in corporibus.”

²⁷ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 295ra): “Circa hoc movet quaestionem, scilicet quare sequitur quod, si potentia infinita esset in corpore, motus fieri in non tempore et non sequitur istud, si potentia sit non in corpore, ex quo enim potentia est infinita et movet sive illa potentia infinita sit in corpore sive non, videtur quod deberet esse motus in instanti. Et respondens dicit, quod si aliqua actio infinita sit alicuius corporis vel virtutis in corpore, sequitur virtutem illam esse infinitam, sed si actio fuerit alicuius virtutis non in corpore, tunc illa virtus secundum id quod est corporis non potest dici finita nec infinita. Cuius ratio est,

Given that the prime mover moves with finite force, the continuity and eternity of movement need to be explained. The celestial spheres, says Fernand after Averroes, have no potency to be corrupted, and their movement has continuous existence. However, the celestial body has matter, although in equivocal meaning compared to the matter of transient beings. Thus, the celestial body, although eternal in its substance, does not have continuity from itself, since it is virtually possible for them to move or not move eternally, in other words, their movement is not necessary, it has the potency to stop moving at some point (*in caelo non est possibilitas nisi ut quiescat*). The reason that it does not cease to move must be then external to it, so it must be caused by a mover that does not have potentiality at all—neither essentially, nor accidentally—and this mover is the first principle of the world, the prime mover having infinite power in duration.²⁸

In order to clarify the relation between God and the created world, i.e., to specify the causal relation between them, Fernand of Spain introduces the concept of two movers: the first and simple mover, i.e., God, being utterly separated from matter (*motor separatus*) that acts indirectly (*mediatum*) as a final cause (*finis*) through the second mover (*motor appropriatus*), that is

quia finitum et infinitum solum de corporibus et magnitudinibus dici possunt, ut apparet 1 *Physicorum*, quia ‘finitum et infinitum quantitati congruunt’.”

²⁸ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 295va): “Intelligendum tamen quod primum principium dicitur infinitum in duratione, licet non dicatur infinitum in vigore. Cuius ratio est, quia, sicut dicit Commentator in loco praeallegato 12 *Metaphysicae*, “in corpore caelesti non est potentia, ut corrumpatur, quia non habet contrarium, et ideo est permanens per suam substantiam, motus autem eius non est permanens per suam essentiam, cum habeat contrarium, scilicet ipsam quietem”, et ideo potest corrumpi. Ad hoc igitur quod motus caeli permaneat aeternaliter “oportet ponere aliquam potentiam permanentem aeternaliter sine possibilitate corruptionis et permutationis, quia in caelo non est possibilitas nisi ut quiescat. Et quia probatum est esse impossibile caelum quiescere [...], igitur necesse est, ut ista permanentia motus sit propter motorem in quo nulla est potentia omnino nec essentialiter nec accidentaliter et tale non est in materia omnino”. Et sic permanentia motus et continuitas est a primo principio et ideo subdit Commentator circa finem eiusdem partis quod “potentiae moventes corpora caelestia, scilicet motores appropriati, possibile est, ut semper moveant et ut semper non moveant. Possunt enim non semper movere, si posuerimus illud ad quod moventur, scilicet primum motorem esse receptibilem transmutationis cuiuscumque modi. Possunt autem semper movere, quando illud ad quod movent fuerit non transmutabile aliquo modo transmutationis.”

intelligences, or more precisely, the intelligence of the last sphere, which affects the world directly (*immediatum*), i.e., as an efficient cause.²⁹ The prime mover as *motor separatus* does not move the heavens, i.e., *primum mobile*, directly, but indirectly through the second mover that interacts with the subject of the movement, i.e., the first sphere. The movement of the heavens lasts eternally due to the action of God as the final cause, the first principle, which is immovable and unchanging. These two attributes are also the very reason why it does not act as an efficient cause that affects the world by direct action.³⁰ Thus, all activity that occurs in the world is caused not directly by God, referred to above as *motor separatus* and object of love, *amatum*, but by the connected mover, i.e., *motor coniunctus*, also referred

²⁹ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 289rb; 290ra): “Ad quaestionem dicatur quod in separatis duplex est movens, scilicet movens mediatum quod est simpliciter primum, scilicet deus ipse; et movens immediatum ut sunt intelligentiae. [...] Quare apparet primum movere solum in ratione finis, dicit etiam in eodem 12 quod “non est idem, quod motor primi mobilis intelligit de primo principio, cum eo quod de ipso intelligit motor Saturni”. Supra etiam in *isto libello* dicit quod formae corporum caelestium et maxime corporis ultimi, scilicet primi caeli, est anima appetitiva et intellectiva, et si primum caelum habeat animam, quae est motor appropriatus praeter ipsum primum, sequitur quod primum non movet nisi ut finis et ubique intentio sua sonat istud.” Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 295va–b): “Ideo semper eodem modo intelligitur ab animabus caelestibus et desideratur. Et quia semper idem eodem modo intelligunt et desiderant, ideo semper eodem modo movent, quia igitur permanentia primi est causa permanentiae continuitatis motus, ideo permanentia primi et duratio habet attributionem ad motum qui est de genere quantum vel consequitur quantum. Et ideo ut sic competit sibi infinitas, et ideo dicitur infinitus in duratione, sed quia vigor eius non habet attributionem ad motum nec ad aliud, quia non movet nisi ut finis, ideo non movet per vigorem, et ideo sibi non competit infinitas vigoris.”

³⁰ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 289va): “Secundo tamen dico quod primum movens quod est movens mediatum movet in ratione finis tantum et non in ratione efficientis. Et videtur de intentione Philosophi et Commentatoris expresse, quia ut Philosophus dicit *2 Caeli et mundi*: Quod enim est nobile et perfectum simpliciter, non indiget actione extrinseca in acquisitione nobilitatis, quia nec indiget assimilari alicui ex quo simpliciter est primum et a se est omnis nobilitas et omnis perfectio; sed primum principium est huiusmodi; quare ipse non movet effective.”

to as *amans*, which affects the world directly and with a single action,³¹ a consequence of desiring the first principle.³² The division into two movers enables us to grasp how the prime mover, transcending finite-infinite categories, moves the world with finite force: it moves as an end (*finis*) to which all the universe leans towards, thus setting the spheres and the whole world into movement with constant force. Fernand illustrates this dependence with an example borrowed from Averroes's long commentary on the *Metaphysics* XII: a healthy person does not go for a walk to gain health but to maintain it. In this sense, the first intelligence does not desire to be like the prime mover, but to maintain the likeness it already has.³³ Thus the connection between the three main causes of the world discussed in the *De substantia orbis* and later in long commentaries³⁴ appears to be as follows: (1) the prime mover, as a final cause infinite in duration, is the object of desire of (2) the connected mover that—as a consequence of its desire and intellection of the first principle—sets with constant and finite power (3) the entire world, i.e., the heavens with the lower spheres, in eternal motion.

³¹ On the movement and actions of the spheres, see Averroes' position on p. 187 and Maino's application of this solution on pp. 197–199.

³² Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 289vb): “Dicit enim quod primum movet in ratione amati et desiderati, et postquam ostendit ibi Philosophus conditiones primi moventis extrinseci, inquit quid est principium huius motus in ipso motore et dicit quod hoc est intelligentia. Quare apparet quod ipse vult praeter primum sit alius motor coniunctus qui movet effective. Et Commentator ibidem dicit quod “primum caelum movetur ab unico motore, scilicet primo, secundum desiderium, ut assimiletur ei secundum suum posse, sicut amans movetur, ut assimiletur suo amato, alii vero orbis moventur secundum desiderium ad motum primi”, ut dicit. Ex quo apparet quod primum non movet nisi ut finis.”

³³ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 290rb): “Ad primam dicatur quod intelligentiae moventur per illud quod intelligunt de primo, non ut acquirant similitudinem eius quam non habent, sed ut similitudinem eius quam habent conservent per motum et causalitatem, ut sanus deambulat non ut sanitatem acquirat, sed ut sanitatem quam habet conservet, ut Commentator dicit 12 *Metaphysicae*, modo quia intelligentiae non intelligunt per species acquisitas ex sensibus, sed per essentias suas et ipsum primum est intellectus abstractus, sicut ipse licet multo perfectior.”

³⁴ See above pp. 185–190.

Fernand concludes that what he presents is the Philosopher's and the Commentator's intention, and it should be clear to anyone who diligently deliberates on this matter. He also states that Averroes's solution does contradict the Catholic faith even though, according to theologians, God has infinite power, not being limited by any relation whatsoever.³⁵ However, regardless of how convincing the Spanish commentator wants to be when he justifies the lack of contradiction between faith and reason in this matter, Fernand's constant negation of divine efficient causality leads to further doctrinal consequences that are fairly unorthodox in their meaning. The first and foremost is denying the possibility of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. As Fernand says, the prime mover does not create *ex infinita distantia*, i.e., *ex nihilo*—this solution is excluded alongside the choice of philosophical argument.³⁶ Furthermore, discarding *creatio ex nihilo* is the consequence of the recognition of the prime mover not as *causa efficiens*, but as *causa finalis* only. As a result of these assumptions, it follows that the prime mover as a *causa finalis* is not an agent cause, changing, moving and affecting the world directly. It is rather the distant end that the whole world is heading for. As such the prime mover tends to preserve the existence of beings and make them more perfect, simultaneously maintaining the continuity and eternity of movement. It is impossible for the prime mover as a final cause to cause the transition from *non-esse* to *esse*.

³⁵ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. XII, *Utrum primus motor vel primum principium sit infinitum in vigore* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 296vb): “Hoc videtur esse intentio Philosophi et expresse Commentatoris circa istam quaestionem, nec est repugnantia in verbis Commentatoris diligenter consideranti, licet hoc aliqui credant. Et ista opinio non discordat realiter a veritate fidei, licet verba theologorum dicunt primum principium esse infinitum in vigore, quia intelligunt ipsum non limitatum nec proportionatum alicui, sed extra proportionem alicuius alterius virtutis.”

³⁶ Fernandus Hispanus, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum in separatis a materia efficiens et finis differant vel sint idem* (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. lat. 845, f. 296ra): “Ad aliam, cum dicitur: ‘Illud quod causat ex infinita distantia’ etc. Concedatur maior et si minor esset concessa, concluderet ratio necessario, sed philosophi negarent minorem et probationem eius, quia, sicut apparet ex 1 *Physicorum*, ‘communis conceptio omnium philosophorum fuit quod ex nihilo nihil fit’.”

Maino de' Maineri on the *De substantia orbis*

The immediate relation between the question of the infinity of the world and the power of God can be found in the commentary on the *De substantia orbis* composed ca. 1315 by Maino de' Maineri (Magninus de Maineriis). He was active at the Parisian Faculty of Arts in the second decade of the 14th century. At the time, he also commented upon the *De anima*. He is recognized as *socius* of John of Jandun—he took part in several disputes with him and other Parisian masters.³⁷ His commentary discusses the problem of the infinite power of God in the question that focuses on the creation of the world from nothing, i.e., question VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri*.³⁸

At the beginning of *divisio textus* Maino starts where Fernand's investigations end. Maino presents two popular views on creation: first, an opinion, attributed to Avicenna, discussing the possibility of the world's creation *ex aeterno*; and second, a religious view that the world was created *de novo*, i.e., *ex nihilo*.³⁹ Maino devotes much attention to disproving the first view, yet he comments on the second with only one sentence and claims it not to be questioned, for God's power is no doubt able to create anything out of nothing.⁴⁰ Then, he declares he will discuss the question according

³⁷ For further details on his life, work and activity in Paris, see: Ermatinger, 1959; Ermatinger, 1976; Fioravanti, 2016; Fioravanti, 2017; Kuksewicz, 1999; Kuksewicz, 2006; Weijers, 2005.

³⁸ The commentary has been preserved in a single manuscript: Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, ff. 89ra–108va. For further details on the manuscript, see: Kristeller, 1977, pp. 162–163; Punta, Luna, 1989, pp. 122–132. On the infinity of God's power, see also (omitted here) a short discussion that Maino included in his *Quaestiones in De anima* III, q. 14, *Utrum noster intellectus coniunctus magnitudini intelligat separata a materia* (Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1625, f. 166rb). For further details on Maino's opinions, see Kuksewicz, 2006, pp. 352–353. The critical edition of this commentary has been prepared by Iacopo Costa and Jean-Baptiste Brenet. For the manuscript and its content, see: Xiberta, 1924, pp. 162–166; Xiberta, 1932, pp. 48–49.

³⁹ Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 96va): “Quidam autem philosophorum dixerunt hinc fuisse ab aeterno, ut imponitur Avicennae, et quidam legis nostrae ponunt hoc fuisse possibile. Alii dicunt quod illa creatio fuit de novo et non ab aeterno.”

⁴⁰ Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 96va): “Sed illi qui ponunt creationem fuisse ab aeterno sine posse fuisse habent difficile contra se,

to a third view, that is Aristotle's and the Commentator's.⁴¹ During the very long and complex discussion concerning the different aspects of creation and the substantial composition of form and matter, Maino argues for the possibility of creation only from a preexisting *subiectum*, i.e., matter.⁴² This decision is based on the same grounds on which Maino subsequently argues in the same question, that the prime principle has no infinite power because it is not possible to gain knowledge of God's power based solely on empirical data, i.e., the observation of local movement.⁴³ This claim marks Maino's acceptance of the boundaries within which our natural faculties are restrained when investigating realms that are beyond human perception. Having acknowledged these cognitive limitations, Maino proceeds to reassess divine causality and God's power—problems strictly connected

quoniam hic videtur implicare contradictionem.” Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 97ra): “Opinionem legis nostrae quae ponit quod ex nihilo fiat aliquid modo supradicto tam in substantiis quam in accidentibus non intendo improbare, quoniam virtus divina hoc potest indubitanter.” Maino discusses creatio ex aeterno on ff. 96va–97ra.

⁴¹ Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 97ra): “Sed ego dicam ad quaestionem quod diceret Aristoteles et Commentator eius quod ex nihilo nihil potest fieri.”

⁴² From the long corpus of questions see for instance this excerpt: Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98ra): “Dico quod ad evitandum creationem sufficit quod praexistat aliquid de eo quod producitur; modo quod producitur est compositum; et ideo sufficit quod praexistat aliquid de composito, scilicet materia. Sed ratio concludit quod ad minus forma creabitur, quia nihil praexistet de forma. Ego possum dicere quod forma non generatur nisi per accidens ut dicunt plurimi compositum autem per se primo. Et ideo dicam quod ad evitandum creationem sufficit quod praexistat aliquid de composito, scilicet materia.”

⁴³ Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98ra): “Credo dicendum quod primum principium non est infiniti vigoris, quia Philosophus non habet plus ponere de primo principio quam possit per motum investigari; sed per motum non potest investigari primum esse infiniti vigoris, nam ad hoc quod virtus aliqua moveat per tempus infinitum sufficit quod sit infinita in essendo et infatigabilis in operando.”

with the above-discussed problem of creation⁴⁴—according to philosophical argument suitable for this line of investigation.

A large part of Maino's question remains in the exegetic and doctrinal character of Fernand's commentary and is devoted to a discussion of divine causality and God's power. When considering the first principle, which is primarily the separate being, a twofold concept of its infinity can be raised. The infinity of the first principle can be considered either as an infinity of God as (1) *finis motus* or as (2) an *agens motum*. If the prime mover is accepted to be active mover (*movens active*) it has to be of finite force; if, however, it is considered as an end (*finis*), the prime mover should be described as not having finite or infinite power because power of movement—properly speaking—is something related to separate substances as being active movers, which the prime mover is not.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Maino rejects this opinion—similarly to Fernand's earlier objections regarding popular misconceptions about the Commentator—and exposes it as a wrong interpretation of Averroes's intention. Maino clarifies that Averroes himself argued in his commentary on *Physics* VIII that finite and infinite might be considered only in reference to bodies since only bodies have extension and magnitude. Separate intelligences, however, are not inhered in bodies, so they are neither finite nor infinite. Consequently, the same applies—according to Maino's exposition of Averroes—to the prime mover seen as an active mover, i.e., as an efficient cause, but not to the prime mover as a final cause.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ On this topic and its relation with divine power and causality, see above p. 196. See also the critical reassessment below, pp. 203–206.

⁴⁵ Magnusus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98va): “Et ideo aliter dicitur quod primum principium de quo loquitur principaliter quod est separatum potest considerari: Uno modo ut finis motus; alio modo ut agens motum. Et similiter intelligo de aliis: Si accipiatur ut movens active sic habet vigorem finitum et debet dici finiti vigoris; sed si consideratur ut finis, sic non debet dici vigoris finiti vel infiniti, nam vigor proprie debetur separatis ut moventia active.”

⁴⁶ Magnusus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98va): “Sed istud est omnino extra intentionem Commentatoris, quia ipse ponit rationem ad probandum propositum, quia finitum et infinitum sunt solum in corporibus, modo certum quod intelligentiae ut moventes sunt non sunt in corporibus, ergo ut sic non habebunt vigorem finitum nec infinitum. Et Commentator loquitur in 8 *Physicorum* secundum materiam

In order to elucidate the essence of separate substances, i.e., the movers of the spheres, Maino introduces what he proudly calls his own exposition, which he never heard in Paris. It reads as follows: to any finite power corresponds a finite time proportional to it, and it applies to every amount of time or magnitude; and to infinite power likewise corresponds infinite time and infinite magnitude. Hence, infinite power as such cannot correspond to finite magnitude, and the same applies to movement of infinite velocity. If any separate substance had performed an action of infinite power, it would have happened in no time (*in instanti*) which will clearly not be possible since the movement must be performed within time.⁴⁷

When he analyzes the distinction between efficient and final causality in the prime mover, Maino refers to the difference between *motor separatus*

subiectivam, modo certum est quod ibi consideratur primus motor ut movens active et non ut finis, et ideo ut sic loquebatur ibi de primo motore.”

⁴⁷ Magninus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98va): “Et ideo aliter dico cum Commentatore quod virtutes separatae non debent dici finitae nec infinitae in vigore eo modo, supple, quo virtutes in corpore sunt finitae vel infinitae in vigore, nam virtutes corporales sic dicuntur finiti vigoris quod finitati vigoris correspondet finitas temporis et qualis est proportio in vigoribus, eadem est in temporibus mensurantibus et magnitudinibus; et infinitati vigoris correspondet infinitas temporis et magnitudinis. Et per illum modum vult dicere Commentator quod vigor separatorum non est finitus nec infinitus, quia finitati vigoris non correspondet finitas temporis nec est proportio in temporibus quae est in vigoribus. Non ergo possit dici vigoris finiti eo modo quo illa inferiora corporalia, quia tempus durationis earum est infinitum et non finitum, nec possit dici vigoris infiniti eo modo quo ista inferiora dicuntur vigoris infiniti, nam aliquid hic inferius existens habens vigorem infinitum, si esset aliquid tale tempus durationis cuius excederet tempus durationis cuiuslibet alterius finiti vigoris in infinitum. Sed dato quod poneret aliquid separatum infiniti vigoris, tamen tempus durationis eius non excederet tempus durationis alicuius finiti vigoris, quia omnia separata dato quod sunt vigoris finiti per vigorem finitum durant in finitum. Immo si finitum et infinitum eodem modo essent in separatis et corporalibus, sequeretur quod omnia separata essent vigoris infiniti, quia tempus correspondens eorum actionibus esset infinitum et tunc sequeretur quod non moverent sua mobilia indeterminata velocitate quod tamen est falsum, immo si stella adderetur orbi, non moveret orbem nisi cum fatigatione et poena, ut patet *2 Caeli* ab Aristotele et Commentatore et illo modo intellexit Commentator quod non debent dici finiti vigoris vel infiniti secundum quod proportionantur finitati temporis et infinitati eius, sed quoniam sint finiti vigoris secundum quod proportionantur velocitati et tarditati motus non intendit Commentator. Et in illa expositione quam numquam audivi declarabatur anima mea et illam expositionem accepi ex dictis Commentatoris in fine *7 Physicorum*.”

and *motor appropriatus*. He writes that—according to some schoolmen—the Commentator, having already introduced his view in the *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* XII, makes corrections to it in the *De substantia orbis*. Nevertheless, as Maino puts it, it does not seem so—on the contrary, in the *De substantia orbis* Averroes upholds the same view, which is also to be found originally in Aristotle and his *De caelo* II.⁴⁸ According to Aristotle then, there are entities that attain their perfection and goodness without any action, some attain it with one action, and others with multiple actions. The prime mover, however, attains its goodness and perfection performing no action or movement whatsoever, since it itself is the superior being that does not need anything but itself and, consequently, is unchangeable and immovable. Therefore, it is no prime mover, *motor separatus*, which actively and directly moves the heavens as an efficient cause, but is its connected mover, *motor appropriatus*, an intelligence created by the prime mover that moves the heavens immediately and with finite and determined velocity by the desire of prime mover as the universal end (*finis*) of consecutive spheres.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For respective views in *De substantia orbis*, see pp. 188–190. See also: Aristotle, *De caelo* II.12 (292a28–292b15); Averroes, *Commentum in De caelo*, lib. II, com. 63–64 per totum (ed. Carmody, 2003, pp. 395–396).

⁴⁹ Magnus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98va): “Ad aliam 12 *Metaphysicae* dicunt aliqui quod Commentator dixit ibi et ideo se corrigit in libello *De substantia orbis*, tamen non audio Commentatorem negare sic expresse. Ista auctoritas videtur implicare duo difficilia. Primum est quod primum <principium> sit infiniti vigoris nec unquam vidi auctoritatem magis expressam ad hoc probandum. Secundo difficile videtur in auctoritate quod primum principium non moveat primum caelum immediate effective. Ponit enim Commentator motorem appropriatum a quo habet velocitatem terminatam et illa videtur esse intentio Aristotelis et Commentatoris 2 *Caeli* capitulo de duabus difficilibus quaestionibus. Dicit enim Philosophus quod quaedam sunt quae attingunt suam perfectionem et suum bonum sine actione et intelligere videtur motorem caeli et alia unica actione et alia pluribus actionibus ut ipse dicit. Motor igitur primus attinget suum bonum sine actione aliqua et sic non movebit caelum effective, sed solum in ratione finis et illud videtur velle Aristoteles in 12 *Metaphysicae*, dicit enim semper quod primum movet ut appetibile et tale movet solum in ratione finis.” See also Magnus de Maineriis, *Quaestiones in De substantia orbis*, q. VI, *Utrum ex nihilo possit aliquid fieri* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conv. Soppr. J III 6, f. 98vb): “Ad auctoritatem Commentator dicit in 12 quod caelum movere a duplici motore etc. potest dici quod Commentator intellexit de aliis motibus a motu primo quia alii motus habent motorem appropriatum praeter primum a quo habent velocitatem determinatam et a primo habent aeternitatem et si intelligatur de primo motu tunc dicam quod non intellexit Commentator

Hence, it is allowed to say that the prime mover has a finite force of movement, but only as moving through the second mover, the intelligence of the last sphere. Yet, speaking in absolute terms, it is beyond infinity and finitude.

Anonymous of Erfurt on the *De substantia orbis*

In the commentaries analyzed thus far, a unanimity of approach can be easily observed. The adopted solutions read as follows: (1) the prime mover has infinite power in duration; (2) the prime mover, *motor separatus*, is a final cause of the universe and the most desirable and the noblest being; (3) the mover of the first sphere, *motor appropriatus*, moves by desiring and thinking the prime mover; (4) The prime mover, a final cause, moves the universe eternally through the second mover, an efficient cause, with a constant and finite force of movement; (5) the idea of creation *ex nihilo* is unacceptable in the field of philosophy which is a result of denying God's infinite power and its efficient causality.

The third of the discussed commentaries on the *De substantia orbis* presents what appears to be an utterly different view. Its author—although commenting upon Averroes and often referring to his views affirmatively—does not share the conclusions reached by the exegetic commentaries of Fernand of Spain and Maino de' Maineri, also reinterpreting some basic tenets to be found in Averroes's works. This anonymous work was written ca. 1362 in the Erfurt milieu where Averroes's commentaries and Averroistic works were held in high esteem.⁵⁰ The commentary consists of *expositio ad litteram* and *quaestiones*. The anonymous author refers in his questions

quod habeat duos motores realiter differentes sed voluit dicere quod motor primus consideratus ut efficiens motum erat motor appropriatus sed ut finis erat separatus magis et talis motus primus habet velocitatem determinatam a deo ut movens effective et a primo habet aeternitatem ut finis motus nam quia primum se intelligit in infinitum et se desiderat in infinitum pro tanto movet per tempus infinitum.”

⁵⁰ The question-commentary has been preserved in two manuscripts differing in a number of questions: Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, 735, ff. 109ra–116vb (breaks in the middle of q. VII) and Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, ff. 74ra–91rb. The latter manuscript also contains exposition-commentary on ff. 92ra–102vb, 116ra–va, 103va–115vb. For a detailed description of these manuscripts, see Kowalczyk et al., 1993, pp. 229–236, 256–261. For an overview and dating of this commentary, see Kuksewicz, 1986, pp. 28–30. Kuksewicz was also the first to recognize

to the same problems as Fernand and Maino—God's infinite power, divine causality, and the problem of God's ability to create out of nothing. For the purposes of this presentation, I chose to analyze at length two questions from this commentary, i.e., question VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensive*, and question IX, *Utrum mundus exivit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis*.

At the beginning of question VII, which deals with the infinite power of God, the Erfurt master refers to Cordovan's authority. He claims that, according to Averroes, the prime mover does not have a finite but infinite power, for God is not connected with a magnitude and exceeds any power.⁵¹ This statement is followed by the conclusions he is eventually going to reject, i.e., (1) God is infinite in duration;⁵² (2) God is not infinite in power;⁵³ (3) God is not infinite in intensive action (which is directly related

this commentary as critical to Averroes. For further literature on the Erfurt milieu, see: Kuksewicz, 1985, pp. V–XXVIII; Kuksewicz, 2007; Lorenz, 1989, pp. 135–139.

⁵¹ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensive* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83ra; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116ra): “In oppositum est Averroes in textu quia concludit motorem primum non esse potentiae finitae, sed infinitae et ibidem: Nonnulla virtus potest esse separata a magnitudine; sicut est de primo principio. Illud probatur rationibus: Illa virtus quae in infinitum excedit virtutem finitam illa est infinita; primum principium in infinitum excedit quamcumque libet virtutem finitam; igitur. Maior nota, quia virtus finita intensive potest alteri virtute finitae proportionari. Minor patet, quia deus excedit virtutem lapidis secundum duplum, tripulum et quadrupulum et sic sine statu.” Such a curious rendition of Averroes seems to be supported by two intermingled ideas borrowed from the *De substantia orbis* III and commentary on the *Physics*, lib. VIII, com. 86. From the former he derives the meaning of infinitum as solely “virtus infinitae actionis aut passionis”. From the latter, he borrows the idea of the prime mover as being of infinite action and beyond matter. See: Averroes, *De substantia orbis* III (ed. Iuntina IX, f. 9rbF–vaG); Averroes, *Commentum in Phys.*, lib. VIII, com. 86 (ed. Iuntina IV, f. 433vbK). See above pp. 185–190.

⁵² Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensive* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83rb; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116rb): “Primo, primum principium est infinitum duratione. Hoc probatur: Illud quod est aeternum et incorruptibile est infinitum in duratione; primum principium est huiusmodi; igitur. Maior nota quia aeternitas primi est sua duratio. Minor patet, quia deus ab aeterno fuit et in aeternum erit, tam secundum philosophos quam theologos.”

⁵³ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensive* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739,

to the second conclusion).⁵⁴ He stresses, however, that, notwithstanding the view represented by many philosophers, he will argue for a solution more probable and complete (*probabilius et completius*), yet contradictory to the three conclusions referred to above.⁵⁵ For instance, he criticizes the view that God is infinite solely in the aspect of time but finite in action. He argues that the first principle's temporal duration is its action, for in God all kinds of action are identical due to the simplicity of its nature. God is therefore infinite both in his action and duration.⁵⁶ When he characterizes the infinity of God, the anonymous author lists four affirmative conclusions, the two first of which could also be found in Averroes.⁵⁷ He argues that the

f. 83rb; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116rb): “Secunda conclusio: Primum principium non est infinitum in vigore. Hoc probatur, quia si sic, tunc motus posset fieri in instanti. Consequens falsum. Falsitas patet 4 et 6 *Physicorum*. Consequentia probatur, quia si deus est infiniti vigoris, tunc potest in quemcumque effectum et per consequens potest producere motum subito.”

⁵⁴ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83rb; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116rb): “Tertia conclusio: Primum principium non est infinitum actione intensivo. Illud probatur: Omne agens certae actionis vel potentiae ex opposito distinguitur; sed quia caelum movetur motu finito et per consequens actio est finita.”

⁵⁵ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83rb; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116rb): “Quamvis ista fuerit virorum bene dicentium secundum hoc, verumtamen probabilius dicetur et completius et arguitur contra haec dicta.”

⁵⁶ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83rb; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116rb): “Videtur primo, quod conclusiones contraxerunt. Ad probandum: Quia praemittit eo quod duratio primi principii sit sua actio: Hoc patet, quia omnia primo identificantur. Secundo praemittit eo quod duratio primo principii sit sua actio, a principio non distinguantur. Ex hoc arguitur: Haec duratio primi principii est infinita; haec duratio prima est sua actio; igitur sua actio erit infinita et sequitur conclusio praeventa.”

⁵⁷ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 83va; Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 735, f. 116va): “His visis prima conclusio: Primum principium non est infinitum infinitate mobilis. [...] Secunda conclusio quod principium primum non est infinitum infinitate quantitatis. [...] Tertia conclusio: Primum principium infinitum est in perfectione. [...] Est quarta conclusio: Primum principium non est infinitum perfectione dependentis.”

concept of finite–infinite when speaking of *infinitas mobilis* and *infinitas quantitatis* refers to what is divisible, has parts and inheres in the matter. God, however, is simple and remains beyond the matter. This explanation refers to Averroes's argument from commentary on the *Physics* VIII, referred to above several times.⁵⁸ In the third conclusion, the Erfurt master claims God to be infinite, for it surpasses all beings and thus has infinite perfection.⁵⁹ In the fourth, he argues that God is the only being that is utterly independent and self-reliant.⁶⁰ The third and fourth conclusions go beyond the spectrum of Averroes's investigations and are not to be found in his works.

The consequences of these assumptions are particularly apparent in question IX, where the anonymous author deliberates on the problem of God's power to create as *causa efficiens*. He argues that God has to be both the efficient and final cause which he derives from the *De substantia orbis*, interpreting Averroes' position on separate substances as final and efficient causes as referring to the prime mover itself.⁶¹ Such a rendition justifies the anonymous commentator's claims that God could and can create a human being, a fly, or the whole world without any effort whatsoever.⁶² Afterwards,

⁵⁸ See above pp. 186, 191–192, 199.

⁵⁹ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 84ra): “Tertia conclusio: Primum principium infinitum est in perfectione. Illa probatur: Illud quod excedit quamlibet perfectionem in infinitum entis hoc est infinitum in perfectione; primum principium est huiusmodi.”

⁶⁰ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. VII, *Utrum primum principium, scilicet deus, sit infinitus intensivo* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 84va): “Est quarta conclusio: Primum principium non est infinitum perfectione dependens. Illa probatur: Omne dependens est finitae perfectionis; igitur primum non est dependens.”

⁶¹ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exivit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87rb): “In oppositum est Averroes in littera dicit enim nihil est efficiens et finis in separatis; sed deus est finis totius mundi; igitur efficiens. Et si sic, habetur intentum. Hoc confirmatur ab hoc quidem ente, id est a deo.” See Averroes' original position on pp. 188–190.

⁶² Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exivit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87rb): “Probatur ratione: Deus potuit et potest omnem hominem producere in esse vel muscam et non est difficilius producere deo totum mundum seu produxisse quoniam talem muscam ex quo non agit cum resistentia et fatigatione.”

the anonymous commentator establishes the terminology he will be using, then he presents views of Aristotle and the Commentator followed by the exposition of the author's own view, critical of Averroes.⁶³ Firstly, the Erfurt master explains the attributes of the eternal being using the definitions from Boethius's *De consolazione* and he defines them as (1) *interminabile* and (2) *immensurabile tempore*.⁶⁴ Then the author concludes that this being is necessarily God—he is infinitely perfect (*interminabilis perfectionis*), so he created the world *ex nihilo*.⁶⁵ Following this assumption, he discusses the question of God as creating the world *de novo* without relying on the previously created matter. The world and all that is created is the immediate effect of creation subject to the first principle as the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*). The first principle, as could be already seen in the question on the infinite power of God, is perfect and, consequently, independent.⁶⁶

The central part of the question is the presentation of the thirteen arguments for the eternity of the world. They are listed only to be eventually

⁶³ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exiuit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87rb): “In quaestione sic procedam ponendo. Primo motam magistri Conradi de Monte Puellarum; deinde ponendo rationes Commentatoris quae videntur in oppositum sonare contra positionem motam; tertio declarando modum defensandi mundum fuisse de novo productum.”

⁶⁴ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exiuit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87rb): “Circa primam partem est sciendum quod [spat. vac.] aeternitas mundi, videlicet an mundus ab aeterno fuisset, an aeternitas secundum Boethium 5 *De consolazione* sic diffinitur: ‘Est enim interminabilis vitae simul tota perfecta possessio’. Hic duo inuuntur: Primo quod ens aeternum debet esse interminabile; secundo innuitur quod huiusmodi ens non debet mensurari tempore seu secundum prius et posterius, quare innuitur omnia quae sunt in tempore senescunt et thabescunt, ut dicitur 4 *Physicorum* tractatu de tempore.”

⁶⁵ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exiuit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87rb): “Deus gloriosus produxit mundum in esse de novo. Hoc probatur, quia est perfectionis non interminabilis. Contradictio, ergo deus <est perfectionis interminabilis et> potuit mundum producere in esse.”

⁶⁶ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exiuit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 88ra): “Deus voluntate sua mundum produxit de novo in esse non sub isto <subiecto> praeiacente. Ista probatur mundus seu caelum est effectus dependens a primo; ergo aliquando incepit esse. Consequentia tenet etiam totum omne dependens a deo incepisset esse secundum illum modum producendi.”

disproved one after another. The first states that God is not able to create the world, for it would have to happen *ex nihilo*, which is impossible.⁶⁷ The anonymous author refutes this position by stating this sort of action to be possible when considering it not accompanied by form or matter, i.e., creation *ex nihilo* would not be possible if considered as a qualitative change (*alteratio*) that assumes the prior existence of the subject of change.⁶⁸ Ultimately, he clarifies his view as follows: God created the world *ex nihilo* by his own will, and, as such, the world is the effect dependent on God as the perfectly independent first principle. He refers then to the independence of the power of God repeatedly and stresses it in question X likewise, where it is explicitly affirmed that the world is not eternal but had a beginning in time for, as it was explained above, it is the effect of creation dependent on the first principle.⁶⁹

To sum up, the conclusions drawn by the author are following: (1) the prime mover has infinite power not only in duration but also in action; (2) the prime mover is the final and efficient cause that does not need any mediation between itself and the created world; (3) the world was created *ex nihilo*, without any prior matter. All of these assumptions—compared with the two former commentaries—step against the principles commonly assumed in the field of natural philosophy.

⁶⁷ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exivit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 87va): “Primo sic [...] si deus produxisset mundum de novo, sequitur quod deus aliquid extra illum immediate perpetuisset. Consequens falsum, ergo ex quo sequitur falsum. Consequens probatur, quia omne quod fit ex aliquo fit. Consequentia probatur, quia si mundum de novo produxisset, tunc ex nihilo ex quo nihil subiit.”

⁶⁸ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. IX, *Utrum mundus exivit in esse a deo per modum causae efficientis* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 88va): “Primo ad primum: Tunc agens effectum produceret ex nihilo etc. Dico aliquid produci ex nihilo est dupliciter: Vel ut dicit carentiam causae efficientis et finis. Sic est falsum. Alio modo ut dicit carentiam materiae et formae, et sic potest concedi. Et sic est de mundi productione. Tu dicis: Ex nihilo nihil fit. Dico quod hoc innuitur de illo quod sit per alterationem [...] et dispositionem iuxta illud, omne illud quod sit per alterationem [...] hoc semper aliquid praerequirat.”

⁶⁹ Anonymus Erfordiensis, *Commentum in De substantia orbis*, q. X, *Utrum mundus fuerit ab aeterno* (Kraków, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka 739, f. 89rb): “Ad quaestionem est dupliciter conclusio: Est productus a deo et incepit esse. Probatur ista: Illud quod dependens est ab alio hoc incepit esse, sed mundus est huiusmodi. Praeterea, patet, quia dependens <est> a primo principio.”

Conclusion

The questions raised in the *De substantia orbis* provided the opportunity for discussing the problem of God's power and divine causality from various perspectives. In the first two commentaries—composed by Fernand of Spain and Maino de' Maineri—we observed nothing but an endeavor to expound Averroes' views with accuracy, often defending the Commentator against numerous popular misconceptions about his philosophy.⁷⁰ The occasion for commenting upon the *De substantia orbis* is also a point of departure for seeking the concordance between different places in Averroes's commentaries to propose a possibly uniform view on the problems under investigation. Hence, due to their conceptual framework, these commentaries represent what we introduced at the beginning of this article as an exegetic approach to the *De substantia orbis*. In the context of this work, the exegetic approach represents, from the vantage point of faith reading, a heterodox and controversial view of Aristotelian physics, scrutinizing problems of the prime mover's nature and divine causality solely and consistently in terms of Averroes's exposition of natural philosophy, relying only on cognition provided by natural reason.

The anonymous commentary from Erfurt enables us to see that the reception of the *De substantia orbis* and its commentary tradition was far from being uniform. On the contrary, this anonymous work proves that commenting directly on Averroes was not always and necessarily a pretext for schoolmen to develop a heterodox interpretation of Aristotle as seen in the two Parisian commentaries. Despite it being a commentary on Averroes, and despite several, sometimes even affirmative references to the Commentator, in a context so controversial as that discussed here, the doctrinal character of this work remains critical to the Cordovan savant, and its aspirations are not focused on exegesis; on the contrary, the anonymous Erfurt master opts for orthodox solutions to the question of the natural cognition of God's attributes, especially its power, and to the question of divine causality, i.e. to the way God affects the created world. Thus, the anonymous commentary goes far beyond Averroes' perspective in discussing his treatise and uses entirely different reasoning in his investigations. In the case of this work, the Commentator's treaty was utilized to develop the philosophy of nature

⁷⁰ For such misconceptions, see above p. 191 and p. 199.

consistent with the view of the Catholic faith, and it provided the anonymous author with the opportunity to critically reassess some of the crucial tenets of Aristotelian physics. Thus, the conclusions accepted in the third commentary are precisely opposite to those of Fernand or Maino and represent what I labelled as a critical approach to the *De substantia orbis*. However, what range of diversity there actually is when referring to the practice of commenting upon the *De substantia orbis* cannot be accurately evaluated here, for we are dealing with numerous, often unedited texts.⁷¹ The modest intention of this article, however, was to point to some aspects of the medieval Latin reception to Averroes that have thus far only been subject to superficial study.⁷²

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⁷¹ Another example of an ambivalent attitude towards Averroes may be found in the anonymous commentary on the *De substantia orbis* preserved in manuscript Zwettl, Zisterzienserstift 338, ff. 112ra–127vb. The author of this work is well versed in natural philosophy exegete of the *De substantia orbis* and calls the opinion of Averroes and Aristotle *verior* than the opinions of modern commentators when he finds so (see the discussion on the matter of the heavens, f. 112va). At the same time, he very often refers to Averroes as a *perversor* or *perversor confusus*, especially when he discusses more controversial issues such as the infinite power of God (see f. 124va–b). Slightly different than the Erfurt commentary discussed here, the Zwettl Anonymous seems to follow Averroes' position very closely, providing convincing exegesis of Averroes' position—similar to that of Fernand and Maino, different from that of the Erfurt Anonymous—and lists numerous arguments for a heterodox solution. Yet in the end, he forcefully rejects Averroes' position. I discovered this commentary shortly before finishing this article, hence I did not include its analysis here. For a description of the manuscript Zwettl, Zisterzienserstift, 338, see Ziegler, 1997, pp. 125–130; the author of the catalogue falsely ascribes this commentary to John of Jandun.

⁷² For some recent studies on medieval Latin commentaries on the *De substantia orbis*, in a particular reference to Fernand of Spain, Maino de' Maineri, and Walter Burley, see: Fioravanti, 2016; Lamy, 2012a; Lamy, 2012b; Vittorini, 2011.

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Abstract

The subject of this article is the Latin reception of Averroes's treatise *De substantia orbis*, with special regard to the commentary practice in the late Middle Ages. Numerous philosophical problems were taken up in these commentaries following

Averroes's lead. The most controversial among them were these concerning divine attributes, i.e., infinite power, efficient and final causality, and, consequently, God's ability to create out of nothing.

Three different commentaries were therefore chosen to exemplify the key differences between the doctrinal approaches of the commentaries on the *De substantia orbis*. The first two of them—composed by Fernand of Spain and Maino de' Maineri—represent the exegetic approach, adopting and developing Averroes's ideas; the third commentary—composed by an anonymous author in Erfurt around 1362—represents the critical approach referring to the questions raised in the *De substantia orbis* in order to propose orthodox solutions being far from these adopted in the treaty by Averroes himself.

The article aims at scrutinizing the problems of infinite power of God and divine causality as they have been taken up by Latin philosophers from the late 13th to the second half of the 14th century by elucidating the key differences between the two lines of inquiry and highlighting the variety of approaches to Averroes's *De substantia orbis*.

