

## PAUL OF VENICE'S COMMENTARY ON THE METAPHYSICS

Alessandro D. Conti

Paul of Venice (Paulus Nicolettus Venetus—Paolo Nicoletti Veneto), O.E.S.A. (Udine 1369–Venice 1429) was the most important Italian philosopher and one of the most interesting thinkers of the late Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> He fully developed a metaphysics of essences inspired by Wyclif's own form of realism, based on the ontological primacy of universals over singulars, and by Duns Scotus's philosophy. He maintained some of the fundamental theses of the metaphysical system of the Doctor Subtilis, and, like Wyclif himself, reinterpreted them by putting much more stress on the realist aspects of the doctrines:

- a single general concept of being holding for God and creatures, and another one, narrower, holding for substances and accidents;
- real distinction among the ten categories, based on the differences among their essences;
- real identity and formal distinction between essence and being;
- a manifold kind of being for universals;
- real identity and formal distinction between the universals *in re* and singulars;
- process of individuation operating at two different levels by two different principles: it multiplies an universal form by means of matter, and constitutes individuals by means of *haecceitates* (thisnesses) or *rationes individuales* (individual principles);
- existence of three distinct but connected types of truth, two of which must be regarded as real properties of extramental things.

Paul's work where we can find his metaphysical theories totally displayed is his mammoth commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, i.e., the *Lectura super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* (henceforward, *Lect. Met.*), extant

---

<sup>1</sup> On Paul of Venice's life, works, and thought, see Alessandro D. Conti, *Esistenza e verità. Forme e strutture del reale in Paolo Veneto e nel pensiero filosofico del tardo Medioevo* (Rome, 1996); and Alessandro D. Conti, "Paul of Venice," in: Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 Edition)*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/paul-venice/>, accessed on November 2012.

in two Italian manuscripts, Pavia, Biblioteca Universitaria, *fondo Aldini*, 324 (A.D. 1434) and Casale Monferrato, Biblioteca del Seminario, Ia.3–6<sup>2</sup> although the doctrines expounded there sometimes needs to be integrated with what he writes in the sixth part of the *Summa philosophiae naturalis* (A.D. 1408—henceforward *Sum. Nat.*), totally dedicated to metaphysical themes, in his *Quaestio de universalibus* (henceforward *Qu. Un.*),<sup>3</sup> and in the Commentary on the *Ars vetus*: the *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii et Artem veterem Aristotelis* (A.D. 1428).

In what follows, a glimpse into Paul's metaphysics shall be offered together with a short description of the main stylistic features of his *Metaphysics* commentary and a brief analysis of the logical tool he utilizes in building up his system, namely, the twin notions of identity and distinction, a "family" of concepts that he draws from Wyclif's notions of formal distinction. As is well known, the Aristotelian treatise is not a homogeneous text but a compound and stratified one, and Paul's commentary is very long (the Pavia manuscript consists of 470 folios) and too articulated, and, what is more, it is repetitious and without a real doctrinal focus, so that it is impossible follow closely its configuration in expounding it. On the contrary, it is necessary to adopt a systematic way of presentation. Thus, in the first section of the chapter, I shall illustrate the structure of the work. The second section will deal with the analysis of the notions of identity and distinction. The third section will be dedicated to being and categories in their mutual relations. In the fourth section I shall explore his solution of the question of the composition of essence and being in creatures. In the fifth section, I shall examine his theory of universals, concentrating on the problem of the relationship between formal universals and individuals. In the sixth section, the most important and somehow original aspects of Nicoletti's metaphysics, namely, his theory of individuation, will be considered. In the seventh section I shall focus on his notion of truth and the ontological link between singular substances, accidents, and complexly signifiabiles. Finally, in the last section some conclusions on the main features of Nicoletti's world will be drawn.

<sup>2</sup> As for the quotations, I shall refer to the Pavia manuscript.

<sup>3</sup> As for the quotations from *Sum. Nat.* and *Qu. Un.*, I shall refer to Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 6433B, fols. 116r–136r.

1. *THE METAPHYSICS COMMENTARY*

The precise dating of composition of Paul's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* remains a matter for conjecture; however, on the basis of the study of Alan Perreiah,<sup>4</sup> it is commonly assumed that it was written in the early 1420s (possibly 1420–24). It appears to be a commentary on both Aristotle's work and Averroes's own commentary on it—and this fact partially explains its uncommon length: even if Paul does not comment on Books M and N, the commentary consists of about 1,200,000 words! Yet, it cannot be utilized in order to better understand Aristotle's and Averroes's thought, since, despite the appearances, it is not an exegetical work. It is not really aimed at this goal; rather, Aristotle and Averroes are used by the Italian master simply as *auctoritates* for supporting his own views. So their works are not studied and commented in themselves but are interpreted from his peculiar point of view, in order to corroborate his own philosophical theses and doctrines. For instance, Paul constantly tries to bring Averroes's reading of the Aristotelian text into line with his own theories, and, if it is not possible, he argues against Arab commentator's explanations.

The true interlocutors of his philosophical discussions are others, namely, some of the main realist authors of the Middle Ages, such as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Alexander of Alexandria, Walter Burley, and John Wyclif; the great masters of his order, Giles of Rome and Gregory of Rimini; and the chief exponents of the late medieval nominalism, such as Ockham, Buridan, and Marsilius of Inghen, against whom he renewed Burley's and Wyclif's attacks.<sup>5</sup> The ways of relating to all these thinkers are various: Paul's *Lectura* is full of remarks, questions, and digressions inspired by the commentaries of Albert, Thomas Aquinas, and Alexander,<sup>6</sup> but his views are rather in debt to Scotus's and Wyclif's, although there are only about half a dozen quotations from Scotus's writings and a pair from Wyclif's *Summa de ente*—as far as I could see. Moreover, very often he gathers as many alternative opinions as possible and plays mutually incompatible theses against each other. This contributes

<sup>4</sup> See Alan R. Perreiah, *Paul of Venice: A Bibliographical Guide* (Bowling Green, Oh., 1986), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. for instance Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 1, fol. 295va–b.

<sup>6</sup> See Fabrizio Amerini, "Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Alexandria, and Paul of Venice on the Nature of Essence," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), 541–89.

to making his commentary stimulating and enriching from an historical point of view, but also makes it difficult to grasp his own ideas in their unity.

These reflections can help us to understand why for about 150 years Paul was *erroneously*, but unanimously, believed to be an Ockhamist in logic and metaphysics and an Averroist in psychology and epistemology. But here, in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, it is possible to find not only clearly displayed and expounded his own form of realism but also, paradoxically, his most keen criticisms to Averroistic position on psychology and epistemology. In the commentary on the fourth book,<sup>7</sup> Nicoletti explicitly argues against the unicity of the passive intellect, utilizing a line of reasoning drawn from the *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* and the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>8</sup> And in the commentary on the twelfth book, he claims that this Averroistic thesis is lacking a solid basis, since it can be maintained from the physical point of view only, according to which everything is considered *qua* affected-by or connected-with motion, but it is *false* from the metaphysical point of view, which is the most comprehensive of all. From this viewpoint, according to which the passive intellect has to be considered a substantial form, it is evident that it has a beginning in time, but certainly not an end, and that, like any other material substantial form, it is multiplied according to the multiplication of bodies.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 3, fols. 136vb–137ra.

<sup>8</sup> Among the arguments employed the most important are the following three: (1) if the soul is the form of the body, as Aristotle states, it is impossible that the passive intellect is one in all men, since one and the same principle in number cannot be the form of a multiplicity of substances; (2) If the passive intellect is one and the same for all men, then after death nothing remains of men but this unique intellect, and in this way the bestowal of rewards and punishments is done away with; and (3) One and the same intellect could hold contradictory opinions at once, in apparent violation of the law of contradiction.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, XII, tr. 1, c. 3, fol. 427ra–b: “Aristoteles ergo in *Physicis* omnia considerans fieri per mutationem et motum posuit aeternitatem mundi, et motus et temporis. Et consequenter, probans esse incorruptibilem intellectum, ne concederet multitudinem infinitam animarum separatarum, voluit illum esse aeternum et unicum in omnibus hominibus. In *Metaphysicis* autem, considerans intellectum esse formam substantialem, asseruit ipsum incipere cum corpore et numerari ad numerationem corporum; non tamen corrumpi, propter suam impassibilitatem. Et, ut ostenderet quod ea quae dicta sunt in *Physicis* non convincunt, asserit quod nihil prohibet sic dicere et quod est perscrutandum—ad innuendum quod in hoc libro *Metaphysicae* determinaturus erat hanc difficultatem. Non tamen determinavit eam, quia morte preventus non complevit librum *Metaphysicae*, sicut <patet> ex quaestionibus motis III huius, quas non complete in hoc libro determinavit.”

2. THE LOGICAL BASIS OF HIS METAPHYSICAL SYSTEM:  
IDENTITY AND DISTINCTION

Paul's formulation of the theory of identity and distinction is a further development of Duns Scotus's and Wyclif's ideas about the subject.<sup>10</sup> The Italian master recognizes two main types of identity: material (*secundum materiam*) and formal (*secundum formam*). There is material identity when the material cause is the same, either in number (it is a case of the same thing called in different ways) or by species (it is a case of two objects made of the same kind of stuff). There is formal identity when the formal cause is the same. This happens in two ways: if the form at issue is the singular form of the individual composite, then there is a unique object known in different ways; if the form at issue is the common essence instantiated by the singular form, then there are two distinct objects belonging to the same species or genus. Correspondingly, the main types of distinction (or difference) are also two: material and formal. There is material distinction when the material cause is different, so that the objects at issue are separable entities. In general, there is formal distinction when the formal cause is different. This happens in two ways: if the material cause is also different, then it is a particular case of material distinction. If the material cause is the same, then a further analysis is necessary. If the material cause is the same by species only, then it is an improper case of formal distinction; but if the material cause is the same in number, then there is properly formal distinction, since the forms at issue have different metaphysical compositions (expressed by different definite descriptions) but share the same substrate of existence, so that they are one and the same thing in reality. For example, there is a proper formal distinction in the case of the two properties of being-capable-of-laughing (*risibile*) and of being-capable-of-learning (*disciplinabile*), which are connected forms instantiated by the same set of individual substances.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On Duns Scotus's theories of formal distinction, see Marilyn McCord Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976), 5–74, esp. 25–43; Peter O. King, "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and Individual Difference," *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992), 51–76; and Steven D. Dumont, "Duns Scotus's Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction," *Vivarium* 43,1 (2005), 7–62. On Wyclif's theories, see Paul V. Spade, "Introduction," in: John Wyclif, *On Universals*, transl. by Anthony Kenny, with an Introduction by Paul V. Spade (Oxford, 1985), pp. vii–li; and Alessandro D. Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," in: Ian C. Levy, ed., *A Companion to John Wyclif, Late Medieval Theologian* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition) 4 (Leiden, 2006), pp. 67–125.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, V, tr. 2, c. 3, fol. 185ra–b.

Material distinction is a necessary and sufficient criterion for real difference, traditionally conceived, whereas there is formal distinction if and only if there is one substance in number (i.e., material identity in the strict sense) and a multiplicity of formal principles with different descriptions instantiated by it. Paul therefore inverts the terms of the question in relation to what earlier approaches had done. By means of the formal distinction, Duns Scotus and Wyclif had tried to explain how it is possible to distinguish many different real aspects internal to the same individual substance: the passage is from one to many. In contrast, Paul is attempting to reduce multiplicity to unity: the passage is from many to one. What Paul 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 thing in number.

### 3. BEING AND CATEGORIES

The cornerstone of Paul of Venice's metaphysics is his definitions of *ens* and *esse*. He deals *ex professo* with these two notions mainly in the fourth book of his commentary on the *Metaphysics*. He describes *ens* and *esse* in relation one to the other, since he affirms that *ens* is that which is (*id quod est*) or that which has being (*id quod habet esse*).<sup>12</sup>

Paul distinguishes two different notions of *Ens*: one more general (*large*), clearly drawn from Scotus's notion of being (*ens*); the other more particular (*stricte*). Both the notions are analogous—says Paul—but the *Ens* taken in the first sense is predicated essentially (*essentialiter*) of God and the creatures, as everything real is immediately something which is (in this sense).<sup>13</sup> Since it is purely conceptual, this homogeneity does not eliminate the difference in natures between God and the creatures, however.<sup>14</sup> The notion of *Ens* taken *stricte* directly applies only to those beings which have a well defined nature and an external efficient cause and principle of their existence.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is predicated essentially only of categorial being, and causally and denominatively (*causaliter et denominative*) of God, who is the real cause of everything else. In fact, any

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 125vb.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 122ra–b.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 124rb: "Neque obstat quod Deus et creatura sint primo distincta, quia ista primitas non est ratione conceptus, sed naturae; conveniunt quidem in eodem conceptu, sed non conveniunt in eodem natura."

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 122rb: "Ens secundum quod huiusmodi habet principium et causam."

other entity is (something real) only insofar as it shares the being of God in accordance with its own nature, value, and position in the hierarchy of creatures.<sup>16</sup> God is said *to be* a being according to the second, narrower, sense just as an individual substance is said *to be* so and so in virtue of an accident, or the sun is said *to be* warm. In these cases, the copula does not mean identity, because no substance is (identical with) an accidental form, nor is the sun the same thing as the warmth. The *Ens* taken in this second sense is the object (*subiectum*) of metaphysics and is immediately divided into the ten categories.<sup>17</sup>

Such a position implies not only that God (as well as separate substances) is not a proper object of the metaphysical science but also that the most proper one is the categorial being—and, in fact, the sixth part of the *Summa philosophiae naturalis*, which deals with metaphysics, is mainly concerned with the ten (Aristotelian) categories.

The categories stem not from the *Ens* as from a over-ordered and comprehensive genus but in different ways, according to their own modes of being. In the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, like Burley, Paul maintains that 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 the abstract forms belonging to one category are really distinct from those in others. He also presents a method for deducing them which is derived from the first example of

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* See also XII, tr. 1, c. 3, fol. 427rb: “Et ita, si ‘Aristoteles’ supervixisset, docuisset inceptionem mundi, ad modum fidei christianae; non quidem per motum vel mutationem, sed per simplicem emanationem, quam vocamus creationem, quae est quaedam productio non praesupponens motum, neque mutationem, neque materiam.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 122ra–b: “Ens transcendenter sumptum dupliciter sumitur, videlicet large et stricte. Ens large sumptum est commune analogum ad Deum et ad creaturam, de quibus essentialiter praedicatur, sed non tamquam de partibus subiectivis aut tamquam de his quorum unum est principium alterius. Et sic ens in quantum ens non habet principia neque causas. [...] Ens stricte sumptum est quoddam commune analogum ad decem praedicamenta, de quibus essentialiter praedicatur tamquam de partibus subiectivis. [...] Deus enim est principium et causa totius entis descendens in decem praedicamenta, sub quo non continetur Deus tamquam pars subiectiva, sed in eo continetur per modum principii. Ideo ens sic sumptum non essentialiter et per se praedicatur de Deo, sed solum causaliter et denominative, eo modo quo accidens praedicatur de substantia et caliditas de sole. Substantia enim non est accidens in abstracto, sed in concreto, nec sol est formaliter calidus, sed solum virtualiter et causaliter. Ita Deus non est entitas in abstracto, sed ens in concreto, non quidem formaliter et quidditative, sed denominative et causaliter—semper loquendo de ente transcendenter sumptum quod est causatum et subiectum metaphysicae, et quod immediate dividitur in decem praedicamenta tamquam partes subiectivae.” See also *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 1, fols. 122ra–b, 123va–124rb, and 125vb; VII, tr. 1, c. 2, fol. 242vb; and *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii* (henceforward *Exp. Porph.*), c. *de specie*, in: *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii et Artem veterem Aristotelis* (Venice, 1494), fol. 22rb.



*sufficiencia praedicamentorum* utilized by Burley in his last commentary on the *Categories*.<sup>18</sup> According to this view, there are two fundamental modes of being proper to world items: being by itself, which characterizes substances, and being in something else (*in alio*), which characterizes accidents. The latter is subdivided into three less general modes: being in something else in virtue of its matter; being in something else in virtue of its form; and being in something else in virtue of the whole composite. Something can be in something else in virtue of its matter, form, and composite according to three different ways: from inside (*ab intrinseco*), from outside (*ab extrinseco*), and partially from inside and partially from outside (*partim ab intrinseco et partim ab extrinseco*). If something is in something else in virtue of its matter and from inside, then it is a quantity; if from outside, it is a where (*ubi*); if partially from inside and partially from outside, it is an affection (*passio*). If something is in something else in virtue of its form and from inside, then it is a quality; if from outside, it is when (*quando*); if partially from inside and partially from outside, it is an action (*actio*). If something is in something else in virtue of the whole composite and from inside, then it is a relation; if from outside, it is a possession (*habitus*); if partially from inside and partially from outside, it is a position (*positio vel situs*).<sup>19</sup>

In the later commentary on the *Categories*, in addition to this, Paul proposes four other examples of metaphysical deduction of the ten categories, as follow. A second one inspired by the *sufficiencia praedicamentorum* utilized by Albert the Great in his *Liber de praedicamentis* (tr. 1, c. 3). A third one drawn from the second *sufficiencia* mentioned by Burley in his last commentary on the *Categories*.<sup>20</sup> A fourth one, which he calls “*communis*,” based on a starting distinction between absolute and relational (*modus respectivus*) modes of being, the former proper to substance, quantity, and quality and the latter to the remaining seven categories. And, finally, a fifth example, called “*specialis*,” which combines the categorial division with the division into four (individual substance,

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Walter Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis* (A.D. 1337), c. *de numero et sufficiencia praedicamentorum*, in: *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis* (Venice, 1509), fol. 21ra–b. In his turn, Burley had derived it from Robert Kilwardby’s commentary on the *Categories* (*lectio 5*).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, V, tr. 2, c. 2, fol. 180rb–va. See also VII, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 235ra–b.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, c. *de numero et sufficiencia praedicamentorum*, fol. 21va. In his turn, Burley had derived it from Simon of Faversham’s commentary on the *Categories* (q. 12).



universal substance, individual accident, and universal accident) of the second chapter of the *Categories*, describes the relationship between substance and the nine kinds of accidents in terms of causality, and considers relation as an accident which, like quantity and quality, comes from inside the substance.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. ESSENCE, BEING, AND EXISTENCE

As we have already seen, *ens* is that which has being (*esse*), but, according to Paul, the finite corporeal beings (namely, “things” such as men, animals, and plants), the *res* of the world, have got four different kinds of being (*esse*): real (*esse reale*), essential (*esse essenziale*), temporal (*esse temporale*), and individual (*esse suppositale vel individuale*). The real being is nothing but the whole reality of the finite being itself (Socrates considered together with all the properties which can be truly attributed to him). The essential being is the mode of being proper to the specific nature (in the case of Socrates, the human nature) that a certain singular directly instantiates. The temporal being is the state of affairs designated by infinitive expressions like “*hominem esse*” or “*esse album*”—namely, the complex object of the act of judging, grounded on the existence of a singular substance or a set of singular substances.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the individual being is the actual existence of the primary substance of a finite being as it is distinct from the whole reality of the finite being itself.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis* (henceforward *Exp. Pred.*), c. *de numero praedicamentorum*, in: *Expositio super Universalia Porphyrii et Artem veterem Aristotelis* (Venice, 1494), fol. 50ra–vb.

<sup>22</sup> On this particular point, see Paul's commentary on the *De anima*, III, tr. 1, c. 4, t.c. 22 (Venice, 1504), fol. 144vb.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 1, fol. 92vb: “Est notandum primo quod esse quadrupliciter sumitur. Primo pro esse reali, eo modo quo sumit Aristoteles, II *De anima*, dicens quod sensatio est unum esse et opinatio alterum. Secundo pro esse essentiali, eo modo quod sumit Philosophus, III *De anima*, dicens quod aliud est magnitudo et magnitudinis esse, et rectum alterum est a recto esse. Ubi dicit Commentator quod ibi accipitur magnitudo et rectum pro individuo et esse magnitudinis et recti pro quidditate et essentia. Tertio sumitur pro esse temporali; et sic sumit Aristoteles, I *Posteriorum*, dicens quod non est idem unitas et unitatem esse, quia unitatem esse significat complexe, unitas incomplexe. Quarto accipitur pro esse suppositali vel individuali; et sic sumit Boethius in libro *De hebdomadibus* (dogmatibus ed.), dicens: ‘Diversum est esse et illud quod est,’ ubi (ita ed.) per esse intelligitur individuum et per illud quod est intelligitur quidditas.”

In view of this position, inspired by Wyclif's doctrine of level of being,<sup>24</sup> Paul of Venice also, like the English master, maintains no real distinction between essence and being.<sup>25</sup> The essence of a creature does not precede its being, as essence without being, as well as being without essence, would be a self-contradictory state 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, while being without essence would imply that there could be the existence of a thing without the thing itself. As a result, the *pars destruens* of his theory on being and essence is a not too implicit refutation of the twin opinions of Aquinas and Giles of Rome.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas had postulated a real composition of essence and *esse* in creatures, in order to account for the dependence of the world upon God at a merely philosophical level. He thought that as the essence of a creature receives its being from God, essence and being are distinct from each other, but related one to the other just as potency (essence) and act (being). Giles pursued the same line of thought, as he admitted a distinction between essence and being as between *res* and *res*.

Because of the complexity of the metaphysical composition of creatures, the simple affirmation of the real identity between essence and being is insufficient for adequately describing the relationships among their constituents. Consequently, like Wyclif,<sup>27</sup> Paul speaks of a formal difference (*distinctio* or *differentia formalis*) that he calls also "difference of reason" (*distinctio rationis*), between essence and being in creatures. In fact, from the extensional point of view, being and essence of creatures

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, c. 7, ed. Ivan J. Mueller (Oxford, 1985), pp. 126–28. See also his *De intellectione Dei*, c. 5, in: Michael H. Dziewicki, ed., *De ente librorum duorum excerpta* (London, 1909), pp. 101–02. On Wyclif's theory of levels of being and in general on his metaphysics, see Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," pp. 67–125.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 2, fol. 127rb: "Ens non est aliquid superadditum essentiae, sive accipiatur ens ut importat esse essentiae sive ut importat esse existentiae; dicit enim Philosophus quod nihil differt dicere in re 'homo' et 'ens homo.' Si autem ens aliquid diceret supra hominem, differret dicere 'homo' et 'ens homo,' quia dicendo 'homo' diceretur quidditas et essentia tantum, dicendo autem 'ens homo' diceretur essentia et existentia; et dicerentur duae res; et per consequens differret dicere 'homo' et 'ens homo.' [...] Dicendum ergo quod esse et essentia dicunt eandem rem sub diversis rationibus. Eadem enim res numero importata per habitum dicitur essentia et importata per actum dicitur esse. Idem enim est lux et lucere; sed lux dicit habitum, lucere autem actum." See also VI, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 223vb: "Unumquodque est ens per suam quidditatem, ita quod idem est ens, essentia [essentia] et quidditas, licet differant ratione."

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 2, fol. 127rb.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, c. 7, pp. 128–31; and *De materia et forma*, c. 4, in: Michael H. Dziewicki, ed., *Miscellanea philosophica*, 2 vols. (London, 1902–05), vol. 1, pp. 184–85.

are equivalent, as every being is an essence and *vice versa*; yet, from the intensional point of view, there is a formal difference, since the actual existence of a thing presupposes its essence and not *vice versa*. More precisely, in the *Summa philosophiae naturalis*, where he copes exhaustively with the problem, Paul summarizes his position as follows: (1) the essence and being of any creature cannot be really distinct from each other; (2) the essence of a thing is formally different from its real being (*esse reale*) and from its essential being (*esse quidditativum*); (3) the essence and the essential being of a thing are formally (*ratione*) different from temporal and individual beings; and (4) specific and generic essences can keep on being even though no individual instantiates them, but in this case they have not any actual existence (*esse actuale*).<sup>28</sup> Hence, according to Paul, the essence and the essential being of a thing are one and the same reality regarded from two different points of view. In fact, when Paul uses abstract terms, such as “*humanitas*,” he wants to signify the common nature intentionally conceived as a mere form, made up by a set of essential properties; conversely, when he uses concrete terms, such as “*homo*,” he wants to signify the common nature extensionally conceived as a real entity instantiated by at least one individual actually existing; and finally, when he uses compound expressions, such as “*homo communis*” or “*in communi*,” he wants to signify that same common nature considered *qua* common—namely, regarded from the point of view of its own mode of being, as it is apt to inform an item put lower down the *linea praedicamentalis*.<sup>29</sup>

Like Wyclif, the Augustinian master seems to think of the essence as a universal form intentionally considered, and the existence (taken in the strict sense) as the mode of being proper to primary substances. Thus, when Paul affirms that essence and being are really identical and formally distinct, he simply restates the thesis of the real identity and formal distinction of universals and individuals typical of the Oxonian Realists of the late Middle Ages. The most important results of such a metaphysical analysis are the following: (1) extension of the range of the notion of being; (2) distinction between being and existence, as the former is the universal condition of every kind of reality and the latter the mode of being peculiar

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 1, fol. 93ra: “His visis sit haec prima conclusio: nullius rei essentia habet esse tamquam formam ab illa realiter distinctum. [...] Secunda conclusio: nulla essentia ab esse reali transcenderet sumpto et a suo quidditativo esse aliter differt quam ratione. [...] Tertia conclusio: nulla essentia vel quidditativum esse differt a suo esse temporali vel suppositali aliter quam ratione. [...] Quarta conclusio: essentia generis vel speciei habet esse existere absque ratione individuali, sed non esse actuale.”

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 1, fol. 93ra.

to individual substances only; and (3) a sort of assimilation of the distinction between essence and being to the distinction between universal and singular.<sup>30</sup> This last point is related to Paul's theory of universals, and it cannot be properly understood without it.

## 5. UNIVERSALS AND INDIVIDUALS

According to Paul, finite (corporeal) beings have a threefold kind of substantial forms (*forma quae dat quod quid est esse*), and therefore a threefold kind of matter: the form and the matter of the (individual) composite (*forma compositionis*), the form and the matter proper to the species (*forma speciei*), and the form and the matter of the whole reality of the finite being (*forma totius*).<sup>31</sup> The *forma compositionis* is the singular form which, joined to the matter (or *materia compositionis*), makes up the individual substance, like the *anima intellectiva* in relation to man. The *forma speciei* is the difference, as it divides genus into species and constitutes the species itself. Conversely, the *materia speciei* is the genus, as it is determined by the difference. The *forma totius* is any superior form in relation to its subordinate forms, like *animalitas* in relation to *humanitas*; while the *materia totius* is any subordinate entity in relation to superior in the *linea praedicamentalis*, like *Sortes* in relation to man or animal. The concepts of matter and form are therefore relative, since their meanings are connected with each other. Being the form of something and being the matter of something are converse relations of three different kinds (*compositionis*, *speciei*, *totius*), whose arguments and values are the

<sup>30</sup> On Wyclif's and Paul of Venice's doctrines on essence and being, see Alessandro D. Conti, "Essenza ed essere nel pensiero della tarda scolastica (Burley, Wyclif, Paolo Veneto)," *Medioevo* 15 (1989), 235–67.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 1, fols. 92vb–93ra: "Forma quae dat quod quid est esse est triplex, scilicet compositionis, speciei et totius. Forma compositionis est alter pars compositi, quae dicitur forma partis, contrahens materiam ad determinatam speciem. [...] Forma speciei est differentia divisiva generis, et generaliter quelibet pars definitionis declarans quidditatem rei. [...] Forma totius est superius respectu inferioris, [...] et generaliter omne continens respectu contenti. [...] Et sicut triplex est forma, ita triplex est materia, scilicet compositionis, speciei et totius. Materia compositionis est alter pars compositi contracta per formam naturalem vel artificialem. Et haec dicitur materia partis. [...] Materia speciei est genus contractum per differentiam essentialem. Sicut enim materia potentialiter formas generans continet, ita genus potentialiter continet omnes species, secundum Porphyrium in *Universalibus*. [...] Est enim genus materia in qua differentiae et materia ex qua speciei. Materia totius est inferius respectu sui superioris—quae dicitur pars subiecta."

metaphysical constituents of the singular substance, the metaphysical constituents of the specific forms, and the categorial items (*entia praedicamentalia*) respectively.

The *forma totius* can be considered from a twofold point of view: intensionally (*in abstracto*) and extensionally (*in concreto*). Considered *in abstracto*, the *forma totius* simply expresses the set of essential properties which compose a categorial form, without any reference to the existence of individuals which, if that is the case, instantiate it. Considered *in concreto* the *forma totius* is that same form conceived of as instantiated by at least one singular item. For instance, the human nature intensionally considered is the *humanitas*, extensionally considered is *homo*. Both of them are *formae totius* as they are superordinated to the whole human concrete compounds, but they denote the same nature with different connotations, since *humanitas* refers to the human nature as a form (i.e., something existentially incomplete and dependent), whereas *homo* refers to the same nature as a real entity (i.e., something existentially autonomous and independent).<sup>32</sup> This *forma totius* is the universal *in re* (or formal universal) of the medieval realist tradition.

Like many other Realists of the Late Middle Ages, Paul admits that there are four kinds of universals:<sup>33</sup> (1) the general causes of everything (*universale causale*), namely, God and the angelic intelligences, who can produce several different effects and specifically distinct individuals; (2) the ideas of any possible species present in the mind of God (*universalia ante rem*)—ideas which are really identical with God Himself, but formally distinct from Him;<sup>34</sup> (3) the common natures existing *in re* as part of the essence of singulars, which determine the main features of the individuals which instantiate them; and (4) the abstract concepts *in anima*, which are mental images of the common natures *in re* naturally caused by the common natures themselves in the human intellect.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Exp. Porph.*, Prooem., fol. gva.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, Prooem., c. 2, fol. gva–b: “Notandum primo quod quadruplex est universale, iuxta imaginationem antiquorum: primum universale est causale, scilicet causa productiva individuorum plurium specierum indifferenter. Et sic Deus et intelligentiae dicuntur universalia. [...] Secundum universale est ideale, causa scilicet exemplaris eiusdem speciei omnium individuorum aequaliter. [...] Tertium universale est universale formale, scilicet natura universalis communicata multis, ut humanitas existens in omnibus hominibus. [...] Quartum universale est intentionale, scilicet conceptus mentalis univoce de pluribus praedicabilis, ut isti conceptus, homo, animal.” See also *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 3, fol. 94rb–va.

<sup>34</sup> On this specific point concerning divine ideas see in particular Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 2, fol. 298rb.

As natures of a certain kind, formal universals are identical with their own individuals (for example, *homo* is the same thing as Socrates) as far as their actual reality is concerned. In fact, universals are formal causes in relation to their own individuals, and individual material causes in relation to their universals, since individuals are *partes subiectivae* of the universals. All the genera, species, and individuals belonging to the same category are, therefore, really identical (as the individuals which instantiate a certain specific nature instantiate also all the forms superior to it) and, if considered in themselves, just as individuals, species, genera, are formally distinct from each other (as in this case the strings of elements which constitute their metaphysical structure are partially different from each other). This entails that for Paul, just as for Burley and Wyclif, formal universals are *in actu* also outside our minds, but this full existence depends entirely on the existence of their individuals. Without them, common natures would not be really universals.<sup>35</sup> In Nicoletti's view, the property of being universal is possessed potentially by common natures which are not instantiated by any individual, and it becomes wholly actual when a common nature is instantiated by at least one singular—universality is therefore an aspect of the common natures completely independent of our mind, and dependent on the existence of individuals. Quite the opposite, according to moderate Realists, such as Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome, the universality (namely, the property of being apt to be present in many things and to share the being with them) is possessed only potentially by common natures, even instantiated by individuals, and it is because of an intervention of the human mind that this property becomes wholly actual. But in this way—argues Paul—the universal concept in our mind would not be matched in the world by a thing of the same degree of generality, and therefore our abstractive knowledge would be somehow misleading.<sup>36</sup>

This interpretative scheme of the nature of universality and of the relationship between common natures and singulars is ultimately grounded on individuation, since no actual universality and no instantiation is possible without individuation. Individuation is fundamental to both universals and individuals, as universals and individuals, distinct on the level of being, are linked together on the level of full existence (*esse existere in*

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 2, fol. 94ra: "Secunda conclusio: universalia habent esse actuale extra animam praeter operationem intellectus. [...] Tertia conclusio: universalia denudata a singularibus suis non sunt actu universalia, sed potentia tantum."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 1, fol. 295rb–va.

*actu*) by individuation. The primary substance, which is the core of the finite being, is the final result of an ontological enrichment of the specific form, just as the specific form was the output of an ontological improvement of the generic form, and so on.<sup>37</sup> What plays a dominant role in this process of individuation is the difference (no matter whether generic, specific, or individual), for it is the formal principle (*ratio*) which causes the passage from a categorial item to its inferior in the *linea praedicamentalis*. The incomplete forms of being peculiar to real universals presuppose individuals. In their turn, individuals can exist as metaphysical items, located at a particular place in space and time, and can be identified as distinct members of the same species only by means of the process of individuation through which they are obtained as from common natures.

#### 6. INDIVIDUATION AND SINGULAR SUBSTANCE

Paul of Venice does not discuss *exhaustively* the problem of individuation in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (even though some interesting affirmations can be found in the glosses to the third book of the Aristotelian treatise), but in other two works: the *Summa philosophiae naturalis* (p. VI, c. 5), where he deals with the problem of angelic individuation, and in the chapter on species of the Commentary on the *Isagoge*.

In the *Summa philosophiae naturalis* and in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Paul's view is apparently drawn from Duns Scotus's doctrine, given the fact that he identifies the principle of individuation with the *haecceitas* (or *ratio individualis*),<sup>38</sup> whereas later on in the Commentary on the *Isagoge* he seems to adopt Thomas Aquinas's terminology and solution, although he keeps on speaking of *haecceitates* (and *rationes individuales*).<sup>39</sup> Therefore his final position on the problem looks like a sort of impossible mixture of antagonistic opinions. Yet, in point of fact, the cornerstone and knotty problem of his theory lies in this twofold approach to the question. Since the beginning, the Italian master assumes that the process of individuation operates at two different levels by two seemingly different principles: it multiplies a universal form by means of matter, and it constitutes individuals by means of the *rationes individuales*.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Qu. Un.*, fol. 124ra: "Genus contrahitur per differentiam, et ex his fit species, sicut ex specie et ratione suppositali fit individuum et singulare."

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 5, fol. 95va–b; and *Lect. Met.*, III, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 83vb.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Exp. Porph.*, c. *de specie*, fols. 23vb–24ra.



As we have already said, in the *Summa* and in the *Lectura*, Paul's treatment of individuation is in line with Duns Scotus's. He claims that the principle of individuation is twofold, *propinquum* and *remotum*. The immanent principle is that one whose presence necessarily entails the existence of the individual that it constitutes, and whose absence necessarily entails the non-existence (or disappearance) of the individual. The remote principle, in contrast, is just what the immanent principle presupposes, but whose presence and absence alone are insufficient for causing the existence or disappearance of the individual, as it continues being after the corruption of the individual. *Haecceitas* is the immanent principle of individuation, whereas form, matter, and quantity are the remote principle. *Haecceitas* in its turn has a twofold origin, as it derives from matter and form together, in the case of corporeal substances, and from the *quidditas* alone, in the case of angelic intelligences.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, according to Paul, there is a close similarity between the *haecceitas*, which he also calls *differentia individualis*, and the specific difference. The specific difference is what differentiates the species from the genus, since it is the determination or property which, once added to the genus, results in the species. At the same time, the specific difference is really identical with the genus, from which it is distinct only in virtue of a formal principle (*alia ratio*). The same happens to the individual difference: it is what differentiates the individual from the species; but, from the ontological point of view, it is really identical-with and formally distinct-from the species itself; and it is the formal principle in virtue of which the individual is what it is, something singular, concrete, and perfectly determined in itself (*hoc aliquid demonstratum*).<sup>41</sup>

As far as the problem of angelic individuation is concerned, the logical consequence deriving from such premises is that it is impossible to find two angels who share the same specific nature and are numerically distinct, since only one *haecceitas* can spring up from an incorporeal species.<sup>42</sup> This solution is close to the inner sense of Duns Scotus's view and contrasts with Aquinas's belief,<sup>43</sup> even though, like Thomas, Paul claims that the angelic intelligences are specifically, and not numerically,

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 5, fol. 95vb.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. VI, c. 5, fol. 96rb; c. 26, fol. 112rb–va; and *Lect. Met.*, III, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 83vb. See also *Qu. Un., secunda conclusio*, fol. 128va; and *tertia conclusio*, fol. 129rb.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. VI, c. 5, fol. 96ra.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 3, q. 1, a. 4; *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 93; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 8; and *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 50, a. 4.

different from each other. However, the Augustinian master thinks that angels are individuated by the *haecceitates*, but not multiply because of the absence of matter, so that there is only one angel per species. Since specific natures of incorporeal beings do not include any reference to matter, only one *ratio suppositalis* can flow from such species. As a consequence, broadly speaking, every angel is *unum numero*, as two (or more) angels are, in any case, “many things,” but no angel is *unum numero* in the strictest sense of the term.<sup>44</sup>

In the Commentary on the *Isagoge*, answering the question whether the matter or the form is the principle of individuation, Paul distinguishes between the principle of individuation proper to material substances and the principle proper to immaterial substances: the former is the matter itself; the latter is the form.<sup>45</sup> He makes no mention of the *haecceitas*. The Scotistic approach of the *Summa philosophiae naturalis* seems to be replaced with a Thomistic assessment. But when he copes with the question of whether individuals add something new in relation to the specific nature or not, he restates what he had held in the *Summa* and in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, as he maintains that: (1) the singular substance is the final result of a process of individuation whose starting point is a universal form; (2) the individuation is what differentiates the individual substance from its species; (3) the individuation is nothing but the *haecceitas* itself; and (4) the *haecceitas* and the specific form are only formally distinct from the individual substance they make up.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 5, fol. 95vb.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Exp. Porph.*, c. de specie, fol. 23vb.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Exp. Porph.*, c. de specie, fols. 23vb–24ra: “Secundum dubium: utrum individuum aliquid addat supra speciem. Respondetur quod tam species quam individuum praedicamentum substantiae dupliciter possunt considerari, videlicet physice et logice. Verbi gratia, homo potest considerari ut est compositum ex materia et forma, una cum dispositionibus qualitativis et quantitativis; et sic homo superaddit animali has dispositiones accidentales realiter differentes tam ab homine quam ab animali. Et ista est consideratio physica. Consideratio autem logica est si consideratur homo ut componitur tantum ex genere et differentia; et sic homo superaddit animali differentiam, non tamen distinctam ab aliquo illorum realiter, sed tantum ratione. Ita Sortes potest dupliciter considerari. Uno modo physice, in quantum componitur ex particulari materia et particulari forma, una cum proprietatibus accidentalibus nominatis; et sic superaddit homini illas proprietates realiter differentes tam a specie quam ab individuo. Alio modo potest considerari logice, in quantum componitur ex specie et individuatione tantum; et sic superaddit speciei individuationem, non quidem realiter differentem ab aliquo illorum, sed solum ratione. Dicendum igitur quod sicut generaliter quaelibet species, cuiuscumque praedicamenti fuerit, superaddit generi differentiam, ita quodlibet individuum superaddit speciei individuationem, quae est ratio incommunicabilis, faciens individuum non posse nisi de uno solo praedicari. [...] Et ideo est dicendum quod, sicut animalitas et rationalitas, ex quibus componitur

In this way, Paul is trying to solve the aporetic aspects of Scotus's doctrine by means of the identification of the *ratio individualis* with the informing act through which the specific nature (the *forma totius in concreto*) molds its matter. This identification had been already suggested by the opposition between immanent and remote principles of individuation described in the *Summa philosophiae naturalis*. In fact, all the constituents of the individual compound (matter, form, and quantity) had been contrasted with the *haecceitas*, which, for that reason, could not be identified with any of them. The equivalence between *individuatō* and *sorteitas* of the Commentary on the *Isagoge* conveys the same basic idea: individuation is (1) the act through which specific forms (or natures) become something actually existing, as it is what individuals add to species, and also (2) what causes this passage from being (*esse*) to existence. As a consequence, the principle of individuation is a positive entity, belonging to the substantial order, added to the specific nature, and related to it as potency to act.<sup>47</sup> Reference to matter as the principle of individuation for corporeal substances does not undermine the substantial Scotistic machinery of Paul's doctrine, as individuation for corporeal substances is a twofold process. It constitutes the individual *qua* individual, giving it existence *in actu*, and it causes the passage from the unicity of the specific nature to the multiplicity of individuals which instantiate it. In other words, individuation explains *how* one and the same specific nature generates many individuals of the same type, and *what* causes this "generation." Matter is the answer to the first question, and *haecceitas* the answer to the second one. Paul's statements about angelic individuation are consistent with this. Since no specific nature as such has actual existence, there must be individual angels. Since there is no matter among angels, there is no multiplicity. Therefore, there is only one angel in each species, and each angel differs *specifically* from the others.

What makes the real difference between Duns Scotus's view on individuation and Paul's theory is the diverse evaluation of the relationship between the *haecceitas* and the specific nature. According to Scotus, the relation that links the *haecceitas* to the species is as act to potency. According to Paul, it is just the reverse. The Italian master claims that the *ratio individualis* plays the role of potency in relation to the species. Individuation

---

homo, non realiter differunt ab homine, sed tantum ratione, ita humanitas et sorteitas, quae est ipsa individuatō, non realiter differunt a Sorte."

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 5, f. 96rb.

is the potential element of the individual compound (it is the “matter”), and species the actual element (it is the “form”). As a consequence, within Paul of Venice’s system, individuals are not the core of being, as they result from an ontological “weakening” of the specific natures, which have a form of being totally independent of them. This conclusion is in line with Paul’s theory of divine ideas, as God thinks of specific natures, and through them knows and creates individuals.<sup>48</sup> But, on the level of existence, which, according to Paul, is only a particular kind of being, individuals are superior to any other kind of entity, as they are the ontological substrates necessarily presupposed by the incomplete forms of existence peculiar to the other entities.

#### 7. SUBSTANCES, ACCIDENTS, AND COMPLEXLY SIGNIFIABLES

As is evident, Paul has a twofold consideration of accidents as abstract forms and concrete properties. Many times in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, he insists that quantity, quality, and relations are (abstract) forms of nine different kinds inherent in the composite substances.<sup>49</sup> In this way, like Burley and Wyclif, he wants to safeguard the reality of accidental forms as well as their real distinction from substance and from each others, while at the same time affirming their dependence on substance in existence. Paul thinks that, if considered in themselves, accidents are abstract forms, really distinct from substance; whilst, if considered as concrete items which affects singular substances, they are not *really* distinct from the substances in which they are present, but only *formally*, as they

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 2, fol. 298rb: “Idea proprie sumpta est quidditas specifica causaliter existens in mente divina, ad cuius exemplar supremus conditor creaturas producit in esse. [...] Idea debet esse quidditas specifica, quoniam idea habet rationem actus et formae; genus autem et individuum habent rationem materiae; ergo idea non potest esse quidditas generis neque individui.” See also *Qu. Un.*, *decima conclusio*, fols. 133vb–134rb. Paul criticizes Duns Scotus’s theory of divine ideas mainly because the Doctor Subtilis had maintained that divine ideas correspond to individuals and not to species—see, in particular, *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 2, fol. 297va–b. On Paul’s theory of divine ideas, see Alessandro D. Conti, “Paul of Venice’s Theory of Divine Ideas and its Sources,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 14 (2003), 409–48 (at pp. 438–48 the edition of the text: *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 3, c. 2).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, V, tr. 2, c. 2, fol. 179rb–vb, dedicated to the categories in general and, more in particular, to the distinction and relationship between substance and accidents; and tr. 3, c. 1, fols. 193ra–197va, dedicated to quantity; c. 2, fols. 197va–201rb, dedicated to quality; and c. 3, fols. 201rb–207vb, dedicated to relations and relatives (*ad aliquid*).

are mere modes of the substance.<sup>50</sup> The formal distinction enables us to rightly understand how this is possible. In the same way as the abstract forms of the universality and individuality, really different from each other, present at the same time in the same real item give origin to the formally different entities of the universal and of the singular, the really different abstract accidental forms which inhere in the same singular substance at the same time give origin to the formally different concrete entities of the (categorical) accidents. Almost the same happens with the complex signifiabiles.

Paul deals with them and the problem of the meaning and truth of sentences<sup>51</sup> in his commentary on the sixth book of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>52</sup> His aim is twofold, as he intends to better determine the ontological status and nature of the *complexe significabile* by clarifying the relations of real identity and formal distinction that, according to him, link it with the individual substance (or substances) on which its reality is grounded; and to develop a general theory of the proposition<sup>53</sup> logically more rigorous and less compromised with a metaphysics of the possible than that supported by Gregory of Rimini, his main source.

Paul's approach to the question is ontological, like that of Gregory, since, according to Paul, the true is an attribute of the things and only secondarily of the thought, but at the same time consistent with the

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, VII, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 236vb.

<sup>51</sup> Paul seems to distinguish between sentence and proposition, considered as what is expressed by a declarative sentence, but, like almost all medieval authors, he uses the two terms '*propositio*' and '*enuntiatio*' interchangeably for designating both the linguistic form by which the propositional content (*our* proposition) is manifested and the propositional content itself. On Paul of Venice's theory, see Giulio F. Pagallo, "Note sulla *Logica* di Paolo Veneto: la critica alla dottrina del *complexe significabile* di Gregorio da Rimini," in: *Aristotelismo padovano e filosofia aristotelica*. Atti del XII Congresso internazionale di filosofia, Venezia, settembre 1958 (Florence, 1960), pp. 183–91; Norman Kretzmann, "Medieval Logicians on the Meaning of the Proposition," *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), 767–87; Gabriel Nuchelmans, "Medieval Problems concerning Substitutivity (Paul of Venice, *Logica Magna*, II, 11, 7–8)," in V. Michele Abrusci, Ettore Casari, & Massimo Mugnai, eds., *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Storia della Logica, San Gimignano, 4–8 dicembre 1982* (Bologna, 1983), pp. 69–80; Conti, *Esistenza e verità*, pp. 276–93.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Paul of Venice, *Lect. Met.*, VI, c. 4, fol. 233rb–vb. See also V, tr. 2, c. 2, fol. 181ra; *Logica Magna*, p. II, fasc. 6: *Tractatus de veritate et falsitate propositionis et Tractatus de significato propositionis*, II, tr. 10 or 11, ed. Francesco Del Punta, transl. Marilyn McCord Adams (Oxford, 1978); and *Exp. Pred.*, c. *de subiecto et praedicato*, fols. 47va–48rb; c. *de affirmatione et negatione*, fol. 52vb; c. *de substantia*, fols. 65vb–66ra; and c. *de priori*, fols. 136va–137va.

<sup>53</sup> Paul defines the *propositio* as a well-formed (*congrua*) and making-sense (*perfecta*) mental sentence (*enuntiatio mentalis*), which signifies the true or the false—see *Logica Magna*, p. II, *Tractatus de propositione* (Venice, 1499), fol. 101rb–va.

fundamental principle of every form of correspondence-theory of truth, that of the isomorphism of language, thought, and the world. In fact, in his commentaries on the *Metaphysics* and on the *Categories* Paul explains that the direct and adequate objects of propositions, which make them true, are *res complexae extra animam*. Such entities are extramental realities made up by a subject-thing and a predicate-thing linked together in one and the same substance (or the same set of substances).<sup>54</sup>

Paul distinguishes three different kinds of truth, connected together: the truth of imitation (*veritas imitationis*), the truth of disclosure (*veritas manifestationis*), and the relational truth (*veritas respectiva*). The first type of truth is the measure of the conformity (*adaequatio*), which all the things have in relation to their corresponding ideas in the mind of God, from which they derive.<sup>55</sup> The second type also is a real property of the extramental things (*passio entis*), which measures their various degrees of disposition to be apprehended by our intellect.<sup>56</sup> The relational truth, unlike the first two *veritates*, is not an absolute property of things but, just as its name says, a relation, and precisely a relation of conformity which has in our intellect its substrate of existence, in the mental sentences its *fundamentum*, and in the molecular objects (*complexa*) existing *extra animam* its *terminus ad quem*. Notwithstanding it is related to the activity of the intellect, the *veritas respectiva* is the effect caused in our intellect by the existence of the *veritas manifestationis*. If the things were not intelligible by themselves, they could not be grasped and recognized by our intellect for what they are. So, like Gregory, Paul also supports the idea that human knowledge is true only *qua* knowledge of the ontological true, and that propositions are true only insofar as they are the signs of the ontological true.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, VI, c. 4, fol. 233rb–va; and *Exp. Pred.*, c. *de subiecto et praedicato*, fol. 48ra.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 233rb: “Veritas imitationis est adaequatio rei ad intellectum divinum. Tunc autem res adaequatur intellectui divino quando debito ordine et debito gradu essendi consequitur ideam intellectus divini, sicut etiam illa domus est vera domus quae adaequatur intellectui artificis, quando debite consequitur exemplar existens in mente artificis. Unde verum est ens habens omne illud quod habere debet, et veritas est entitas aut essentia habens quicquid habere debet, quando debite consequitur et imitatur ideam divini intellectus.”

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 233va: “Veritas manifestationis est adaequatio rei ad intellectum nostrum. Tunc enim res adaequatur intellectui quando seipsam humano intellectui repraesentat sicut est. Et sic accipiendum verum convertitur cum ente.”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 233vb: “Patet ergo quod non solum in intellectu componente et dividente est veritas et falsitas subiective, sed etiam in re extra animam; quoniam in vero auro est veritas imitationis subiective et in falso auro est falsitas subiective, opposita illi veritati privative, eo modo quo opponuntur lumen et tenebra. Sed verum et falsum transcendentur



On the basis of this account, which, then, is the relationship that holds between singular substances, finite beings, and *complexe significabilia*? In Paul's opinion, the complex truth signified by a true affirmative proposition is a composite reality which is part of the whole reality (the *esse reale* of the *Summa*) of a finite corporeal being. Socrates being a man (*Sortem esse hominem*) is *in re* Socrates himself considered together with the countless concrete properties of which he is the bearer. At the same time, the proposition identifies only one of these properties, that signified by the predicate-term (in our example, the property of being a man), which is formally different from the abstract form (in our example, that of humanity) connoted by the predicate-term and from Socrates himself. In fact, as we have already seen, the *formae totius* (or specific natures or essences) can be conceived of *in abstracto* and *in concreto*. Both the abstract form of humanity and the concrete property of being a man are substantial items superordinated to the singular human compounds, but while humanity is properly a form, namely, something existentially incomplete and dependent, being a man is a sort of existentially autonomous, independent, and non-elementary item. For that reason, Paul denies that what verifies a proposition such as "Socrates is white" are Socrates and the accidental form of whiteness taken together. On the contrary, he claims that the *significatum adaequatum* of that proposition is the reality of Socrates and his state of being white (*album*).<sup>58</sup> True negative propositions, too, such as "Socrates is not a donkey," have something which corresponds to them in reality, namely, something which is neither a substance nor an accident but a sort of negative state of affairs grounded in the two *esse realia* proper to the things signified by the subject and predicate terms (in our example, Socrates and the nature of the donkey).<sup>59</sup> So, the being proper to complexly signifiables can be identified with the *esse temporale* listed by Paul as the third level of being proper to the finite beings, and, as such, it is really identical-with and formally distinct-from the finite (corporeal) beings itself and with the singular substance which gives actuality to it.

---

sumpta non opponuntur nisi secundum affirmationem et negationem, dicens Philosophus quod verum est ens et falsum est non ens. Ideo extra animam non est falsum transcendentur sumptum subiective in aliquo, sed veritas est subiective in ente sicut unitas. Ad Philosophum autem dicentem quod verum et falsum sunt in anima, bonum autem et malum sunt in rebus, respondetur quod ipse loquitur de vero et de falso secundum compositionem et divisionem, non autem de vero et falso secundum imitationem et manifestationem." See also *Lect. Met.*, V, tr. 2, c. 2, fol. 181rb–va.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Logica Magna*, II, tr. 11, p. 170. See also *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 1, c. 1, fol. 123ra.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Lect. Met.*, IV, tr. 2, c. 3, fol. 143va; and *Exp. Pred.*, c. *de substantia*, fol. 66ra.



## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the previous analyses have shown, Paul's world consists of: (1) finite beings (that is, things like angels, men, animals, plants and flowers, stones etc.), each made up by a primary substance and a host of concrete properties existing in it and by it; (2) substantial and accidental forms; and (3) *complexe significabilia*, the *significata* of propositions, that is, extramental complex realities made up by a subject-thing and a predicate-thing linked together in one and the same substance or set of substances (for instance, the fact that Socrates is a philosopher, or the fact that some man is white).<sup>60</sup> He conceives of primary (i.e., individual) substances as the ultimate substrates of existence and subject of predication in relation to everything else; therefore, for him, the only way to guarantee the reality of the items belonging to other categories and of substantial natures instantiated by primary substances was that of regarding them as attributes of singular substance. As a consequence, the finite being cannot be totally identified with the primary substance. No primary substance contains the whole being of the finite being, which is an ordered congeries of categorial items. In their turn, primary substances are not absolutely simple items but are somehow complex ones, since they are compounded by potency and act, and particular matter and form—a form which is really (*realiter*) identical-with and formally (*formaliter*) distinct-from the specific nature itself, just as the whole primary substance is really identical-with and formally distinct-from the universal (or secondary) substance. Also the complexly signifiables, which are, in a certain way, parts of the finite being are really identical-with and formally distinct-from the finite being itself and from any other complexly signifiable which rests upon the same substance (or the same set of substances). Hence, within Paul of Venice's system of thought, the twin notions of real identity and formal distinction are the main kind of relationship holding between the constitutive elements of his world.

The substantial and accidental forms present in finite beings are nothing but the categorial items themselves, taken together with their peculiar modes of being. All these items are real being, in the sense that they are mind-independent. Yet, primary substances only are existent, namely, actual beings—*entia in actu*. Individuation is what causes the passage from being in general (*esse*) to existence, and from specific natures (universals)

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Exp. Pred.*, c. *de subiecto et praedicato*, fol. 48ra.

to individuals. Because of the modalities of this passage, substantial universal forms are, at the same time, really (*realiter*) identical-to and formally (*formaliter*) distinct-from their individuals.<sup>61</sup> For that reason, and given that there are four different kinds of being (*esse*) in the finite beings (*entia*), universal natures have a form of being their own, independent of singulars. So, even if all the individuals belonging to a certain substantial species were annihilated, the species would keep on being as a mere metaphysical possibility (*esse indeterminatum et in potentia*) in the absolute power of God and in the pure potentiality of the prime matter.<sup>62</sup> What is more, a common nature would be annihilated if and only if all the individuals belonging to it were destroyed not only in relation to their actual existence but also in relation to their potential being.<sup>63</sup> Still, the potential being of individuals is nothing but the essential being proper to universals, and therefore the annihilation of the individuals in relation to their potential being is the destruction of universals themselves.

As a consequence, Paul of Venice's metaphysics states the centrality of specific natures, which, after all, correspond to the ideas in the mind of God, and in relation to which the actual existence of individuals is functional, since individuals exist only as material substrates (*partes subiectivae*) of the natures themselves. According to the moderate (Aristotelian) Realists of the 13th century, the actual existence of at least one individual was necessary in order to guarantee the existence *in potentia* of the corresponding universal. On the contrary, in Paul of Venice's view, the existence of a universal essence is the necessary condition for the existence of individuals. Hence, paradoxically his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* celebrates the "dissolution" of the Aristotelian ontology and the primacy of the Neo-platonic view.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *Sum. Nat.*, p. VI, c. 2, fol. 94ra. See also *Qu. Un.*, *prima conclusio*, fol. 124ra–b; *secunda conclusio*, fol. 127va; and *nona conclusio*, fol. 133va–b.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Exp. Porph.*, Prooem., fol. 8va. It is evident that there is a certain affinity among the *esse indeterminatum* of universals of which Paul speaks, the *esse essentiae* or *in genere* of Wyclif (*Tractatus de universalibus*, c. 7, p. 127) and the second level of being (or categorical being) analyzed by Giles of Rome in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics* (*Super Analytica Posteriora*, II [Venice, 1488], fol. N1rb).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Exp. Pred.*, c. *de substantia*, fol. 57va–b: "Destructo quolibet homine coniunctum 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."