

CATEGORIES AND UNIVERSALS IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

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In the (later) Middle Ages categories and universals were closely linked topics. Categorical doctrine concerned (1) the existence, inner natures, and the mutual relationships of the basic, metaphysical items of the world (individual and universal substances, individual and universal accidents), and (2) the connections of such basic items to language. Late medieval theories of universals¹ dealt with the problems of (1) real existence of universals (or common natures), both substantial and accidental ones, and (2) the relationship between them and the (perceptible or otherwise intelligible) individuals. Hence, in one way, later medieval theories of universals investigated more thoroughly some of the many related questions which categorical doctrines went into. This is not surprising, since (1) textually, medieval discussions on the problem of universals derived from a well-known passage of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, a work which was intended to be an introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*, and (2) philosophically, the medieval problem of universals is one of the various aspects of the problem of meaning, which in its turn is one of the two main subjects of any later medieval categorical doctrine. In *Isagoge* 1,13–16 Porphyry raises his famous series of questions, about the ontological status of universals and their relation to individuals, which medieval philosophers faced up to in their commentaries on the *Isagoge* and treatises on universals: (1) whether genera and species exist in themselves or are nothing but mere concepts; (2) whether, if they have an extramental form of existence, they are corporeal or incorporeal; (3) and whether they exist apart from perceptible objects or in and by virtue of them. In another way, all late medieval theories of universals respond to an implicit semantic question: is there something *in re* which corresponds to the common nouns of our language in the same way

¹ A comprehensive survey of the problem of universals from Antiquity to late Middle Ages is provided in Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, Paris 1996.

as individuals correspond to proper names? The answer of Realists was affirmative, negative that of Nominalists; while, within each group, authors disagreed about the peculiar modes of being of universals and the nature of their relation to individuals.

In what follows, I will draw the outline of the problem of universals in late Middle Ages both from a systematic and from a historical point of view, trying to indicate the connections with the doctrine(s) of categories. Accordingly, first of all I will give a short account of the standard theories of universals worked out between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Second, I will summarise Ockham's criticism of the traditional view. Finally, in the third and fourth sections, I will consider the main positions about universals elaborated from 1330 ca. to 1430 ca. in some detail, and show their increasing relevance for the categorial doctrines. From this and the concluding remarks—I hope—it shall emerge (1) why and how the debate over the status and nature of universals evolved during the very last period of the Middle Ages, and (2) the progressive subordination of the categorial view to the conception of universals.

The Moderate Realist View

Since Robert Kilwardby's formulation of the problem of universals in his commentaries on the *Ars Vetus* (*Isagoge, Categories, Liber sex principiorum, De interpretatione*) the semantic origin of the so called "moderate realist" view on universals (endorsed by authors such as Robert Kilwardby himself, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Simon of Faversham, John Duns Scotus, Thomas Sutton, Giles of Rome, and Walter Burley before 1324), is quite evident. What might be described as the orthodox view (at least until it was challenged by Ockham and the other Nominalists) was that universals (or common natures) are the real significata of general nouns, such as 'man', 'animal', and 'whiteness'.² As a consequence, moderate Realists conceived of universals

² In his middle commentary on *De interpretatione* (*Commentarius in librum Perihermeneias*, before 1310) in commenting on the starting lines of chapter seven (17a38–b7), Walter Burley claims that a linguistic expression is a general noun (*nomen appellativum*) if and only if it signifies a universal, that is an entity apt to be common to many individual items—see Stephen F. Brown, "Walter Burley's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Perihermeneias*," *Franciscan Studies* 33 (1973), 42–134, p. 85.

as metaphysical entities, existing independently of our minds, which are necessary conditions for our language to be significant. Common nouns would be meaningless if they did not signify something (1) that exists somehow in reality, and (2) that has the peculiar feature of being common to (namely, present in) many individual items. Moreover, they investigated the metaphysical composition of such common natures by the doctrine of categories, from a point of view that we can call “intensional” and in a way similar to that exploited by our modern componential analysis. Only by associating general nouns with such entities as their proper *significatum* did they think the fact could be explained that a general noun can be used predicatively to ascribe a given property (say, being a man or an animal) to many individuals at the same time. According to them, a general noun stands for (*supponere*) and labels (*appellare*) a certain set of individual items only by way of the common nature (the universal) that (1) it directly signifies, and (2) is present in that set of individuals as their own intelligible essence. Since common natures (1) connect general nouns up with their extensions by determining the classes of the things to which they are correctly applied, and (2) are what general nouns stand for when they have simple supposition,³ they are the intensions of common nouns; or better, the hypostatizations of these intensions, inasmuch as they were conceived of as entities existing independently of our minds.

This comes out quite clearly from the standard reading of *Categories* 5, 3b 10–15, where Aristotle maintains that a primary substance signifies a single item (*hoc aliquid* according to the Latin translation) whilst a secondary substance signifies a qualifying (and therefore common or universal) item (*quale quid* according to the Latin translation), notwithstanding it seems to signify a single item. Thirteenth century authors identified the secondary substance with the *quale quid* and the primary substance with the *hoc aliquid*, and therefore secondary substances (namely, the universals of the category of substance) with the significata of general nouns of that category (such as ‘man’) and primary substances (namely, the individuals of the category of substance) with the *significata* of individual expressions of that category (such as ‘this man’, which refers to a single human individual only). Furthermore,

³ Cf. e.g., Walter Burley, *De suppositionibus* (A.D. 1302), in Stephen F. Brown, “Walter Burleigh’s Treatise *De suppositionibus* and its Influence on William of Ockham,” *Franciscan Studies* 32 (1972), 15–64, pp. 35–36.

they assumed that common nouns of the category of substance, when used predicatively, specify which kind of substance a certain individual substance is.⁴ As a consequence, they thought of universals and individuals as linked together by a sort of relation of instantiation. In other words, they conceived of primary substances as the tokens of secondary substances (and, more in general, individuals as tokens of universals), and secondary substances as the types of primary substances (and, more in general, universals as types of individuals). In fact, according to them, (1) individual substances are unique physical entities, located at a particular place in space and time, and universal substances are their specific or generic forms—that is, their intelligible natures, immanent in them, having no independent existence, and apt to be common to many different individuals at the same time. (2) Any individual substance can be recognized as a member of a certain natural species by virtue of its conformity to the universal substance that it instantiates, and by virtue of its likeness to other individual substances.

From what has been said it is manifest that the crucial question of the medieval realist approach to the problem of universals was not that of the ontological status of the universals (as it was for Boethius and the other Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle); it was that of their relation with the individuals. Since moderate Realists, agreeing with Aristotle (*Categories* 5, 2a35–2b6), maintained that, if primary substances did not exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist, as everything else depends on them for its own being,⁵ the question of the status of universals necessarily became the question of their relation to individual substances. In fact, according to the moderate

⁴ Cf. Robert Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Praedicamentorum*, lectio 7 (Cambridge, Peterhouse), ms. 206, fol. 47ra–b; Albert the Great, *Liber de praedicamentis*, tr. 2, cap. 8, in *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris, 1890), vol. 1, pp. 181–183; Thomas Sutton, *Expositio super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de substantia* (Oxford, Merton College), ms. 289, fol. 11rb–va (transcription in Alessandro D. Conti, “Thomas Sutton’s Commentary on the *Categories* according to the Ms Oxford, Merton College 289,” in *The Rise of British Logic*, ed. P. O. Lewry (Toronto, 1985), pp. 173–213, pp. 203–204); Walter Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de substantia* (Cambridge, Peterhouse), ms. 184, fol. 178ra–b.

⁵ Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Porphyrii*, lectio 2 (Cambridge, Peterhouse), ms. 206, fol. 34vb; Albert the Great, *Liber de praedicamentis*, tr. 2, cap. 4, pp. 172–174; Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum Praedicamentorum*, q. 7, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, ed. Pasquale Mazzarella (Padua, 1957), p. 77; Thomas Sutton, *Expositio super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 8rb; John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super Praedicamenta*, q. 13, in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 1, pp. 369–372 and 377; Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 177va.

realist view, universals are not self-subsistent entities, but exist only in individual items, as universals have no being (*esse*) outside the being of their instantiations. As a result, moderate Realists thought that universals could be said to be everlasting because of the succession of their individuals, not because of a peculiar kind of being of their own.⁶ But whereas according to the most common opinion universals existed *in potentia* outside the mind and *in actu* within the mind, on Duns Scotus's and Burley's accounts they exist *in actu* outside the mind, since their being is exactly the same as the being of individuals, which is actual. Indeed, for Duns Scotus and Burley the necessary and sufficient condition for a universal to be *in actu* is the existence of at least one individual instantiating it. Therefore our mind does not give actuality to universals, but a separate mode of existence only.

Like the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle, such as Ammonius and Simplicius, medieval moderate Realists also argued that universals are threefold: (1) *ante rem*, or ideal universals, that is the ideas in God, archetypes of all that there is; (2) *in re*, or formal universals, that is the common natures shared by individual things; and (3) *post rem*, or intentional universals, that is mental signs by which we refer to the universals *in re*. On the other hand, differing from Neoplatonists, they were convinced that common natures really have the property of being universal by themselves. More precisely, like Avicenna, they believed that, properly speaking, common natures *qua* such are prior, and so "indifferent," to any division into universals and individuals. However, universality is as it were their inseparable characteristic.⁷ As a consequence they thought that three different kinds of entities can be qualified as real universals (*universalia in re*): (1) the common natures instantiated by individuals—which are *res* of first intention; (2) the form itself of universality which belongs to a certain common nature when seen in its relation to the individuals—which is a second intention, such as being-a-genus, being-a-species; (3) the entities which are made

⁶ Cf. e.g., Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super libro Porphyrii*, q. 5, p. 27; Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 177va.

⁷ Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Porphyrii*, lectio 2, fol. 34va; Albert the Great, *De quinque universalibus*, tr. *de universalibus in communi*, capp. 3 and 5, ed. Col., vol. 1.1A, pp. 24–25 and 31–32; Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super libro Porphyrii*, qq. 4 and 5, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 23–24 and 26–27; Giles of Rome, *Super librum I Sententiarum*, d. 19, p. 2, q. 1, ed. (Venetiis, 1521), fol. 110va; Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge*, q. 11, in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 1, pp. 50–51; *Lectura II*, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1, ed. Vaticana, vol. 18, p. 237.

up by the union of a common nature with one of these properties of second intention. Moreover, they conceived of formal universals in two different manners: as first intentions or as second intentions. In the first case, they considered universals as natures of a certain kind, identical with their own individuals (for example, man would be the same thing as Socrates). In the second case, formal universals were regarded as properly universals and distinct from their own individuals, considered *qua* individuals, because of the opposite constitutive principles: *communicabilitas* for universals and *incommunicabilitas* for individuals.⁸ Hence, moderate Realists thought of universals as formal causes in relation to their own individuals, and individuals as material causes in relation to their universals. Furthermore, agreeing with what Aristotle states in the third (1b10–15) and fifth (2b2–3) chapters of the *Categories*, they maintained that (1) a universal could directly receive only the predications of those forms more common than itself (i.e., those forms which are put on a higher level in the *linea praedicamentalis*); and (2) the accidental forms inhering in substantial individuals could be predicated of the substantial form itself that those individuals instantiate only indirectly, through and in virtue of the individuals of that substantial form.⁹ Thus, their position on the question of the relationship between universals and individuals necessarily entailed a soft attitude towards the problem of defining and classifying the types of identity and distinction (or difference), since it is evident that universals had to be considered at the same time not totally identical—with and not totally different—from their own individuals.

Indeed, at the end of the thirteenth century two main attempts were made to revise the common notions of identity and distinction

⁸ Cf. Albert the Great, *De quinque universalibus*, tr. *de universalibus in communi*, cap. 3, p. 26, cap. 5, pp. 32–33; Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super libro Porphyrii*, q. 4, pp. 23 and 25; Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in librum Porphyrii Isagoge*, q. 3, pp. 19–20.

⁹ For instance, if Socrates is white, then man (*homo*) is white, but the form of whiteness cannot be directly attributed-to (or predicated-of) the form of humanity itself: humanity is not whiteness, nor white. Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Praedicamentorum*, lectio 4, fol. 44va; Albert the Great, *Liber de praedicamentis*, tr. 1, cap. 6, pp. 161–162; tr. 2, cap. 4, pp. 172–173; Thomas Sutton, *Expositio super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de ordine praedicati ad subiectum*, fol. 6ra; cap. *de substantia*, fol. 7vb (transcription in Conti, “Thomas Sutton’s Commentary on the *Categories*,” pp. 195–196, and 197); Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum Praedicamentorum*, q. 3, p. 76; q. 21, pp. 95–96; Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super Praedicamenta*, q. 9, pp. 327–332; q. 13, pp. 365–377; Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de regulis praedicationis*, fol. 174va; cap. *de substantia*, fol. 177va.

by introducing a third kind of difference in between the real (*realis*) and the notional (*secundum rationem*) ones, but neither of them was specifically intended to offer an answer to the problem of the relationship between universals and individuals. Henry of Ghent spoke of intentional (*secundum intentionem*) difference,¹⁰ which he characterised in the following way: two entities intentionally differ one from the other if and only if (1) both of them are constitutive elements of the same thing, but (2) the definition of neither of them is part of the definition of the other, so that (2.1) each of them can be understood even together with the negation of the other. Duns Scotus spoke of formal distinction.¹¹ He gave two different definitions of it. In the *Lectura* and in the *Ordinatio* he described it as a symmetrical relation between two entities which cannot exist separately: two entities are formally distinct one from the other if and only if (1) both of them are constitutive elements of the same reality, but (2) neither of them can exist by itself, (3) nor is one part of the definite description of the other.¹² In the *Reportata Parisiensis* he defined it as an asymmetrical relation between a whole reality and one of its constitutive elements: an entity x is not formally identical with another entity y if and only if (1) y is not part of the definite description of x, but (2) x and y are one and the same thing in reality.¹³ He utilised these two rather different notions of formal distinction in order to illustrate respectively (1) how the genus and the specific difference, and the specific nature and the individual difference are linked together, and (2) the relations which hold between the divine nature

¹⁰ Cf. Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet X*, q. 7, ed. R. Macken (Leiden, 1981), pp. 164–166. On Henry of Ghent's doctrine of intentional distinction see John F. Wippel, "Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent's Theory of Intentional Distinction Between Essence and Existence," in *Sapientiae procerum amore*, ed. T. W. Koehler (Rome, 1974), pp. 289–321.

¹¹ On Scotus's theory of formal distinction see Marilyn McCord Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976), 5–74, pp. 25–43; Peter King, "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and Individual Difference," *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992), 51–76; Stephen D. Dumont, "Duns Scotus's Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction," *Vivarium* 43 (2005), 7–62. On further developments of Scotus's theory in Oxford at the end of the fourteenth century see Alessandro D. Conti, "Sviluppi e applicazioni della distinzione formale scotista ad Oxford sul finire del XIV secolo," in *Via Scoti, Methodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti*, ed. Leonardo Sileo, 2 vols. (Rome, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 319–336.

¹² Cf. Duns Scotus, *Lectura I*, d. 2, p. 2, qq. 1–4, ed. Vaticana, vol. 16, p. 216; *Ordinatio I*, d. 2, p. 2, qq. 1–4, ed. Vaticana, vol. 2, pp. 356–357; II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 6, ed. Vaticana, vol. 7, pp. 483–484.

¹³ Cf. Duns Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensis I*, d. 33, qq. 2–3, and d. 34, q. 1, ed. Vivès, vol. 22, pp. 402–408, and 410.

and its three Persons, and between the human soul and its faculties. On the other side, in his *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias* (A.D. 1301), Walter Burley used the intentional difference for clarifying the relations between genus and difference, and between essence and being.¹⁴ He claimed that there was not a real distinction between essence and being (as Aquinas and Giles of Rome had taught), but they were really the same and only intentionally distinct.¹⁵ By means of these new kinds of distinctions moderate Realists were trying to explain how it is possible to distinguish many different real aspects internal to the same individual thing, without breaking its unity.

In conclusion, the legacy to the late Middle Ages left by the debate on universals which took place in between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries can be summed up as follows: (1) universals exist in a threefold way, as ideas in the mind of God, as common natures *in re*, and as general concepts in our mind. (2) Real universals are forms naturally apt to be present in many individual items as their main metaphysical components. (3) Real universals have no being outside the being of their individuals. (4) Real universals are partially identical-with and partially different-from their own individuals. (5.1) Real universals exist *in potentia* only outside our minds, or, (5.2) according to Duns Scotus's and Burley's views, they exist *in actu* outside our minds.¹⁶ As far as the logical machinery was concerned, besides the real and notional distinctions there were three other types of distinction which could be employed in order to account suitably for the inner composition of beings: Henry of Ghent's intentional distinction, and the two kinds of formal distinction drawn up by Duns Scotus.

Ockham's Critique

As it is well known, in the first decades of the fourteenth century, in his commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*, in his *Expositio aurea*,

¹⁴ See Alessandro D. Conti, "Essenza ed essere nel pensiero della tarda scolastica (Burley, Wyclif, Paolo Veneto)," *Medioevo* 15 (1989), 235–267.

¹⁵ Cf. Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*, q. 4, in Stephen F. Brown, "Walter Burley's *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*," *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974), 200–295, p. 273.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g., Burley, *Expositio libri De Anima* (1316 ca.) lib. I, q. 3: "utrum universale habeat esse extra animam," Civitas Vaticana, Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat. Lat. 2151, fol. 10ra–vb.

and in the first part of his *Summa logicae*, Ockham contended that (T1) the presupposition of a relation of identity between universals and individuals was inconsistent with the standard definition of real identity, according to which two things *a* and *b* are identical if and only if, for all *P*, it is the case that *P* is predicated of *a* if and only if it is predicated of *b*; and (T2), from an ontological point of view, the only kind of distinction which could hold between two creatures was the real one, as (in his opinion) any form of distinction between two creatures necessarily implies a real distinction between them. From these two theses and the assumption of the absolute truth of the Aristotelian claim that (T3) there cannot be universal forms apart from their individuals, he derived (T4) a rejection of any type of extramental existence for universals.¹⁷ His final argumentation, expressed in general terms, was that, if universals are something existing *in re*, really identical with their individuals, when considered as first intentions, then whatever is predicated of the individuals must be predicated of their universals too, and so a unique universal entity (say, the human nature) would possess contrary attributes simultaneously (because of the different accidental forms inhering in the various individuals really identical with that common nature at a given time). A conclusion clearly unacceptable.¹⁸

The crucial point of Ockham's attack on the traditional realist view on universals is the demonstration of the thesis (T2), since (T3) was a sort of undisputed dogma in his times, and (T1) was recognised to be somehow true by moderate Realists too. As a matter of fact, they had tried to avoid that internal contradiction by introducing some form of distinction between universals and individuals considered as second intentions—as we have already seen. It was a common topic in the explanation of *Categories* 3, 1b10–15, that one cannot infer from 'Socrates is a man' and 'man is a species' that 'Socrates is a species,' notwithstanding the identity between homo and Socrates.¹⁹ On the other

¹⁷ On Ockham's theory of universals see Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham* (Indiana, 1987), 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 3–69; and Alessandro D. Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in Johannes Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, ed. Alessandro D. Conti (Florence, 1990), pp. 257–294.

¹⁸ Cf. Ockham, *Expositio in librum Praedicamentorum Aristotelis*, cap. 8.1, in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 2, pp. 164–168; *Summa logicae*, pars I, cap. 15, in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 1, pp. 50–51.

¹⁹ Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Praedicamentorum*, lectio 4, fol. 44va; Albert the Great, *Liber de praedicamentis*, tr. 1, cap. 6, pp. 161–162; Thomas Sutton, *Expositio super librum Praedicamentorum, prologus*, fol. 2rb (transcription in Conti, "Thomas Sutton's Commentary on the *Categories*," p. 187); Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum*

hand, in their opinion, the thesis of the identity of universals and individuals was necessary for safeguarding (1) the division of predication into essential and accidental, and (2) the difference between substantial and accidental forms, stated by Aristotle in the second (1a20–1b5) and fifth (2a18–33, 3b17–21) chapters of the *Categories*.²⁰ Consequently, moderate Realists had been forced to speak of identity between universals and individuals, but to weaken that same identity by limiting the transitivity of predications, since, according to them, not all that was predicated of individuals could be predicated of universals and vice versa. Besides differentiating common natures conceived of as first intentions and as second intentions, a further device moderate Realists had made use of was to distinguish between two points of view from which one could consider universal forms: (1) *in abstracto* (intensionally) and (2) *in concreto* (extensionally). (1) Intensionally regarded a common nature was nothing but the sum of essential properties which constituted a categorial item, without any reference to the existence of individuals which, if that was the case, instantiated it. (2) Extensionally regarded a common nature was that same form conceived of as actually instantiated by at least one individual. For instance, the human nature intensionally considered was *humanitas*, extensionally considered was *homo*. Both terms ‘*humanitas*’ and ‘*homo*’ referred to the same nature, but respectively viewed (1) as simply a form, existentially incomplete and dependent, and (2) as a real type, concretely instantiated by at least one individual. While it was not possible to ascribe a property of one of its individual to the universal form regarded *in abstracto* (obviously, humanity is neither white nor running nor sick), it was possible to attribute it to the universal form regarded *in concreto* (man is white and black and running etc.) without any contradiction.²¹

Praedicamentorum, q. 3, p. 76; Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super Praedicamenta*, q. 9, pp. 327–332; Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de regulis praedicationis*, fol. 174va.

²⁰ Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Praedicamentorum*, lectio 3, fol. 44ra–b; lectio 6, fol. 45rb–va; lectio 7, fol. 47rb; Thomas Sutton, *Expositio super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de subiecto et praedicato*, fol. 5rb–vb; cap. *de substantia*, fol. 11ra (transcription in Conti, “Thomas Sutton’s Commentary on the *Categories*,” pp. 194–195 and 201–202); Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de complexo et incomplexo*, fols. 173vb–174ra; cap. *de substantia*, fol. 177va.

²¹ Cf. Kilwardby, *Notulae super librum Porphyrii*, lectio 5, fol. 37ra; *Notulae super librum Praedicamentorum*, lectio 1, fol. 43va–b; lectio 8, fol. 49vb; Albert the Great, *De quinque universalibus*, tr. *de universalibus in communi*, cap. 1, pp. 17–19, and cap. 8, pp. 37–38;

According to Ockham, (1) resorting to those expedients, and (2) positing a third kind of distinction in order to solve the problem of clarifying the relation holding between universals and individuals amounted simply to looking for *ad hoc* solutions. In his opinion, there was no room for any further distinction in addition to the real one (traditionally viewed), since any other possible kind of distinction necessarily implied identity, and identity was a transitive, symmetrical, and reflexive relation.²² Moreover, he apparently subscribed to both the Identity of Indiscernibles (for all *x* and *y*, if for all *P*, *P* is predicated of *x* if and only if it is predicated of *y*, then *x* is identical with *y*) and the Indiscernibility of Identicals (for all *x*, *y*, and *P*, if *x* is identical with *y*, then *P* is predicated of *x* if and only if it is predicated of *y*) laws.²³ As a consequence, he concluded that it was impossible that contradictory properties (such as *communicabilitas* and *incommunicabilitas*) were truly asserted of the same *res* unless the bearers of those contradictory properties were really distinct and independent beings.²⁴ But given (I3), universals could not in any way be real things (*res*); they necessarily were mental entities (*entia rationis*), as no other alternative was possible.²⁵ So, for Ockham, the only universal beings it made sense to talk about were universal *concepts*, and derivative from them, universal terms in spoken and written language—taking for granted that such universal concepts, if regarded simply as beings, were individual like all others, as they were universal only in the sense of being the mental signs of a multiplicity of individual things. So that for Ockham universality consisted simply in the universality of the representative function of mental, spoken, and written terms.²⁶

Burley, *Tractatus de abstractis*, Civitas Vaticana, Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat. Lat. 2146, fol. 249rb.

²² Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 6, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 2, p. 186; d. 33, q. 1, in *Opera theologica*, vol. 4, pp. 416–421. On real sameness and distinction in Ockham see Marilyn McCord Adams, “Ockham on Identity and distinction,” especially pp. 6–12 and 44–50.

²³ Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 1, pp. 14 and 16; q. 6, pp. 173–174; *Summa logicae*, pars I, cap. 16, p. 56.

²⁴ Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 1, p. 14: “Impossibile est contradictoria verificari de quibuscumque, nisi illa, vel illa pro quibus supponunt, sint distinctae res, vel distinctae rationes sive entia rationis, vel res et ratio”; and q. 11, p. 363: “Contradictoria non possunt verificari nisi propter aliquam distinctionem vel non-identitatem”; see also *Summa logicae*, pars I, cap. 16, pp. 54–55.

²⁵ Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 1, pp. 14–15.

²⁶ Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 4, pp. 122–124; *Expositio in librum Porphyrii, prooem.*, in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 2, pp. 11 and 14–16; *Summa logicae*, pars I, cap. 14, pp. 48–49; and cap. 15, pp. 53–54.

As it is well known, over the course of his career, Ockham modified his belief on the status of universal concepts.²⁷ At the very beginning, following the ideas of Henry of Harclay and Peter Auriole, he was of the opinion that universals were purely intentional objects (*ficta*), in the sense that they did not exist in our minds as in their own subjects of inherence (*subiective*), but they were the objects (namely, the semantic contents) apprehended by our minds through the acts of understanding (*obiective*). Such semantic contents would be what we grasp by means of common nouns and compare with reality in order to establish the truth or falsity of a sentence.²⁸ Eventually, he changed his mind and in his later *Quaestiones super libros Physicorum*, *Quodlibet IV*, and *Summa logicae* adopted the so called “intellectio-theory.” The turnabout was caused by Walter Chatton’s critique, that the *Venerabilis Inceptor* partially accepted. Ockham maintained that universal concepts were those singular acts of understanding by means of which our minds think of several individuals at once—a choice that was consistent with his theories of supposition and of meaning.²⁹

Universals, identity, and predication from Ockham to Wyclif

With the noteworthy exception of Ockham’s followers,³⁰ such as John Buridan, Albert of Saxony, Henricus Totting de Oyta, and Marsilius of

²⁷ See Marilyn McCord Adams, “Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century,” in Norman Kretzmann et al., eds. *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy. From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 411–439; Adams, *Ockham*, pp. 71–107; Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 277–289; Claude Panaccio, “Semantics and Mental Language,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul V. Spade (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 53–75.

²⁸ Cf. Ockham, *Ordinatio I*, d. 2, q. 8, pp. 271–281.

²⁹ Cf. Ockham, *Summa logicae*, pars I, c. 12, pp. 42–43: “Dicendum quod circa istum articulum diversae sunt opiniones. Aliqui dicunt quod non est nisi quoddam fictum per animam. Alii, quod est quaedam qualitas subiective existens in anima. Alii dicunt quod est actus intelligendi. Et pro istis est ratio ista, quia ‘frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora’. Omnia autem quae salvantur ponendo aliquid distinctum ab actu intelligendi possunt salvari sine tali distincto, eo quod supponere pro alio et significare aliud ita potest competere actui intelligendi sicut alii signo. Igitur praeter actum intelligendi non oportet aliquid aliud ponere.” See also cap. 15, p. 53. On Ockham’s semantics see Adams, *Ockham*, pp. 327–435; Claude Panaccio, *Les Mots, les Concepts et les Choses. La sémantique de Guillaume d’Occam et le nominalisme d’aujourd’hui* (Montréal-Paris, 1991).

³⁰ I do not take their theories into consideration, since they did not add any remarkable feature to Ockham’s approach and doctrine.

Inghen, later medieval authors acknowledged that Ockham's critique showed that the traditional realist description of the relation between universals and individuals was untenable, but they were convinced that realism as a whole still was defensible. Therefore, they tried to remove the aporetic points of the traditional realist theory of universals by suitable strategies. Fundamentally these were two: (1) the affirmation of a real distinction between universals and individuals; (2) the elaboration of new notions of identity and distinction as means to interpret the relation between universals and individuals, and thereby the nature of predication. The first strategy was that of Walter Burley, who after 1324 in his writings always maintained that universals, conceived of as general forms, fully exist outside the mind and are *really distinct* from the individuals in which they are present and of which they are predicated. The second strategy was the most common in all of Europe during the later Middle Ages. Burley was persuaded that Ockham's arguments for proving the theses (T1) and (T2) were valid, and therefore renounced his support for thesis (T3) in order to escape from the inconsistencies stressed by the *Venerabilis Inceptor*. On the other hand, the other late medieval authors stuck by (T3), recognised that Ockham's demonstration of (T1) was effective, and unanimously judged Ockham's reasons for (T2) to be insufficient for proving it. As a consequence, they had to revise the notions of identity and distinction so that they could utilise them for expounding the peculiar relation of partial identity and partial distinction holding between universals and individuals without falling prey to the contradictions pointed out by Ockham.

There were two different forms of this second strategy. The first one was that of some Italian Dominican masters (such as Franciscus de Prato and Stephanus de Reate), who, in order to avoid the conclusion that a universal and its individuals were considered to be the same thing, worked out new definitions for identity and distinction inspired by Hervaeus Natalis's notion of conformity (*conformitas*).³¹ They regarded identity as an intersection of classes of forms (or properties), so that it

³¹ Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibet* I, q. 9, ed. Venetiis 1513, fol. 19ra–vb. On Hervaeus's theory see Jan Pinborg, "Zum Begriff der *Intentio Secunda*: Radulphus Brito, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli in Diskussion," *Cahiers de l'institut du moyen-Age grec et latin* 13 (1974), 49–59; Dominik Perler, "Peter Aureol vs. Hervaeus Natalis on Intentionality. A Text Edition With Introductory Remarks," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 61 (1994), 227–262; Dominik Perler, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), pp. 258–317; Fabrizio Amerini, "What is Real. A Reply to Ockham's Ontological Program," *Vivarium* 43 (2005), 187–212; Fabrizio Amerini, "Realism and Intentionality: Hervaeus Natalis, Peter Auriol, and William

was possible to affirm (1) that two entities were really identical without entailing that they were the same thing, and (2) that two entities were not really identical without entailing that they were really different. The second line of development was that of the most important school of later medieval Realists, started up by John Wyclif in the second half of the fourteenth century, the so called “Oxford Realists”: besides Wyclif himself, the Englishmen Robert Alyngton († 1398), William Milverley, William Penbygull († 1420), Roger Whelpdale († 1423), and John Tarteys, as well as the German Johannes Sharpe († after 1415), and the Italian Paul of Venice (1369–1429). According to the Oxford Realists (1) universals and individuals are really identical but formally distinct; (2) the two notions of difference (or distinction) and real identity are logically compatible, and (3) predication is not a mental relation between two things, but a real one. In particular, Wyclif revised Duns Scotus’s twofold notion of formal distinction and developed a form of intensional logic where the basic relation between things is that of formal distinction, intended by him as the measure of the coincidence of the metaphysical components of two *res*. Improving to some extent Wyclif’s ideas, his followers (1) proposed new determinations of the twin notions of identity and distinction, and (2) deeply modified the standard medieval analysis of predication.

Chronologically, the first solution we meet is that of Walter Burley. As we have already seen, at the beginning of his academic career Burley was a supporter of the moderate realism, but after 1324, because of Ockham’s criticism, he changed his opinions and evolved an original form of platonic realism. In the prologue of his last commentary on the *Physics* (1324–34), in the *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, in the last commentary on the *Ars Vetus* (A.D. 1337), and in the later *Tractatus de universalibus* (after 1337), he expounds his new ontology of macro-objects, based on a threefold real distinction:³² (1) between universals

Ockham in Discussion,” in *Philosophical Debates at the University of Paris in the First Quarter of the Fourteenth Century*, eds. Theo Kobusch—Stephen F. Brown (Louvain, forthcoming).

³² On Burley’s ontology of macro-objects see Alessandro D. Conti, “Ontology in Walter Burley’s Last Commentary on the *Ars Vetus*,” *Franciscan Studies* 50 (1990), 121–176; on his semantic theory see Alessandro D. Conti, “Significato e verità in Walter Burley,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 11 (2000), 317–350; and Laurent Cesalli, “Le réalisme propositionnel de Walter Burley,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 68 (2001), 155–221; on his theory of universals and individuals set in its epistemological context see Alessandro D. Conti, “La conoscenza del singolare in Walter Burley,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), 517–540; on his theory of universals set in its metaphysical and semantic contexts see Marta

and individuals;³³ (2) between categorial items (or simple objects—*incomplexa*) and real propositions (or states of affairs—*propositiones in re*);³⁴ and (3) among the ten categories.³⁵

Burley's most accurate and analytical treatments of the problem of universals are those set in the treatise on universals and in the chapter on substance of his last commentary on the *Categories*, but interesting remarks can be found in his last commentaries on the *Isagoge* and the *Liber sex principiorum*, and in his *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*. Like Albert the Great, whom he quotes by name, Burley admits the typical thirteenth century division of universals into *ante rem*, *in re*, and *post rem*;³⁶ however, he follows also Auriolo and the early Ockham in positing, besides the act of understanding (the standard *post rem*, conceptual universal), another mental universal, distinct from the former, and existing in the mind only as its object (*habens esse obiectivum in intellectu*).³⁷ By introducing a second mental universal, existing *obiective* in the mind, Burley hoped to account for the fact that we can grasp the meaning of a general noun even though we have never seen any individual among those for which the noun can stand for in a predicative sentence, and therefore without properly knowing the universal it directly signifies.

In order to avoid the inconsistencies of the traditional moderate realist view on universals pointed out by Ockham, he claims that universals fully exist outside the mind and are really distinct from the individuals they are-in and are predicated of. According to him, if universals are no longer constitutive parts of their own individuals, then the inconsistencies stressed by Ockham vanish, as universals cannot take

Vittorini, *Predicabili e categorie nell'ultimo commento di Walter Burley all' Isagoge di Porfirio*, Ph.D. diss., University of Salerno, academic year 2004–05.

³³ Cf. Burley, *In Physicam Aristotelis Expositio et Quaestiones, prooem.*, ed. Venetiis 1501, fol. 9rb; *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de subiecto et praedicato* and cap. *de substantia*, in *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis*, ed. Venetiis 1509, fols. 20rb, 23rb–vb, and 24va; *Expositio super librum Perihermeneias*, cap. *de oppositione enuntiationum*, in *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis*, fol. 74rb–va; *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wöhler, Leipzig 1999, pars III, pp. 14–40.

³⁴ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis, prooem.*, fols. 17vb–18va; cap. *de subiecto et praedicato*, fol. 20rb; cap. *de priori*, fol. 47va; *Expositio super librum Perihermeneias, prooem.*, fol. 66ra–b.

³⁵ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de numero et sufficientia praedicamentorum*, fol. 21ra–b.

³⁶ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super librum Sex principiorum*, cap. *de forma*, in *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis*, fol. 53rb.

³⁷ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de priori*, fol. 48vb; and *Tractatus de universalibus*, pars VI, pp. 60–66.

the (opposite) properties of the latter. Furthermore, the principle holds that causes must be proportionate to the effects they produce: but the causes of an individual, which is a singular effect, must be individual, while obviously those of a common nature must be universal. Therefore, individual substance cannot be composed of anything but singular form and matter; whereas universals must be compounded by genus and specific difference, and by any other universal form ordered over the genus. Consequently, the lowest species is not a constitutive part of the individuals it is in and is predicated of, but only a form coming together with their individual essences, and making their metaphysical structure known, since it is the species or genus (namely, the type) which individuals belong to (namely, instantiate).³⁸ Hence, Burley sharply distinguishes between two main kinds of substantial forms: one singular (*forma perficiens materiam*) and the other universal (*forma declarans quidditatem*). The former affects a particular piece of matter and, together with it, brings the substantial composite (or *hoc aliquid*) about. The latter, the lowest species, discloses the nature of the individual substances in which it is present and of which it is predicated, but it is not one of their constitutive parts.³⁹ This distinction between a *forma perficiens materiam* and a *forma declarans quidditatem* is very like the one, very common among the moderate Realists of the thirteenth century, between *forma partis* (the singular form which in union with a clump of matter brings the substantial composite about) and *forma totius* (the universal form or

³⁸ Cf. Burley, *In Physicam Aristotelis expositio et quaestiones, prooem.*, fols. 8rb–9vb.

³⁹ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 23rb–va: “Ad primum in contrarium dicendum est quod substantia singularis non componitur ex universalibus, sed solum ex singularibus, quia Sortes non componitur nisi ex hac materia et hac forma, et non componitur ex genere et differentia quae praedicantur de eo in quid. Sed species de genere substantiae componitur ex genere et differentia, et ex omnibus superioribus ad ipsum. Et huius ratio est quia effectus particularis sunt causae particulares et effectus universalis sunt cause universales; . . . sed individuum est effectus particularis et species est effectus universalis. . . . Ad illud quando probatur quod species est pars individui, quia est quidditas individui, dicendum quod quidditas et forma unum sunt. Et ideo, sicut forma est duplex, scilicet forma declarans quidditatem et forma perficiens materiam, sic quidditas est duplex: quia quaedam est quidditas quae est forma perficiens materiam et quaedam est forma declarans quidditatem. Quidditas quae est forma perficiens materiam est pars individui cuius est quidditas; sed quidditas declarans quidditatem non est pars individui cuius est quidditas, nec est de essentia talis individui, sed est essentialiter concomitans essentiam eius. . . . Ad quintum principale, cum dicitur an haec species, homo, sit eadem omnino res in Sorte et Platone an alia et alia, dicendum quod haec species, homo, est eadem in Sorte et Platone.” This same thesis is supported with new arguments based on the definition of identity in the *Tractatus de universalibus*, pars III, pp. 22–28.

essence which is the type that the substantial composite instantiates).⁴⁰ But, because of the real distinction between universals and individuals, Burley was able to draw from it a further conclusion that moderate Realists could not draw: the “dissolution” of the problem of individuation. For him, individual substances are really distinct from their own species and from one another in and of themselves. A primary substance really differs (1) from its species because the latter is not a part of its essence, but a form present in it and dependent on it for actual existence, and (2) from the other primary substances belonging to the same species because of its own singular form and matter.⁴¹

Such a dissolution of the problem of individuation is not the only point of agreement between the later Burley and Ockham: like the *Venerabilis Inceptor*, Burley rejects any kind of distinction in addition to the real one (and therefore even that form of intentional distinction he had employed in his early works). As it has been already said, he admits Ockham’s thesis (T2). In his last commentary on the *Categories*⁴² and in the *Tractatus de universalibus*⁴³ he considers (1) identity a transitive, symmetrical, and reflexive relation; and (2) identity and difference (or distinction) two mutually incompatible concepts. In fact, he defines identity and distinction as follows: a is identical with b if and only if for all x, it is the case that x is predicated of a if and only if it is predicated of b; a differs from b if and only if (1) there is at least one x such that a is predicated of x and b is not, or vice versa, or (2) there is at least one y such that y is predicated of a and not of b, or vice versa. The other two main theses of Burley’s system (the existence of a real proposition and a real distinction among the ten categories) depend on his new position

⁴⁰ Cf. e.g., Albert the Great, *De quinque universalibus*, tr. *de universalibus in communi*, cap. 8, pp. 37–38; *Metaphysica* VII, tr. 1, cap. 1; VIII, tr. 1, cap. 3, ed. Col., vol. 16.2, pp. 316–317, and 391.

⁴¹ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii*, cap. *de specie*, in *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis*, fol. 10va: “Intelligendum est quod unum individuum substantiae non distinguitur ab alio solum per huiusmodi proprietates accidentis, sed formaliter per suam formam et materialiter per suam materiam.”

⁴² Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de oppositione*, fol. 44rb: “Nota quod ex isto loco sumitur doctrina bona ad cognoscendum identitatem vel diversitatem aliquorum ad invicem. Et est: si unum praedicatur de aliquo de quo non praedicatur reliquum, illa non sunt eadem, sed diversa; et si aliquid praedicatur de uno quod non praedicatur de reliquo, illa non sunt idem. Et e contrario: si quicquid vere praedicatur de uno vere praedicatur de reliquo, illa sunt eadem.”

⁴³ Cf. Burley, *Tractatus de universalibus*, pars III, p. 22.

on identity and distinction, and consequently on what he thought was necessary in order to defend a realist view of universals.

Because of his giving up of the intentional difference, Burley was compelled to make the ontological status of propositions *in re* much stronger than it was before. While in the *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias* and middle commentary on the *De interpretatione* he had clearly stated that mental propositions exist in our minds as in their own subjects of inherence (*habent esse subiectivum in intellectu*) and real propositions (*propositiones in re*) exist in our minds as their intentional objects (*habent esse obiectivum in intellectu solum*),⁴⁴ in his last commentary on the *Ars Vetus* he affirms that a real proposition is an *ens copulatum* formed by the entities for which the subject and the predicate of the corresponding mental proposition stand, together with an identity-relation, if the proposition is affirmative, or a non-identity-relation, if the proposition is negative.⁴⁵ Moreover, as far as the problem of the ontological value of the Aristotelian categories is concerned, whereas in his middle commentary on the *Categories*⁴⁶ Burley (1) judged only the absolute categories (substance, quantity, and quality) to be really things, and (2) considered the remaining ones as a sort of real aspects (*respectus reales*) of the absolute ones, in his last commentary on the *Categories* he claims that (1) the division into categories is first of all a division of *res* existing outside the mind, and only secondarily of the mental concepts and spoken or written terms which signify them; and (2) things in one category are really distinct from those in others.⁴⁷ What is more, (3) he polemicalizes against Ockham's strong reductionist position, arguing that it compromises the actual goal of a correct categorial theory, namely, the classifying and putting in hierarchical order all the items according to their nature, inner metaphysical structure, and peculiar modes of being.⁴⁸

Notwithstanding the assumption of a real distinction between universals and individuals, and the different evaluation of the categorial

⁴⁴ Cf. Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*, q. 3, pp. 248–249; *Commentarius in librum Perihermeneias*, pp. 61–62.

⁴⁵ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super librum Perihermeneias, prooem.*, fol. 66ra–b.

⁴⁶ Cf. Burley, *Tractatus super librum Praedicamentorum*, cap. *de numero et sufficientia praedicamentorum*, fols. 175rb–176rb.

⁴⁷ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de numero et sufficientia praedicamentorum*, fol. 21ra–b.

⁴⁸ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de numero et sufficientia praedicamentorum*, fols. 21va–b, and 22ra.

table in relation to his early works, Burley kept on supporting, without introducing any restrictive clause, the Aristotelian principle (stated in *Categories* 5, 2b5–6) that primary substances are the necessary condition of existence for any other categorial items (universal substances included).⁴⁹ This was still possible since he held that universals were forms, and therefore entities existentially incomplete and dependent which require the existence of at least one individual for being. Ockham had interpreted in an original way that same principle: he had claimed that what Aristotle meant was that the truth of all the propositions of the form ‘Sortes is not’ necessarily entails the truth of the following proposition ‘no man is’ (*nullus homo est*),⁵⁰ so translating a metaphysical principle into a logical rule. Paradoxically, the divergent interpretation of *Categories* 2b5–6 is the only remarkable difference between the logical structure of Burley’s theory of universals and that of Ockham. Burley himself stresses this point: in commenting on that passage, he observes that it goes against Ockham’s position on universals, since, if universal substances were concepts, the destruction of all the members of a certain species could not imply the disappearance of the corresponding universal.⁵¹ Indeed, both Ockham and Burley subscribe to (T1) and (T2), and do not accept (T3), even though Ockham only accepted it in the sense that universal concepts (say, the concept of man) do exist apart from and independently of their corresponding real individuals (say, Socrates or Plato). What prevents Burley from totally agreeing with Ockham is precisely the opposite reading of Aristotle’s affirmation that if primary substances did not exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist. Being faithful to Aristotle on this point, Burley had to build up a sort of mixed theory of universal, where some principles of Aristotelian ontology went alongside some principles of Platonic ontology. In contrast, detaching himself from the real Aristotelian intention, Ockham could construct a theory consistent with Aristotle’s claim in *Metaphysics* Z 13 (1038b8–9, 1038b34–1039a3) that universals are not substances.

⁴⁹ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 24va.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ockham, *Expositio in librum Praedicamentorum Aristotelis*, cap. 8.5, pp. 175–176.

⁵¹ Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, fol. 24va: “Hic patet evidenter quod secundae substantiae non sunt conceptus in anima, quia, si secundae substantiae essent conceptus animae, tunc destructis primis substantiis possibile esset alia remanere. Nam destructis omnibus rosis adhuc potest conceptus rosae remanere in anima. Et ita species potest manere destructis omnibus individuus suis—quod est contra Philosophum hic.”

Two main difficulties arise from Burley's (new) solution to the problem of universals: (1) within his ontology, it was difficult to distinguish between essential and accidental predication, since secondary substances (namely, the universal forms of the category of substance) necessarily presupposed primary substances for their existence in the same way as accidental forms did. Thereby, their relation to primary substances was (almost) the same as that peculiar to accidental forms, a sort of inherence. (2) Universals existed apart from their individuals—a conclusion “dangerously” close to Plato's thesis on the subject. As a consequence, many late medieval Realists tried other ways of replying to Ockham's charges.

When Ockhamist logic arrived in Italy in the 1330s, some Italian Dominican masters brought into question Ockham's ontological reductionist program, at the same time attempting to escape from the “exaggeration” of Burley's version of realism. According to Franciscus de Prato and Stephanus de Reate,⁵² in order to defend moderate realism, it was necessary (1) to clarify the relation that holds between universals and individuals, and (2) to rethink the twin notions of identity and distinction in such a way to avoid both the inconsistencies pointed out by Ockham, and Burley's real distinction between individuals and universals. To preserve a real foundation of universal concepts and to defend the entire extension of the table of the categories were the two main steps of their philosophical strategy, aimed to restore the principles of a Thomistic view of the world. In order to achieve this goal they developed some of Hervaeus Natalis's chief logico-metaphysical intuitions.⁵³

⁵² On their lives, works, and logico-metaphysical theories see Fabrizio Amerini, “La *quaestio* ‘Utrum subiectum in logica sit ens rationis’ e la sua attribuzione a Francesco da Prato. Note sulla vita e gli scritti del domenicano Francesco da Prato (XIV secolo),” *Memorie Domenicane*, n.s. 30 (1999), pp. 147–217; Fabrizio Amerini, “La dottrina della *significatio* di Francesco da Prato, O.P. (XIV secolo). Una critica tomista a Guglielmo di Ockham,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 11 (2000), 375–408; Fabrizio Amerini, *I trattati De universalibus di Francesco da Prato e Stefano da Rieti (secolo XIV)*, Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo (Spoleto, 2003), pp. 1–56 (at pp. 57–132 the critical edition of Franciscus's treatise on universals, and at pp. 133–145 the edition of Stephanus's tract); Christian Rode, *Franciscus de Prato* (Stuttgart, 2004); Fabrizio Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato. Con l'edizione critica della Loyca e del Tractatus de voce univoca* (Florence, 2005), pp. 1–248 (at pp. 249–506 the critical edition of Franciscus's *Loyca*, and at pp. 507–597 the edition of his *Tractatus de voce univoca*); Amerini, “What is Real,” pp. 187–212.

⁵³ Amerini, “What is Real,” pp. 200–201, and 212.

Like Hervaeus, Franciscus and Stephanus rejected any kind of distinction that was midway between a real distinction and one of reason.⁵⁴ Their basic ideas were that (1) universal forms have no being outside the being of their individuals;⁵⁵ (2) real identity may be more or less close, and (2.1) the limit of that real identity is the entirely real identity (*esse idem convertibiliter* or *totaliter*).⁵⁶ This means that they recognised degrees in real identity. Moreover, Franciscus explicitly assumes that (1) from the fact that two items are not entirely really identical we cannot conclude that they are really different.⁵⁷ According to Franciscus, a universal and one of its individuals are really identical, but they are not entirely identical. There are properties that can be predicated of a universal form and not of one of its individual, or vice versa, but this is not equivalent to proving that they are really non-identical, so that they can be really separate. For instance, Peter and man (*homo*) are really identical if they are compared to each other, but they are not entirely identical if they are compared to another individual man, say Martin. What is more, according to Franciscus, saying that if two items are not identical in any respect, then they are really different, amounts to formulating an

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 201.

⁵⁵ Cf. e.g., Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus* (between 1341 and 1343), a. 5, p. 110: “Cuius ratio est quia albedo universalis, in tali casu, non habet in rerum natura aliam entitatem, sive aliam albedinem, quam albedinem Petri”; p. 121: “Cuius ratio est quia homo universalis realiter et essentialiter praedicatur de Petro et de Martino, et est de essentia Petri et Martini, et est homo universalis unum realiter cum Petro et idem est unum realiter cum Martino.”

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g., Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 4, pp. 99–100: “Ex his quae tacta sunt in ista conclusione ego elicio quattuor correlaria. Primum est quod universale et singulare, ad invicem comparata, sunt idem realiter et essentialiter et differunt sola ratione. . . . Secundum correlarium est quod universale et singulare, in comparatione ad tertium, idest in comparatione ad aliud singulare, distinguuntur realiter. Cuius ratio est quia universale identificat sibi aliud singulare nec differt ab eo realiter; unum autem singulare non identitat sibi aliud singulare, sed differt realiter ab eo. Unde Petrus et homo differunt realiter in comparatione ad Martinum, pro quanto homo includit identice Martinum, qui differt realiter a Petro. Tertium correlarium est quod universale et singulare non sunt idem convertibiliter. Cuius ratio est quia ex quo universale plura includit et in plus se habet quam singulare sequitur quod non sunt idem convertibiliter. Quartum correlarium est quod ex eo quod universale est idem realiter cum suis singularibus sequitur quod illud universale est subiective in intellectu cuius singulare vel singularia sunt subiective in intellectu, et illud universale est extra intellectum subiective cuius singulare vel singularia sunt extra intellectum subiective.”

⁵⁷ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 5, p. 121: “Cum ulterius dicitur *si homo et Petrus non sunt idem omnibus modis realiter, ergo differunt aliquo modo realiter*, dico quod non sequitur. . . . sicut etiam non sequitur ‘Petrus non est omnis homo, ergo Petrus est aliquid non-homo’, vel sicut non sequitur ‘Petrus non est omnibus modis identitatis et omnibus modis unitatis homo, ergo Petrus aliquo modo est non-homo’.”

invalid consequence (in his opinion it is a case of *fallacia consequentis*).⁵⁸ Franciscus argues that the following consequences are valid: ‘if man and Peter are identical in any respect, then they are identical’, ‘if man and Peter are not identical, then they are not identical in any respect’; while the following consequences are invalid: ‘if man and Peter are identical, then they are identical in any respect’, ‘if man and Peter are not identical in any respect, then they are not identical’.⁵⁹ In fact, he distinguishes between being-not-identical (*esse non idem*), that he equates with being-different (*differre*), and not-being-identical (*non esse idem*), as the former relation implies the latter, but not vice versa.⁶⁰

Franciscus’s position on universals and his explanation of the relationship between universals and individuals ultimately depend on the acceptance of the Thomistic thesis of a real composition of essence and being (*esse*) in creatures. Pursuing Aquinas’s line of thought, he assumed that essence and being are distinct from each other, but related one to the other just as potency (essence) and act (being). All the individuals belonging to a certain natural species share the same essence (or nature), in the sense that each of them derives from one and the same essence. On the other hand, that same common essence *qua* the essence of a given individual is, from an ontological point of view, singular and not universal, since it is “contracted” by the act of being peculiar to that given individual.⁶¹ Hence, each individual belonging

⁵⁸ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 4, p. 100; a. 5, pp. 113; and 119–121.

⁵⁹ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 5, pp. 119–120. See Amerini, “What is Real,” p. 205.

⁶⁰ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 5, pp. 121–122: “Hic etiam nota quod aliud est dicere quod aliqua duo aliquo modo non sunt idem et aliud est dicere quod aliqua duo aliquo modo sunt non idem: nam prima propositio est de praedicato negato et secunda propositio est de praedicato infinito. Et quia ad propositionem de praedicato negato non sequitur propositio de praedicato infinito, e converso autem sic, ut patet in II *Perihermeneias*, ideo ad hanc propositionem: ‘homo et Petrus aliquo modo (non) sunt idem,’ quae est de praedicato negato, non sequitur ista conclusio: ‘homo et Petrus aliquo modo sunt non idem,’ quae est de praedicato infinito. Et ideo dato quod possit concedi quod homo et Petrus (inter se) aliquo modo non sint idem realiter, quia non sunt idem convertibiliter, tamen non potest concedi quod homo et Petrus inter se aliquo modo sint non idem (realiter); et per consequens non potest concedi quod inter se aliquo (modo) differant realiter, quia numquam de aliquibus potest verificari quod aliquo modo differant realiter inter se, nisi possit verificari de eis quod aliquo modo sint non idem realiter (inter se), quia ‘differre’ et ‘esse non idem’ uniformiter et convertibiliter se habent.”

⁶¹ Cf. e.g., Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de sex transcendentibus*, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch, in *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 5 (2000), 177–217, a. 1, pp.

to a certain natural species is really different from any other belonging to that same natural species because of its own (act of) being, and not because of its essence. As a consequence, according to Franciscus (and Stephanus), (1) there is real identity between two items *a* and *b* if and only if they share at least one act of being, and (2) two items *a* and *b* are entirely identical if and only if, for all the acts of being **B**, it is the case that **B** is an act of being of *a* if and only if it is an act of being of *b*. From this, it necessarily follows that (1) a universal essence is really identical with each of its individuals but not entirely identical, as it shares (or may share, in the case of universal essences instantiated by one individual only) many other beings. For instance, humanity *qua* instantiated by a given individual, say Peter, is really identical with him, but *qua* instantiated by another one, say Martin, it is not entirely identical with Peter. (2) Real identity is not a transitive relation. From the fact that a certain universal essence, say humanity, is really identical with each of its individuals (Peter, Martin, and so on) does not follow that each of them is really identical with any other.⁶²

Franciscus's (and Stephanus's) theory of universals testifies to the permanent influence of Thomas Aquinas's approach within the Dominican order in the middle of the fourteenth century. They dealt with universals and categories from the point of view of a metaphysics of being, and not of essences. The rules they explicitly laid down or implicitly followed are ineffectual or contradictory if they are set in a different metaphysical context. What Franciscus stated about identity and distinction makes sense only if interpreted as concerning acts of being. The same is true for his defence of the reality (and real distinction) of each category. He observes that all the ten Aristotelian categories are things (*res*), but according to two different meanings of the term '*res*'. In fact, it signifies (1) a real essence, or (2) the mode of being of a real essence. The three absolute categories (substance, quantity, and quality) are things in

182 and 185; a. 2, pp. 187–188; a. 6, p. 216. See Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato*, pp. 151–157.

⁶² Cf. e.g., Franciscus de Prato, *Tractatus de universalibus*, a. 5, p. 119: "Ad quadragesimum quartum dico quod dato quod homo universalis sit existens in rerum natura, in (quo) conveniunt Petrus et Martinus, non tamen sequitur quod Petrus et Martinus sint idem inter se. Et quando dicitur quod (*quae*) *uni et eidem sunt eadem inter se sunt eadem*, dico quod verum est quod aliqua sint eadem realiter in aliquo quod sit unum realiter; sed Petrus et Martinus sunt eadem realiter in entitate hominis, quae est unum non realiter (immo est plures realiter), sed unum est tantum secundum rationem. In qua unitate Petrus et Martinus sunt unum secundum rationem et non secundum rem, ex quo remanent Petrus et Martinus distincta realiter."

the former sense (of the term); while the latter is the sense according to which the other seven categories are said to be things.⁶³ The basic pattern of his arguments aimed to prove, against Ockham, that the ten categories are really different from each other is an example of *reductio ad absurdum*: if a certain category a was really identical with another category b, (namely, if a and b shared at least one act of being), then one of them would be over-ordinated to the other, and therefore it would transmit all its essence to the other, so that it would be possible to find all the essential properties of a among the essential properties of b, or vice versa. But, for instance, none among the essential properties of substance is one of the essential properties of quantity, nor vice versa, since they are described in totally different ways. And therefore substance and quantity are really different categories.⁶⁴

Franciscus and Stephanus were influenced by Thomas Aquinas's and Hervaeus Natalis's metaphysical views, and especially by the theory of a real composition of essence and being, but the most influential metaphysics of the later Middle Ages was Duns Scotus's. In fact, many among the main philosophical convictions of Wyclif, who pointed to the strategy (almost) all the subsequent Realists were to adopt, were an original version of the most fundamental theses of Duns Scotus's system, where much more stress was put on the ontological presuppositions and entailments of the doctrines. In particular, no one maintained a real distinction between essence and being: since later medieval Realists considered being (*ens*) as a sort of stuff that the ten categories modulated according to their own natures, they thought that any categorial item (universal substances and accidents included) was immediately something which is, so that the essences of creatures do not precede their beings, not even causally, as every thing is (really identical with) its essence.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Logica*, pars I, tr. 5, a. 1, p. 381; *Tractatus de sex transcendentibus*, a. 6, p. 215.

⁶⁴ Cf. Franciscus de Prato, *Logica*, pars I, tr. 5, a. 7, pp. 415–424.

⁶⁵ Cf. e.g., John Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus* (1374 ca.), ed. Ian J. Mueller (Oxford, 1985), cap. 6, pp. 120–123. In view of his position on the problem of being, Wyclif maintains no real distinction between essence and being. According to him, the being of a thing is brought into existence by God at the same instant as its essence, since essence without being and being without essence would be two self-contradictory states of affairs. In fact, essence without being would imply that an individual could be something of a given type without being real in any way, and being without essence would imply that there could be the existence of a thing without the thing itself. As a consequence, the *pars destruens* of his theory on being and essence is a strong refutation

As just indicated, the starting point of the latest medieval realist speculations on universals, predication, and categories were the theories on these subjects worked out by Wyclif.⁶⁶ Like Burley, Wyclif reacted to Ockham's attack to the traditional realist view on universals and categories, but, unlike him, he (1) stuck by the thesis of the real identity of universals and individuals, and (2) revised the theory of predication and the notions of identity and distinction. He (1) explicitly presents his opinion on universals as intermediate between those of Aquinas and Giles of Rome, on the one hand, and of Burley, on the other hand,⁶⁷ and (2) many times in his works expresses the deepest hostility to Ockham's approach to philosophy. Ockham and his followers discriminated between things as they exist in the extra-mental world and the concepts and schemata by means of which we can grasp and signify them. As we have seen, according to the *Venerabilis Inceptor*, in the world there are only individual substances and qualities; on the contrary, the signs by which they are understood and signified are both individual and universal, and of ten different types (the ten Aristotelian categories). Nor do the relations through which we connect our concepts in a proposition correspond to the real links which connect individual items in a state of affairs. Thus, our knowledge does not reproduce the world and its items, but merely concerns them. Wyclif maintained that such an approach to philosophical questions was misleading and deleterious. Like Burley, he thought that only on the ground of a close isomorphism between mental language and the world could the signifying function of terms and propositions, the possibility of definitions, and finally the validity and universality of our knowledge be accounted

of the twin opinions of Aquinas and Giles of Rome. On Wyclif's theory of essence and being see Alessandro D. Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, ed. Ian C. Levy (Leiden, 2006), pp. 89–95.

⁶⁶ On Wyclif's main logico-metaphysical theories see John A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1961); Paul V. Spade, "Introduction," in John Wyclif, *On Universals*, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford, 1985), pp. vii–xlvii; Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 1–30; Anthony Kenny, "The Realism of *De Universalibus*," in *Wyclif in his Times*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford, 1986), pp. 17–29; Alessandro D. Conti, "Logica intensionale e metafisica dell'essenza in John Wyclif," *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo e Archivio muratoriano* 99.1 (1993), 159–219; Alessandro D. Conti, "Analogy and Formal Distinction: on the Logical Basis of Wyclif's Metaphysics," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6.2 (1997), 133–165; Paul V. Spade, "The Problem of Universals and Wyclif's Alleged 'Ultrarealism'," *Vivarium* 43 (2005), 111–123; Laurent Cesalli, "Le 'pan-propositionnalisme' de Jean Wyclif," *Vivarium* 43 (2005), 124–155; Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 67–125.

⁶⁷ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 4, pp. 86–87.

for and ensured. He firmly believed that mental language was an ordered collection of signs, each referring to one of the metaphysical constituents of the world (individuals and universals, substances and accidents, concrete properties, like being-white, and abstract forms, like whiteness), and that true propositions were like pictures of the inner structure and mutual relationships of such items (or essences, according to his terminology). So the main characteristics of his own form of realism, which were to inspire the strategy and doctrines of the (other) Oxford Realists, were the trust in the scheme object-label as the fundamental interpretative key of semantic problems, and a strong propensity towards hypostatization.

Like moderate Realists of the thirteenth century, Wyclif recognizes three main kinds of universals: (1) *ante rem*, or ideal universals; (2) *in re*, or formal universals; and (3) *post rem*, or intentional universals. On the other hand, just like Burley, Wyclif holds that formal universals exist *in actu* outside our minds, and not in *potentia*, as moderate Realists thought—even if, unlike Burley, he maintains that they are really identical with their own individuals.⁶⁸ In his view, (1) universals and individuals share the same empirical reality, which is that of individuals, but (2) have opposite constituent principles, when properly considered as universals and individuals. According to his terminology, they are really the same but formally distinct.⁶⁹ This formulation is only another way of saying that universals and individuals are the same identical things if conceived as first intentions, and differ from each other if conceived as second intentions. So at last Wyclif accepts the very core of the traditional realistic account of the relationship between universals and individuals; but he tries to improve it by defining more accurately its predicative structure.

According to Wyclif, because of the formal distinction, not everything predicable of individuals can be directly predicated of universals and vice versa, although an indirect predication is always possible. As a consequence, Wyclif distinguished three main non mutually exclusive

⁶⁸ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 2, p. 69. In addition to this partition of universals, standard in the Middle Ages, Wyclif adopts another one, which was very successful among his followers, based on the different functions that universal essences perform (*Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 1, pp. 15–16): he divides universals into (1) universals by causality (*causatione*), (2) universals by community (*communicatione*), and (3) universals by representation (*repraesentatione*).

⁶⁹ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 2, pp. 62–63; cap. 4, pp. 86–87; cap. 10, pp. 208–213.

types of predication (that he conceives as a real relation which holds between metaphysical entities),⁷⁰ each more general than the preceding one (or ones). In the *Tractatus de universalibus* they are the following: formal predication (*praedicatio formalis*), predication by essence (*praedicatio secundum essentiam*), and habitual predication (*praedicatio secundum habitudinem*). (1) Formal predication is that in which the form signified by the predicate-term is directly present in the entity designated by the subject-term. This happens whenever an item in the categorial line is predicated of its inferior or an accident of its subject of inherence. (2) It is sufficient for predication by essence that the same empirical reality is both the real subject and predicate, even though the formal principle connoted by the predicate-term differs from that connoted by the subject-term. ‘God is man’ and ‘(What is) universal is (what is) singular’ (*universale est singulare*) are instances of this kind of predication. (3) There is habitual predication when the form connoted by the predicate-term does not inhere, directly or indirectly, in the thing signified by the subject-term but simply implies a relation to it, so that the same real predicate may be at different times said truly or falsely of its real subject without any change in the subject itself. According to Wyclif, we use this kind of predication mainly when we want to express theological truths, such as: that God is known and loved by many creatures, and brings about, as efficient, exemplar, and final cause, many good effects.⁷¹

Habitual predication does not require any kind of identity between the entity signified by the subject-term and the entity signified by the predicate-term, but formal predication and essential predication do. Thus, the ontological presuppositions of the most general type of predication, implied by the other types, are completely different from those of the other two. In any case, it is clear that Wyclif’s efforts were directed towards unifying the various kinds of predication through a unique basic relation of partial identity: the formal distinction. In the *Tractatus de universalibus* it is described as the difference by which things differ from each other even though they are constitutive elements of the same single essence or supposit. According to Wyclif, this is the case for: (1) the concrete accidents inhering in the same substance, as they coincide in the same particular subject, but differ from each other because

⁷⁰ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 1, pp. 35–36.

⁷¹ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 1, pp. 28–30 and 34.

of their own natures; (2) the matter and substantial form of the same individual substance; (3) what is more common in relation to what is less common, like (3.1) the divine nature and the three Persons, (3.2) the world and this world; and, (3.3) among the categorial items belonging to the same category, a superior item and one of its inferiors.⁷² As it is evident, the first sub-type of the formal distinction is a slightly different version of the Scotistic formal distinction as defined in the *Lectura* and in the *Ordinatio*, while the third sub-type is a reformulation of the Scotistic formal distinction as described in the *Reportata Parisiensis*.

Formal distinction is one of the three main kinds of difference that Wyclif recognises, as he speaks of real-and-essential and real-but-not-essential differences also.⁷³ Still, formal distinction is the main kind of transcendental relation holding among (Wyclif's) items, as it is the tool by means of which the dialectic one-many internal to the individual substances is regulated. It is intended to explain why one and the same individual substance (say, Socrates) is one thing, even if it contains in itself a lot of simpler entities, and how many different entities can constitute just one thing. Moreover, formal distinction sets the relations (1) between a concrete accident, such as being-white (*album*), and its substance, namely, the substance in which the corresponding abstract form (say, whiteness) inheres; (2) among all the concrete accidents belonging to one and the same substance. Consequently, formal distinction is a central notion for the categorial doctrine too.

Wyclif held that the extramental world is divided into ten genera of beings, or categories, none of which can be reduced to another one.⁷⁴ Since, like Aristotle (and the moderate Realists), he thought of substance as the ultimate substrate of existence and subject of predication in relation to anything else, the only way to demonstrate the reality of the items belonging to other categories was to conceive of them as forms and attributes of substance. Accordingly, he insisted that the items falling into the accidental categories, considered by themselves, are forms inherent in the composite substances.⁷⁵ In this way, Wyclif wanted to safeguard the reality of accidents as well as their distinction

⁷² Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 4, pp. 91–92.

⁷³ Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, cap. 4, pp. 90–91. On Wyclif's notions of difference see Conti, "Analogy and Formal Distinction," pp. 158–163; Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 72–78.

⁷⁴ Cf. Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali* (1369 ca.), cap. 4, ed. Rudolf Beer (London, 1891), pp. 30–32.

⁷⁵ Cf. Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali*, cap. 6, p. 48.

from substance and from one another, while at the same time affirming their dependence on substance in existence—so following some of the main principles stated by Aristotle in the *Categories*. And in fact, in the *De ente praedicamentali* (1) he clearly states that quantity, quality, and relation are entities with well determined natures, and really distinct from substance;⁷⁶ and, (2) like all the other medieval Realists, he also subscribes to the Aristotelian thesis that primary substances are the necessary condition of existence for any other categorial items.⁷⁷ All the more so because, as what he says about the first sub-type of formal distinction makes evident, accidents considered in an absolute way, according to their own natures, are abstract forms, really distinct from substance; yet, if considered from the point of view of their existence as concrete accidents, they are only formally, but not really distinct from the substance in which they are present and that they affect, since, in this case, they are modes of that substance.⁷⁸

The final result of Wyclif's approach to the problems of universals and categories was a system of intensional logic where (1) the copula of any standard philosophical proposition (like 'Socrates is white', or 'man is an animal') had to be interpreted as meaning degrees in identity between the things signified by the subject-term and the predicate-term; and (2) individuals and universals, considered *qua* beings, appear to be a sort of hypostatisation of intensions, since they are what is signified by proper and common nouns respectively. Only in virtue of renouncing an extensional approach to the matter was Wyclif able to give a (partially) satisfactory solution of the problem of the relationship between universals and individuals, which had always been the most difficult issue for any medieval form of realism.

The Oxford Realists

Wyclif's logico-metaphysical system, however rigorous in its general design, contains—as we have seen—some unclear and aporetic points,

⁷⁶ Cf. Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali*, cap. 6, pp. 48 and 50; cap. 7, pp. 61–62.

⁷⁷ Cf. Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali*, cap. 5, pp. 42–43.

⁷⁸ Cf. Wyclif, *De actibus animae* (1365 ca.), pars 2, cap. 4, in *Johannis Wyclif miscellanea philosophica*, ed. Michael H. Dziewicki, 2 vols. (London, 1902), [vol. 1, pp. 1–160], pp. 122–23, and 127. On Wyclif's categorial doctrine see Conti, "Logica intensionale e metafisica dell'essenza," pp. 197–209; Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 103–113.

which needed to be removed. All the same, Wyclif's philosophy exercised an enormous influence on the forms of later medieval realism, since his intuitions concerning universals, predication, and categories played a large role both in logic and metaphysics of many authors, and especially of the Oxford Realists.⁷⁹ According to these authors (who in their works show the closest familiarity with Wyclif's writings) (1) universals and individuals are really identical but formally distinct; (2) predication is a real relation between things; (3) the ten Aristotelian categories are ten really distinct kinds of beings. Partially modifying Wyclif's doctrine, they (1) introduced a new type of predication, called predication by essence (*secundum essentiam*), based on a partial identity between the entities for which the subject and predicate stood; and (2) redefined the traditional kinds of predication (the essential and

⁷⁹ Besides Wyclif himself, Robert Alyngton, William Milverley, William Penbygull, Roger Whelpdale, John Tarteys, Johannes Sharpe, and Paul of Venice. All those philosophers studied and/or taught in Oxford: Alyngton at Queen's College, Penbygull at Exeter College, Whelpdale at Balliol and Queen's Colleges, Tarteys at Balliol College; Paul of Venice at the Augustinian *studium* from 1390 to 1393. On their lives and works see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (Oxford, 1957–59), 3 vols., *sub nominibus*. On Paul of Venice's life and works see Alan R. Perreiah, *Paul of Venice: a Bibliographical Guide* (Ohio, 1986). Sharpe's *Quaestio super universalibus* has been edited in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, pp. 1–145; Penbygull's *De universalibus* has been edited in Alessandro D. Conti, "Teoria degli universali e teoria della predicazione nel trattato *De universalibus* di William Penbygull: discussione e difesa della posizione di Wyclif," *Medioevo* 8 (1982), 137–203, pp. 178–203. *Excerpta* from Alyngton's main work, a commentary on the *Categories*, in Alessandro D. Conti, "Linguaggio e realtà nel commento alle *Categorie* di Robert Alyngton," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 4 (1993), 179–306, pp. 242–306; *excerpta* from Milverley's *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, Whelpdale's *Tractatus de universalibus*, Tarteys's *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii*, and Paul of Venice's *Quaestio de universalibus*, in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, Appendices II, III, IV, and V, pp. 159–164, 165–187, 189–197, and 199–207 respectively. For analyses of their main works and doctrines and information on Wyclif's influence see: Conti, "Teoria degli universali e teoria della predicazione," pp. 137–166; Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, pp. 211–238, and 295–336; Alain de Libera, "Questions de réalisme. Sur deux arguments antiocchamistes de John Sharpe," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 97 (1992), 83–110; Alessandro D. Conti, "Il problema della conoscibilità del singolare nella gnoseologia di Paolo Veneto," *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio muratoriano* 98 (1992), 323–382; Conti, "Linguaggio e realtà," pp. 179–241; Alessandro D. Conti, *Esistenza e verità: Forme e strutture del reale in Paolo Veneto e nel pensiero filosofico del tardo medioevo* (Rome, 1996); Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux. De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1996), pp. 402–428; Alessandro D. Conti, "Paul of Venice on Individuation," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 65 (1998), 107–132; Alessandro D. Conti, "Paul of Venice's Theory of Divine Ideas and its Sources," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 14 (2003), 407–448; Alessandro D. Conti, "Johannes Sharpe's Ontology and Semantics: Oxford Realism Revisited," *Vivarium* 43 (2005), 156–186; Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 118–125.

accidental predications) in terms of this partial identity. Furthermore, some of them, starting from Wyclif's characterization of identity and distinction, formulated new definitions of these transcendental relations, which were the main tools that they utilised in building up their own philosophical systems.

Like Wyclif, Oxford Realists accepted the core of the moderate realist approach to the problem of universals. Their accounts (1) of the kinds and status of universals, and (2) of the relationship between universals and individuals are very similar to those worked out by moderate realist authors of the second half of the thirteenth century, such as Albert the Great and Duns Scotus. According to Oxford Realists, we can count the following entities universal: (1) those causes that have a multiplicity of effects (*universalia causalia*, or *causatione*), such as God and the angelic intelligences; (2) the ideas in God (*universalia idealia*, or *exemplatione*); (3) universal forms, or real universals (*universalia realia*, or *formalia*, or *communicatione*, or *praedicatione*); and (4) universal concepts (*universalia repraesentatione*, or *cognitione*).⁸⁰ In their view, formal universals are common natures in virtue of which the individuals that share them are exactly what they are, just as humanity is the form by which every man formally is a man. Like Wyclif, all of them thought that common natures exist *in actu* in the external world and are really (*realiter*) identical-with and formally (*formaliter*) distinct-from their own individuals.⁸¹

Since, like Wyclif, Oxford Realists accepted the essence of the traditional, realist account of the relationship between (formal) universals and individuals, they too had to define its logical structure more accurately, but at the same time trying to avoid Wyclif's aporias. As a consequence

⁸⁰ Cf. Alyngton, *Litteralis sententia super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, pp. 279 and 287; Penbygull, *De universalibus*, p. 178; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, p. 159; Tarteys, *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii*, p. 171; Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, p. 189; Paul of Venice, *Lectura super libros Metaphysicorum*, *prooem*, cap. 2, Pavia, Biblioteca Universitaria, fondo Aldini, ms. 324, fol. 9va–b. Tarteys and Whelpdale add a fifth kind of universal to that list: the universal by reception (*receptione*), namely, place and primary matter. Sharpe (*Quaestio super universalia*, pp. 49–50) adds two other kinds: the universal quantifiers (such as 'omnis' and 'nullus'), and universal propositions, both affirmative and negative.

⁸¹ Cf. Alyngton, *Litteralis sententia super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, p. 268; Penbygull, *De universalibus*, pp. 181 and 189; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, p. 163; Tarteys, *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii*, pp. 178–179; Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, pp. 193–194; Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, pp. 91–92; Paul of Venice, *Quaestio de universalibus*, p. 199; *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii*, cap. *de genere*, in *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii et Artem Veterem Aristotelis* (A.D. 1428), ed. (Venetiis, 1494), fol. 14vb.

they had to redefine predication, and through it (implicitly or explicitly) also the notions of identity and distinction (or difference).

In particular, Alyngton, and some years later Sharpe, Milverley, and Tarteys, divided predication into formal predication and predication by essence (*secundum essentiam*), that Alyngton calls also “remote inherence” (*inhaerentia remota*). Predication *secundum essentiam* (1) shows a partial identity between the real subject and predicate, which share some, but not all, metaphysical component parts, and (2) does not require that the form connoted by the predicate-term is directly present in the item signified by the subject-term. Formal predication, on the contrary, requires such a direct presence. ‘Man is an animal’ and ‘Socrates is white’ are instances of formal predication. Unlike Wyclif, who applied predication by essence to second intentions only, these later philosophers thought that it held also when applied to first intentions. So they affirmed that it was possible to predicate of the universal-man (*homo in communi*), or of the abstract form of humanity (*humanitas*), the property of being white, if at least one of its individuals was white. They were careful, however, to use a substantival adjective in its neuter form as a predicate-term, because only in this way could it appear that the form signified by the predicate-term is not directly present in the subject, but is indirectly attributed to it through its individuals. Therefore, according to them ‘(what is) singular is (what is) common’ (*‘singulare est commune’*), ‘universal-man is (something) white’ (*‘homo in communi est album’*) and ‘humanity is (something) running’ (*‘humanitas est currens’*) are instances of predication by essence (or remote inherence).⁸² Formal predication itself is in turn divided by Alyngton and Milverley into formal substantial and formal accidental predication, since (1) formal predication necessarily demands the direct presence of a form in a substrate, and, (2) according to them, this can occur in two different ways: either as one of the inner constitutive element of the substrate (substantially), or as one of its subsidiary properties (accidentally).⁸³

According to Alyngton, Milverley, and Tarteys the formal-and-essential predication and the formal-and-accidental predication would

⁸² Cf. Alyngton, *Litteralis sententia super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, p. 289; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, p. 160; Tarteys, *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii*, London, Lambeth Palace, ms. 393, fols. 204(235)r–v, and 209(240)r–v; Sharpe, *Quaestio de universalibus*, pp. 89–91.

⁸³ Cf. Alyngton, *Litteralis sententia super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de subiecto et praedicato*, p. 245; cap. *de substantia*, pp. 274 and 289; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, pp. 160–161.

correspond to Aristotle's essential and accidental predication respectively. But, as a matter of fact, they agreed with Wyclif in regarding predication by essence as more general than formal predication. As a consequence, in their theories formal predication is a particular type of the predication by essence. This means that they implicitly recognized a single ontological pattern, founded on a partial identity, as the basis of every kind of predicational statement. But in this way, the *praedicatio formalis essentialis* and the *praedicatio formalis accidentalis* are very different from their Aristotelian models, as they express degrees in identity as well as the predication by essence.

In contrast, Penbygull and Whelpdale, who possibly belong to the same generation as Sharpe, were closer to Wyclif's teaching as manifested in the *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi* (1366–68), since they divided predication into formal (*praedicatio formalis*), by essence (*secundum essentiam*), and causal (*secundum causam*). They describe formal and by essence predications in the same way as the other Oxford Realists, and causal predication in the same way as Wyclif.⁸⁴ According to Penbygull and Whelpdale, there is causal predication when the item signified by the predicate-term is not present in any way in the item signified by the subject-term, but the real subject has been caused by the real predicate—'*dies est latio solis super terram*' is an example of this kind of predication.⁸⁵

These two interpretative schemes of the nature and kinds of predication (that worked out by Alyngton, Milverley, Tarteys, and Sharpe, and that adopted by Penbygull and Whelpdale) are ultimately grounded on various notions of identity which are different from that common in the thirteenth century, and fixed by Walter Burley in his last commentary on the *Categories* and treatise on universals. So it is not surprising that Penbygull, Milverley, and Sharpe put forward new criteria for identity and distinction.

⁸⁴ Cf. Wyclif, *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, cap. 2, in Samuel H. Thomson, "A 'Lost' Chapter of Wyclif's *Summa de ente*," *Speculum* 4 (1929), 339–346, p. 342. As a matter of fact the ms. Cambridge, Trinity College, B.16.2, used by Dziewicky for his edition of the work (London 1909), lacks the second chapter and the first section of the third chapter. Samuel H. Thomson integrated the text on the basis of the ms. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 4307.

⁸⁵ Cf. Penbygull, *De universalibus*, pp. 186–188; Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, pp. 190–192.

Penbygull and Milverley⁸⁶ (1) distinguish between the notion of non-identity and that of difference (or distinction); (2) deny that the notion of difference implies that of non-identity; (3) affirm that the two notions of difference and real identity are logically compatible, thus admitting that (3.1) there are degrees in distinction, and (3.2) that the degrees of distinction between two things can be read as the inverse measure of their (partial) identity. In his turn, Sharpe seems to combine the theories of Duns Scotus, Wyclif, and Penbygull and Milverley themselves.⁸⁷ (1) Like Penbygull and Milverley, he considers identity and distinction (or difference) as the two possible inverse measures of the coincidence of the metaphysical components of two given entities. Moreover, (2) he speaks of formal and real (or essential) identity, formal and real (or essential) distinction (or difference), and (2.1) states that formal identity is stronger than real (or essential) identity, since the former entails the latter, while real difference is stronger than formal distinction, since the latter is entailed by the former. (3) Finally, he admits degrees in formal distinction (*distinctio formalis consistit in gradibus*), as he recognizes two different types, the first of which comes very close to that proposed by Scotus in his *Ordinatio*, while the second is drawn from Wyclif's *Tractatus de universalibus* (third sub-type).

Yet, among the Oxford Realists, the most original was Paul of Venice. His philosophical theories (culminating in a metaphysics of essences which states the ontological and epistemological primacy of universals over any other kind of beings) are the final and highest result of the preceding realistic tradition of thought, since he (1) fully developed the new form of realism started up by Wyclif; (2) renewed Burley's attacks against nominalistic views; (3) was open to influences from many other directions, as he (3.1) held in due consideration also the positions of authors such as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome, and (3.2) critically discussed the doctrines of the main Nominalists of the fourteenth century, William Ockham, John Buridan, and Marsilius of Inghen.

Paul of Venice divides predication into identical and formal, and defines them in a slightly different way in relation to his sources. To

⁸⁶ Cf. Penbygull, *De universalibus*, pp. 190–191; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, p. 163.

⁸⁷ Cf. Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, pp. 91–92; *Quaestio super libros De Anima*, q. 2: “utrum potentia intellectiva distinguatur ab essentia animae,” Oxford, New College, ms. 238, fol. 236r–v (transcription in Conti, “Studio storico-critico,” p. 216, note 18).

speak of identical predication it is sufficient that the form signified by the subject-term of a (true) proposition and the form signified by the predicate-term share at least one of their substrates of existence. This is the case of propositions like ‘man is (an) animal’ and ‘the universal-man is something white’ (*homo in communi est album*). One speaks of formal predication in two cases: (1) when for the truth of the proposition it is necessary that the form signified by the predicate-term is present in all the substrates of existence of the form signified by the subject-term in virtue of a formal principle (declared in the proposition itself) which is in its turn directly present in all the substrates of existence of the form signified by the subject-term. This is the case of propositions like ‘man is formally (an) animal’, ‘Socrates *qua* man is an animal.’ (2) Or when the predicate of the proposition is a term of second intention, like ‘species’ or ‘genus.’ This is the case of propositions like ‘man is a species’, ‘animal is a genus.’⁸⁸

As it is evident, identical predication is extensionally defined, whereas formal predication is intensionally defined, since formal predication entails a relation modally determined between the subject-thing and the predicate-thing. In fact, the formal predication presupposes that there is a necessary connection between the subject-thing and the predicate-thing of the given proposition. For this reason Paul denies that sentences like ‘(what is) singular is (what is) universal’ (*singulare est universale*), that Wyclif and the other Oxford Realists acknowledged as true ones, are true propositions. For Wyclif (and the other Oxford Realists) the sentence at issue is an example of predication by essence, but for Paul it is an example of formal predication. As a consequence, Paul rewrites the preceding sentence in this form: ‘(what is) singular is this universal’ (*singulare est hoc universale*), where the presence of the demonstrative ‘this’ modifies the kind of predication from formal to identical. So corrected the sentence is true, since it signifies that a certain item, in itself singular, is the substrate of existence of an universal essence.⁸⁹

As a result, Paul builds up a mixed system, where the copula of the standard philosophical sentences which he deals with can have a three-fold value: it means (1) a partial identity between the real subject and the real predicate, in the case of identical predication; (2) a necessary

⁸⁸ Cf. Paul of Venice, *Quaestio de universalibus*, pp. 201–202.

⁸⁹ Cf. Paul of Venice, *Quaestio de universalibus*, pp. 206–207. See Alessandro D. Conti, “Il sofisma di Paolo Veneto: *Sortes in quantum homo est animal*,” in *Sophisms in Medieval Logic and Grammar*, ed. Stephen Read (Dordrecht, 1993), pp. 304–318.

link between forms, in the case of the first type of formal predication; and (3) that the real subject in virtue of itself necessarily is a member of a given class of objects, labelled and referred-to by the predicate-term of the proposition at issue, in the case of the second type of formal predication, namely, when the predicate is a term of second intention. Paul therefore inverts the terms of the question in relation to Wyclif's approach, since Paul is attempting to reduce multiplicity to unity (the passage is from many to one). What he wants to account for is the way in which many different entities of a certain kind (namely, of an incomplete and dependent mode of existence) can constitute one and the same substance in number.

As the previous analysis has shown, Paul of Venice's world consists of finite beings (namely, things such as men and horses), which are aggregates made up by a primary (or individual) substance and a host of formal items (common natures and accidental forms, both universal and singular) existing in it and by it. The components of the finite beings are nothing but the categorial items themselves, taken together with their own modes of being. All these items are real, namely, they are beings (*entia*), in the sense that they are mind-independent. Yet, primary substances only are existent (in other words, primary substances only are actual beings—*entia in actu*). Individuation is what causes this passage from being (*esse*) to existence, and from specific natures (universals) to individuals. What is more, Paul of Venice's metaphysics celebrates the centrality of specific natures, which correspond to the ideas in the mind of God, and in relation to which the actual existence of individuals is functional, as they exist only as material substrates (*partes subiectivae*) of the natures themselves. Hence, within his system, notwithstanding the real identity with individuals, common natures have a form of being their own, which is independent of individuals. So that, if all the individuals belonging to a certain natural species were annihilated, their corresponding nature would keep on being, even though only potentially, as a mere metaphysical possibility (*esse indeterminatum et in potentia*).⁹⁰ In commenting on *Categories* 5, 2b5–6 (as we have seen, one

⁹⁰ *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii, proem.*, fol. 8va: "Licet repugnet universali habere determinatum esse absque suo singulari, non tamen repugnat habere indeterminatum esse absque illo; et consequenter non repugnat illi separari a suo singulari tam realiter quam intentionaliter. Unde nulla rosa existente adhuc est aliquo modo quidditas rosae, alioquin ea corrupta non amplius haberetur scientia de rosa, ex quo scientia non habetur de non ente... Et si allegatur illud Aristotelis in *Praedicamentis*: 'Destructis primis substantiis impossibile est aliquid horum remanere', demonstratis

of the most important passages of the work), Paul restates that same thesis, and adds that a certain common nature would be annihilated if (and only if) all the individuals belonging to the corresponding natural species were destroyed not only in relation to their actual existence, but also in relation to their potential being.⁹¹ Still, the potential being of individuals is nothing but the essential being proper to universals, and therefore the destruction of the individuals in relation to their potential being is the destruction of universals themselves.

Concluding Remarks

As it is well known, in the *Categories* Aristotle sketches the main features of his metaphysics and semantics (which in turn are the ground of these medieval disciplines), since he (1) sets out the basic elements of the world (individual and universal substances, individual and universal accidents) in their mutual relationships, and (2) shows their links to language. As a consequence, that treatise is not a homogeneous text, but a compound one. There are in it three main doctrinal bodies, which can be split up into a few minor theories:

- (1) The categorial doctrine properly so-called concerns the table of categories (ch. 4), and the standard, internal structure of the (ten) categorial fields (chs. 2, 3, and 5). Two other theories complete it: (1.1) a semantic one, about homonymy, synonymy, and paronymy (ch. 1), and (1.2) a metaphysical one, on substance, where the Stagirite states the epistemological and ontological primacy of individual substances over any other kind of beings (ch. 5). This first group of

universalibus, illud est sic intelligendum: destructis primis substantiis impossibile est aliquod universale eorum remanere secundum esse determinatum. Cum quo stat quod possint remanere secundum esse indeterminatum. Destructis ergo omnibus singularibus alicuius universalis illud universale remanet, non actu sed potentia, non determinatum sed indeterminatum; remanet quidem in potentia activa primi motoris, et in potentia passiva primae materiae, et in potentia cognitiva animae." See also *Quaestio de universalibus*, fol. 127ra–b.

⁹¹ Cf. Paul of Venice, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, cap. *de substantia*, in *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii et Artem Veterem Aristotelis*, fol. 57va–b: "Destructo quolibet homine coniunctim ita quod non sit aliquod individuum speciei humanae, non manet homo, sed manet essentia hominis in suis causis. . . . Si tamen deficerent omnes homines et actu et potentia, non maneret species humana secundum esse neque secundum essentiam." On this point see Conti, *Esistenza e verità*, pp. 119–123, and 190–192.

- doctrines culminates in a threefold distinction: (1.3) between substance and accidents; (1.4) between individuals and universals; and (1.5) between two different types of predication: (1.5.1) the being-in-something-as-a-subject (or accidental predication) and (1.5.2) the being-said-of-something-as-a-subject (or essential predication) (chs. 2 and 5).
- (2) The “regional” ontologies, about the foremost categorial fields after substance (chs. 6–9). This second group of doctrines consists of physical and metaphysical theories of quantity (ch. 6), relation (ch. 7), quality (ch. 8), action and passion (ch. 9). There Aristotle (2.1) roughly describes (2.1.1) the items falling into these categorial fields, (2.1.2) their own modes of being, and (2.1.3) their main properties, and (2.2) supplies preliminary lists of them.
 - (3) The *Postpraedicamenta* (according to the terminology proper to the Latin tradition), a bundle of several loosely related topics concerning opposition, priority and posteriority, change, and having (chs. 10–15).

Medieval commentators usually did not ascribe much significance to this final section of the tract, but chiefly concentrated on the first two parts, and on the general questions of (1) the subject, (2) purpose, and (3) importance of the work. The *Categories* is not only a composite, but also a rather ambiguous text, as Aristotle’s *Categories* can be considered as both a classification of things and a classification of the signs signifying those things. Therefore, from late Antiquity onwards there were many disputes about those three questions. Depending on the general evaluation of the treatise, whether it primarily deals with world things or their signs, it is customary to classify medieval authors as being Realists or Nominalists. Furthermore, Nominalists (such as Peter of John Olivi, Ockham, Buridan) maintained that (1) in the world there are two (substance and quality), or three (substance, quantity, and quality), supreme genera of beings only, but (2) we grasp and signify the items falling into those two (or three) real categories by means of ten semantically different kinds of terms. On the contrary, Realists (such as Robert Kilwardby, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Simon of Faversham, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Burley, Franciscus de Prato, Jacobus de Placentia, Wyclif, Alynngton, Paul of Venice) held that the ten Aristotelian categories are the supreme genera of beings, irreducible to one another—even though there were some significant differences among them in establishing the nature and ontological status of

those ten categories. Some of them, such as Robert Kilwardby, Henry of Ghent, Simon of Faversham, “the first” Burley, and Franciscus de Prato judged only the items falling into the three absolute categories to be things (*res*), and considered the remaining ones real aspects (*respectus reales*) proper to the former. Some, such as Duns Scotus, “the second” Burley, Wyclif, Alyngton, and Paul of Venice, claimed that all the ten Aristotelian categories are distinct kinds of things. Some of them, such as Albert the Great, Simon of Faversham, Burley, Alyngton, thought that the ten categories are characterized by their own modes of being (*modi essendi*); some, such as Thomas Aquinas, believed that their constitutive and distinctive principles are their own modes of being-predicated (*modi praedicandi*); and some, such as Duns Scotus and Paul of Venice, affirmed that the ten real categories differ from each other in virtue of their own essences.

Originally, the problem of universals was only one of the main question internal to the theory of categories considered in the most proper sense. As a consequence, even though from a purely logical point of view the opinions on categories and universals are independent of each other (one might support the thesis that categories chiefly are really distinct genera of things while rejecting the thesis that universals have some existence of their own outside the mind, or vice versa), historically, in the (later) Middle Ages, realism concerning categories was always matched by a realist conception of universals, whereas nominalism on the question of categories was always paralleled by a nominalist position about universals.

If we consider the moderate realist view of universals, it is easy to see that it is totally determined by (1) the general evaluation of the categories, and (2) the main principles and theses stated by Aristotle in the first five chapters of the book. When moderate Realists interpreted the relation between universals and individuals in terms of identity, they were trying to save the ontological primacy of individual substances at the same time reading in a realist way (1) the nature and division of predication, and (2) the twofold partition (into substantial and accidental, individual and universal items) set in the second chapter of the *Categories*. On the one hand, they assumed that being a universal was equivalent to being-said-of-something-as-a-subject, on the other hand, they considered that relation as a real relation between two different kinds of beings. As a result, they were compelled to postulate a form of identity between universals and individuals: universals are (metaphysical) parts of their individuals. Otherwise it would have been impossible

to distinguish the relation of being-said-of-something-as-a-subject (or essential predication) from the relation of being-in-something-as-a-subject (or accidental predication, or inherence). Both universal substances and accidents are somehow present in individual substances and neither can exist apart from individual substances, but universals are parts of individuals and accidents are not.⁹² On the other side, universals and individuals cannot be entirely identical, since there is not a complete transitivity in predication between them. To elaborate new notions of identity and distinction was therefore a necessity for the Realists of the fourteenth century, as the logical machinery they had at their disposal was insufficient for their purposes. Because of Ockham's critique (1) of the moderate realist view, and (2) formal distinction, almost all the Realists of the later Middle Ages became fairly unsatisfied with Henry of Ghent's and Duns Scotus's formulations of distinctions midway between the real distinction and the distinction of reason. So they tried to improve the theory of universals by modifying (1) the standard Aristotelian analysis of predication, and (2) the notion of formal distinction. In fact, the only other possible way of overcoming Ockham's argumentations against realism was to assume, like Burley did, that universals and individuals are really distinct. A choice which entailed a change from an Aristotelian metaphysics to a "Platonic" one—as we have seen. Indeed, this second way also led to a paradoxical result: the partial dissolution of the traditional doctrine of categories. Within the new metaphysical system that Oxford Realists built up, universals and individuals, essential and accidental predication are far too different from their Aristotelian patterns. As Paul of Venice's explicit denial of the existential primacy of individual substances shows, the metaphysics proper to the Oxford Realists substantially is a Platonic metaphysics, where universal essences, and not individual substances, are the main kind of being. According to the moderate Realists of the second half of the thirteenth century, the actual existence of at least one individual was necessary in order to guarantee the existence *in potentia* of the corresponding universal. In Paul of Venice's view, the existence of a universal essence is the necessary condition for the existence of

⁹² Cf. Aristotle, *Categories* 2, 1a24–25, where the Stagirite posits that something is in something as a subject if, *not being in anything as a part*, it cannot exist apart from what it is in.

individuals. In other words, for moderate Realists universals were types and individuals were the tokens which instantiated those types; about one hundred and fifty years later, for Paul of Venice universals were projects and individuals were their possible fulfilments. There cannot be types without tokens, but no project, as such, needs to be fulfilled.

