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REALISM

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Realism and nominalism were the two major theoretical alternatives in the later Middle Ages concerning the reality of general objects: realists believed in the extramental existence of common natures or essences; nominalists did not. This so-called "problem of universals" was only one of the main questions at issue between realists and nominalists, however, whose disputes ranged widely over the status and mutual relationships of the basic items of the world (individual and universal substances, individual and universal accidents) as well as their connection to language. For scholastic authors, these questions arose first and foremost in the context of Aristotle's *Categories*. As a consequence, the medieval realist–nominalist dispute included also the problem of the status and number of real categories. Realists held that the division into categories is first of all a partition of things made on the basis of ontological criteria and only secondarily a classification of terms (which could be mental, written, or spoken), and therefore that the world is divided into ten fundamental kinds of things (in a broad sense of 'thing'), no one of which can be reduced to any other. In contrast, nominalists maintained that Aristotle's division into ten categories is a partition of terms on the basis of semantic criteria, and that there are only two or three real categories (Substance and Quality, and perhaps Quantity too). Even though from a purely logical point of view these opinions on categories and universals are independent of each other, historically, in the later Middle Ages, realism concerning categories was always matched by a realistic conception of universals, whereas nominalism on the question of categories was always paralleled by a nominalistic position on universals.

This chapter outlines the main medieval forms of realism, trying to indicate how the debate over universals and categories evolved. First, it sketches the chief features of the standard realist doctrine on universals and categories as it was worked out between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Second, it summarizes William of Ockham's attack on this traditional view and Walter Burley's reply on behalf of realism. Finally, it considers the most important realist

theories of the later Middle Ages, which were proposed in order to avoid both Ockham's criticisms and the "exaggeration" of Burley's version of realism.

TRADITIONAL "MODERATE" REALISM

What has come to be known as "moderate realism" is a view endorsed by a long list of authors from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, including Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Simon of Faversham, John Duns Scotus, Thomas of Sutton, Giles of Rome, and Walter Burley (pre-1324). We can approach this view by considering its semantic origins, which are evident as early as Robert Kilwardby's formulation of the problem of universals in his commentaries on the *Ars vetus* (1235–40). According to the semantics of the traditional moderate realist, universals are the real *significata* of general nouns (such as 'man' and 'whiteness'), and are thus extramental entities that are common to many individual items. Moderate realists investigated the metaphysical composition of such universals from a point of view that we can call "intensional." Only by associating common nouns with such entities as their proper *significata* did they think the fact could be explained that a general noun can be used predicatively to ascribe a given property (say, being a human being or being white) to many individuals at the same time. According to them, a general noun stands (*supposits*) for a certain set of individual items only by way of the common nature (the universal) that it directly signifies – a common nature that is present in that set of individuals as their intelligible essence. (On supposition and signification, see Chapter 11.)

This emerges quite plainly in the common reading of *Categories* 5, where Aristotle maintains that primary-substance terms signify a single item (*hoc aliquid* in Latin), whereas secondary-substance terms signify a "qualifying" (and therefore common or universal) item (*quale quid* in Latin) – even if they seem to signify a single item.[1] Medieval realists identified the secondary substance with the *quale quid* and the primary substance with the *hoc aliquid*, and therefore identified 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)

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[1] See *Cat.* 5, 3b10–15: "All substances appear to signify something individual. In the case of primary substances it is indisputably true that they signify something individual, since what is shown [by them] is something indivisible and unitary. In the case of secondary substances, the form of naming gives the impression that we are also signifying something individual when we speak, for instance, of man or animal, but this impression is not true. On the contrary, we are signifying [a type, i.e.] something with a certain qualification."

with the *significata* of individual expressions of that category (such as 'this man'). Furthermore, they assumed that secondary substances specify which kind of substance a certain individual substance is. As a consequence, they thought of universals and individuals as linked together by a sort of relation of instantiation. Moreover, they agreed with Aristotle (*Cat.* 5, 2a35–2b6) that if primary substances did not exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist, since everything else depends on them for its own being. Accordingly, the question of the status of universals became the question of their relation to individual substances. For these authors, universals are not self-subsistent entities, but exist only in and in virtue of individual entities, inasmuch as universals have no being outside the being of their instantiations.[2]

Medieval realists distinguished between three kinds of universals:

- *ante rem* – the ideas in God;
- *in re* – formal universals, the common natures (or essences) present in individual things;
- *post rem* – the mental signs (or concepts) by which we refer to the universals *in re*.

Formal universals were conceived of in two different ways, as first intentions and as second intentions. Conceived of as first intentions, universals are natures of a certain kind, identical with their own individuals. (For example, *man* would be the same thing as Socrates). Conceived of as second intentions, formal universals were regarded as properly universal and distinct from their own individuals, considered *qua* individuals. So conceived, universals and individuals had to be distinct, because of their opposing constitutive principles: on the one hand, the generality, or natural tendency to be common (*communicabilitas*) that characterizes universals; on the other hand, the thisness, or impossibility of being common (*incommunicabilitas*) that characterizes individuals.[3]

These dual conceptions necessarily required a flexible approach to defining and classifying the types of identity and difference, given that universals were considered at the same time not totally identical with and not totally different from their own individuals. Indeed, initial scholastic accounts of identity and

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[2] For statements of the general semantic account described here, see Kilwardby, *In Porphyrium* 2 (Peterhouse ms. 206, f. 34vb); *In Praedicament.* 7 (Peterhouse ms. 206, f. 47ra–b); Albert the Great, *De praedicament.* 2.4, 2.8; Simon of Faversham, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 7; Sutton, *In Praedicament.* [*De substantia*], ed. Conti, in "Thomas Sutton's Commentary," pp. 203–4; Scotus, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 13 (*Opera phil.* I: 369–72, 377); Burley, *De suppositionibus*, ed. Brown, pp. 35–6; *Tractatus super Praedicamenta* [*De substantia*] (Peterhouse ms. 184, ff. 177va, 178ra–b); *Commentarius in Periherm.*, ed. Brown, p. 85.

[3] Albert the Great, *De quinque universalibus* 1.3, 1.5; Simon of Faversham, *Quaest. super Porphyrium* 4; Scotus, *Quaest. in Porphyrium* 3 (*Opera phil.* I: 19–20).

difference appealed to two kinds of distinctions: a real distinction and a distinction of reason. At the end of the thirteenth century, attempts were made to introduce a third, intermediary distinction. Henry of Ghent, for instance, spoke of an intentional distinction (*Quodlibet* X.7), whereas Scotus spoke of a formal distinction.[4] In the *Lectura* (I.2.2.1–4) and in the *Ordinatio* (I.2.2.1–4; II.3.1.6), Scotus describes this as a symmetrical relation between two entities that cannot exist separately; in the *Reportatio Parisiensis* (I.33.2–3; I.34.1), he defines it as an asymmetrical relation between a whole reality and one of its constitutive elements. Although none of these intermediary distinctions was specifically intended to offer an answer to the problem of universals, they nevertheless served as a potentially useful tool, for by means of them, moderate realists were trying to explain how it is possible to distinguish between many different real aspects internal to the same individual thing, without breaking its unity.

As far as the problem of the status and number of real categories was concerned, some moderate realist thinkers – such as Kilwardby, Henry of Ghent, Simon of Faversham, and "the first" Burley (in contrast with his later views, described below) – held a sort of reductionist position regarding the number of real categories: they judged only the items falling into the three "absolute" categories (Substance, Quantity, and Quality) to be things (*res*) in the strict sense of the term, considering the remaining ones to be merely "real aspects" (*respectus reales*) of the former, albeit still somehow distinct from them.[5] Others, such as Albert the Great, Thomas of Sutton, and Scotus, defended a real distinction between all ten categories, as things in the world, irreducible to one another.[6] With the sole and remarkable exception of Scotus, who maintained that the distinction among the ten categories is based on their different natures, all of these authors regarded categorial items as made up of two main components: an inner nature or essence, and a distinctive mode of being or of being predicated (*modus essendi*, *modus praedicandi*). The categories were understood to divide items according to these modes, rather than according to their essences.

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4   On Henry's doctrine of intentional distinction see John F. Wippel, "The Dating of James of Viterbo's Quodlibet I and Godfrey of Fontaines' Quodlibet VIII," *Augustiniana* 24 (1974) 348–86; on Scotus's formal distinction see Peter King, "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and Individual Difference," *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992) 51–76, and Stephen Dumont, "Duns Scotus's Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction," *Vivarium* 43 (2005) 7–62.

5   Kilwardby, *In Praedicament.* prooem. (Peterhouse ms. 206, f. 41ra) and ch. 5 (ff. 44vb–45ra); Henry of Ghent, *Summa quaest. ord.* 32.5 (*Opera* XXVII: 79–80); Simon of Faversham, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 12; Burley, *Tractatus super Praedicamenta* [*De numero praedicament.*] (Peterhouse ms. 184, ff. 175rb–76rb).

6   Albert the Great, *De praedicamentis* 1.7; Sutton, *In Preadicament.* [*De numero praedicament.*], ed. Conti, p. 196; Scotus, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 1 (*Opera phil.* I: 250–1).

OCKHAM'S CRITIQUE, AND BURLEY'S EXTREME REALISM

In the second and third decades of the fourteenth century, Ockham argued that the common realist account of the relationship between universals and individuals was inconsistent with their being really identical. His central argument was that if universals are something existing *in re*, really identical with their individuals, then whatever is predicated of individuals must be predicated of their universals too. Hence a unique universal entity (say, human nature) would possess contrary attributes simultaneously (short and tall, young and old), just as different individuals do. This is clearly unacceptable (*In Praedicament.* 8.1; *Summa logicae* I.15).

Such an inconsistency had been foreseen by moderate realists, who had tried to avoid it by introducing the sorts of intermediary distinctions described earlier between individuals and universals considered as second intentions. On the one hand, according to traditional realists, the real identity of universals and individuals had to be maintained in order to safeguard the division of predication into essential and accidental, as well as to maintain the difference between substantial and accidental forms. Like accidental forms, universal substantial forms are somehow present in individual substances and cannot exist without them; so if they, unlike accidental forms, had not been identical with individual substances, as constitutive parts of their being, then they would have been indistinguishable from accidents. Consequently, moderate realists had been forced to speak of identity between universals and individuals. On the other hand, it was evident that not all that was predicated of individuals could be predicated of universals, and vice versa. For instance, it was a common topic in commentaries on *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.[7] For this reason, it was necessary to limit in some way the transitivity of predication between universals and individuals. The intermediary distinctions considered earlier were the vehicle for satisfying both of these demands.

According to Ockham, there is no room for any further distinction beyond the real one, since any other possible kind of distinction necessarily implies identity (or else it would count as a real distinction), and identity is a transitive, symmetrical, and reflexive relation (*Ordinatio* I.2.6; I.33.1). Hence, the transitivity of predication cannot be limited by this strategy. Moreover, Ockham

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[7] Kilwardby, *In Praedicament.* 4 (Peterhouse ms. 206, f. 44va); Albert the Great, *De praedicamentis* 1.6; Sutton, *In Praedicament.* prolog., ed. Conti, p. 187; Simon of Faversham, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 3; Scotus, *Quaest. super Praedicamenta* 9; Burley, *Tractatus super Praedicamenta* [*De regulis praedicationis*] (Peterhouse ms. 184, f. 174va).

accepts the indiscernibility of identicals. As a consequence, he concludes that it is impossible for contradictory properties to be truly asserted of the same thing. Instead, the bearers of those contradictory properties have to be really distinct and independent things (*Ordinatio* I.2.1; I.2.6; I.2.11; *Summa logicae* I.16).[8] Later medieval realists acknowledged that Ockham's critique showed that the traditional realist description of the relation between universals and individuals is untenable, but they were convinced that realism as a whole is still defensible. Two fundamental strategies emerged for formulating a revised form of realism: either to affirm a real distinction between universals and individuals, or to elaborate new notions of identity and difference. The first strategy was that of Burley. At the beginning of his academic career, he was a supporter of moderate realism, but beginning in 1324, in response to Ockham, he developed an original form of Platonic realism. On this view, universals, conceived of as general forms, fully exist outside the mind and are *really distinct* from the individuals in which they are present. In many of his last works he expounds on his new ontology, which is based on a threefold *real* distinction: between universals and individuals; between categorial items (*incomplexa*) and real propositions or states of affairs (*propositiones in re*); and between each of the ten categories.[9]

Like Ockham, Burley rejects any kind of distinction in addition to the real one. He considers identity a transitive, symmetrical, and reflexive relation, and identity and difference two mutually incompatible relations.[10] On the other hand, he claims that universals *in re* fully exist outside the mind and are really distinct from the individuals they are in and are predicated of. Two startling conclusions follow from this. First, a universal has its own being, distinct from the being of the individual that instantiates it. Second, a universal is not a part of that individual. Instead, individual substances are composed of nothing but singular form and matter. The base-level species (*human being*, for instance, or *horse*) is not a constitutive part of the individuals it is in and is predicated of, but is only a form coming together with those individual essences, and making their metaphysical structure known: it is the species (namely, the type) that individuals belong to (or instantiate). Once universals are no longer constitutive

[8] On real sameness and distinction in Ockham, see Marilyn McCord Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976) 5–74.

[9] On Burley's new ontology see Alessandro Conti, "Ontology in Walter Burley's Last Commentary on the *Ars Vetus*," *Franciscan Studies* 50 (1990) 121–76; on the development of his semantic theory see Alessandro Conti, "Significato e verità in Walter Burley," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 11 (2000) 317–50, and Laurent Cesalli, "Le réalisme propositionnel de Walter Burley," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 68 (2001) 155–221.

[10] Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta* [*De oppositione*], ed. 1509, f. 44rb; *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. Wöhler, p. 22.

parts of their own individuals, the inconsistencies stressed by Ockham vanish.[11]

The other two main theses of Burley's ontology also depend on what he takes to be necessary in order to defend a realist view of universals. Because he gives up intentional and formal distinctions, and so can no longer reduce the being of universal substantial forms and that of accidental forms to the being of individual substances, Burley is compelled to make the ontological status of *propositiones in re* stronger than it was before. Whereas in his youth he had clearly stated that mental propositions exist in our minds as in their own subjects of inherence, and that real propositions exist in our minds as their intentional objects, in his last commentary on the *Ars vetus* (1337) he affirms that a real proposition (which is the *significatum* of a mental proposition) is a "molecular being" (*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).[12] Moreover, with respect to the problem of the ontological value of the Aristotelian categories, he claims that the division into categories is first and foremost a division of things (*res*) existing outside the mind – using *res* in its strictest sense for an irreducible, fully existing entity. Accordingly, the things in one category are really distinct from those in others. Burley rejects any sort of reductionism, arguing that this compromises the actual goal of a correct categorial theory – namely, the classifying and putting in hierarchical order of all the world items according to their nature, metaphysical structure, and distinctive modes of being.[13]

Despite these new views (namely, that there is a real distinction between universals and individuals, and that the ten categories are all irreducibly real), Burley keeps on supporting without qualification the Aristotelian principle that primary substances are the necessary condition of existence for all other categorial items, including universals (*Cat*. 2b5–6).[14] This is still possible because he holds that universals are forms, and therefore existentially incomplete and

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[11] Burley, *Expositio in Phys.* prooem., ed. 1501, ff. 8rb–9vb; *Expositio super Praedicamenta* [*De subiecto et praedicato*], ed. 1509, f. 20rb and [*De substantia*], ff. 23rb–vb, 24va; *Expositio super Periherm.* [*De oppositione enuntiationum*], ed. 1509, f. 74rb–va; *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. Wöhler, pp. 14–40.

[12] Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta*, prooem., ed. 1509, ff. 17vb–18va; [*De subiecto et praedicato*], ed. 1509, f. 20rb; [*De priori*], ed. 1509, f. 47va; *Expositio super Periherm.*, prooem., ed. 1509, f. 66ra-b. For his earlier view of propositions, see *Quaest. in Periherm.* 3 and *Commentarius in Periherm.*, ed. Brown, pp. 61–2.

[13] Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta* [*De numero praedicament.*], ed. 1509, ff. 21ra–b, 21va–b, 22ra. For Burley's earlier views, see the reference in note 5.

[14] Burley, *Expositio super Praedicamenta* [*De substantia*], ed. 1509, f. 24va.

dependent entities whose existence requires the existence of at least one individual substance. Since he is faithful to Aristotle rather than to Plato on this point, Burley has to build up a sort of mixed theory, where principles of Aristotelian ontology go alongside principles of Platonic ontology. Two difficulties arise from his new system, however. First, it becomes difficult to distinguish essential from accidental predication, since universal substances necessarily presuppose individual substances for their existence, in the same way that accidental forms do. Second, the conclusion that universals have their own being distinct from the being of individuals seems dangerously close to Plato's theory of Forms. As a consequence, many late medieval realists would try other ways of replying to Ockham's charges.

LATE MEDIEVAL REALISM

Because Burley was persuaded that Ockham's arguments were valid, he sought to escape from the resulting inconsistencies by moving toward Platonism. In particular, he renounced his support for the thesis that universal forms have no being apart from the being of individuals. Most later medieval realists, in contrast, retained that anti-Platonic thesis. To escape the contradictions Ockham had described, they instead revised the notions of identity and difference to make room for the distinctive relation of partial identity and difference that they claimed holds between universals and individuals. There were two main lines of strategy. The first was that of some Italian Dominican masters, such as Francis of Prato and Stephen of Rieti in the 1340s, who worked out new definitions for identity and distinction that were inspired by Hervaeus Natalis's notion of conformity. The second approach was that of the most important school of later medieval realists: the so-called "Oxford Realists," started by John Wyclif. Besides Wyclif himself, this school includes the Englishmen Robert Alyngton, William Milverley, William Penbygull, Roger Whelpdale, and John Tarteys, as well as the German John Sharpe and the Italian Paul of Venice. According to the Oxford Realists, universals and individuals are *really* identical but *formally* distinct. In addition, they claimed that the two notions of formal difference and real identity are logically compatible, that predication is a *real* relation between things, and that the ten Aristotelian categories are ten really distinct kinds of things (*res* in the strict sense).[15]

[15] On this last point see Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali* 4; Alyngton, *Super Praedicamenta* [*De numero praedic.*], ed. Conti, pp. 252–3; Paul of Venice, *Super Praedicamenta* [*De numero praedic.*], ed. 1494, ff. 50rb–51ra.

Francis of Prato and Stephen of Rieti both attempt to defend realism by rethinking the relation between universals and individuals.[16] Their goal is to avoid the inconsistencies pointed out by Ockham without going as far as Burley's real distinction between individuals and universals. Toward this end, they develop some of Aquinas's and Hervaeus Natalis's chief intuitions.[17] Like them, Francis and Stephen reject any kind of distinction midway between a real distinction and one of reason. Their basic ideas are that universal forms have no being outside the being of their individuals[18] and that real identity may be more or less close. This is to say that the limit of real identity is entirely real identity, but that two things can be not entirely really identical without being really non-identical and, hence, without being really different.[19] Although the idea that identity comes in degrees is a distinctive one, Francis and Stephen clearly fall into the moderate realist tradition with respect to the problem of universals.[20] The same is true for their defense of the reality and real distinctness of each category. In his *Logica* (I.5.1), Francis observes that all ten Aristotelian categories contain things, but in two different senses of the term, for *res* can signify either a real essence or the mode of being of a real essence. The three absolute categories are things in the former sense of the term, whereas the other seven categories are said to be things in the latter sense.

The most influential of the later scholastic realists was Wyclif.[21] Like the moderate realists, he recognizes three main kinds of universals – ideal universals, formal universals, and intentional universal – and he holds that formal universals

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[16] On Francis's and Stephen's lives, works, and theories see Fabrizio Amerini, *I trattati* De universalibus *di Francesco da Prato e Stefano da Rieti (secolo XIV)* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2003) 1–56, Christian Rode, *Franciscus de Prato* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004), and Fabrizio Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato: con l'edizione critica della* Loyca *e del* Tractatus de voce univoca (Florence: SISMEL, 2005) 1–248, and "What is Real? A Reply to Ockham's Ontological Program," *Vivarium* 43 (2005) 187–212.

[17] Thomas Aquinas, *In Metaphys.* VII.11, VII.13; Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibet* I.2 (ed. 1513, f. 7rb–va), I.9 (ff. 19ra–vb, 20rb); II.7 (f. 47rb).

[18] Francis of Prato, *De universalibus* 5, ed. Amerini, p. 110; Stephen of Rieti, *De universalibus*, ed. Amerini, pp. 142–3.

[19] Francis of Prato, *De universalibus* 4, ed. Amerini, pp. 99–100.

[20] Stephen of Rieti, *Super Porphyrium* 1, ed. Amerini, pp. 159–61.

[21] On Wyclif's form of realism see Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 1–30; Paul Vincent Spade, "Introduction," in John Wyclif, *On Universals*, tr. A. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) vii–xlvii; A. Kenny, "The Realism of *De Universalibus*," in A. Kenny (ed.) *Wyclif in his Times* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 17–29; Alessandro Conti, "Analogy and Formal Distinction: On the Logical Basis of Wyclif's Metaphysics," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997) 133–65; Laurent Cesalli, "Le 'pan-propositionnalisme' de Jean Wyclif," *Vivarium* 43 (2005) 124–55; Paul Vincent Spade, "Insolubles," E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: http://plato.stanford.edu; and Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," in I. C. Levy (ed.) *A Companion to John Wyclif* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 67–125.

are really identical with their individuals. In his view, universals and individuals share the same reality – that of the individuals – but have opposite constituent principles. On his terminology, they are really (*realiter*) the same but formally (*formaliter*) distinct. In this way, Wyclif both accepts the very core of the traditional realist account of the relationship between universals and individuals and tries to improve on it by defining its predicative structure more accurately. Because of the formal distinction, not everything predicable of individuals can be directly attributed to universals and vice versa, although an indirect predication is always possible. As a consequence, Wyclif distinguishes three non-mutually exclusive types of predication, each more general than the preceding one. In the *Tractatus de universalibus* (1, ed. Mueller, pp. 28–30, 34–6) they are described as formal predication, predication by essence (*secundum essentiam*), and habitudinal predication (*secundum habitudinem*). Habitudinal predication does not require any kind of identity between the item(s) signified by the subject term and the item(s) signified by the predicate term, but formal predication and essential predication do. Thus, the ontological presuppositions of the most general type of predication were different from those of the other two. Wyclif aims to unify the various kinds of predication by means of a unique basic relation of partial identity, the formal distinction, which he characterizes as that by which things differ from each other even though they are constitutive elements of the same single essence or suppos it (ibid. 4, pp. 90–1). The formal distinction is the main kind of transcendental relation holding among the items in Wyclif's world (a transcendental relation being one that does not fall into the category of Relation and that can connect items belonging to different categories or not belonging to any category). It is intended to explain both 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, the formal distinction accounts for the relations between a concrete accident and its substance – for instance, between being white (*album*) and the substance in which the corresponding abstract form, whiteness, inheres. Consequently, the formal distinction also plays a central role in discussions of the categories.

Wyclif is a realist with respect to the categories: he holds that the extramental world is divided into ten genera of beings, none of which can be reduced to another. Thus, like Burley, he insists that the items falling into the accidental categories, considered by themselves, in an absolute manner, are forms inherent in composite substances. In this way, Wyclif attempts to safeguard the reality of accidents as well as their distinctness both from substance and from one another. At the same time, he affirms that accidents depend on substances for their existence, since he subscribes to the Aristotelian thesis that primary

substances are a necessary condition for the existence of all other categorial items.[22] Indeed, Wyclif can insist on this doctrine in a very strong form, since accidents considered from the point of view of their existence as concrete beings are only *formally*, but not *really* distinct from the substance in which they are present and that they affect. Opposed to the separability of accidents from their substance (a view that became notorious because it clashed with the doctrine of transubstantiation), Wyclif describes accidents as mere modes of that substance.[23]

Wyclif's philosophy exercised an enormous influence on the forms of later medieval realism. In particular, his intuitions concerning universals, predication, and categories played a large role in the logic and metaphysics of many authors, especially of the Oxford Realists.[24] According to these authors, formal universals are common natures in virtue of which the individuals that share them are what they are. Humanity, for instance, is the form by which every human being is formally a human being. Like Wyclif, the Oxford Realists agree that common natures exist *in actu* in the external world and that they are really identical to, but formally distinct from, their own individuals.[25] Different authors, however, analyze predication and identity in different ways. Alyngton – and, some years later, Sharpe, Milverley, and Tarteys – divide predication into formal predication and predication by essence, which Alyngton also calls "remote inherence" (*inhaerentia remota*). Predication by essence requires only a partial identity between the real subject and predicate. These need to share some, but not all, metaphysical component parts. Formal predication, in contrast, requires the direct presence in the entity denoted by the subject term of the

[22] Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali*, 4 (ed. Beer, pp. 30–2), 5 (pp. 42–3); 6 (pp. 48–50); 7 (pp. 61–2).

[23] Wyclif, *De actibus animae* 2.4 (ed. Dziewicki, *Miscellanea philosophica* pp. 122–3, 127). For Wyclif's treatment of accidents as it pertains to the Eucharist, see Kenny, *Wyclif*, 68–90; see also Paul Bakker, "Réalisme et rémanence: la doctrine eucharistique de Jean Wyclif," in M.-T. Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri and S. Simonetta (eds.) *Wyclif: logica, teologia, politica* (Florence: SISMEL, 2003) 87–112.

[24] For analyses of their main works and doctrines and information on Wyclif's influence see Alessandro 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) 137–66; Alessandro Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in John Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia* (Florence: Olschki, 1990) pp. 211–38, 295–336; Alain de Libera, "Questions de réalisme: sur deux arguments antiockhamistes de John Sharpe," *Revue de metaphysique et de morale* 97 (1992) 83–110; Alessandro Conti, "Linguaggio e realtà nel commento alle *Categorie* di Robert Alyngton," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 4 (1993) 179–242; Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux de Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 1996) pp. 402–28; Alessandro Conti, "Johannes Sharpe's Ontology and Semantics: Oxford Realism Revisited," *Vivarium* 43 (2005) 156–86; Conti, "Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics," 118–25.

[25] Alyngton, *Super Praedicamenta* [*De substantia*], ed. Conti, p. 268; Penbygull, *De universalibus*, ed. Conti, pp. 181, 189; Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, ed. Conti, p. 163; Tarteys, *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii*, ed. Conti, pp. 178–9; Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. Conti, pp. 193–4; Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, ed. Conti, pp. 91–2; Paul of Venice, *Quaestio de universalibus*, ed. Conti, p. 199; *Super Porphyrium* [*De genere*], ed. 1494, f. 14vb.

form connoted by the predicate term. Instances of predication by essence (or remote inherence) are '(What is) singular is (what is) common' (*Singulare est commune*) and 'Humanity is (something) running' (*humanitas est currens*).[26] 'Man is an animal' and 'Socrates is white' are instances of formal predication.

Unlike the others, Penbygull and Whelpdale add a third, causal kind of predication. According to them, 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 subject has been caused by the predicate (for example: *A day is the effect of the sun around the earth*).[27] These authors differ in other ways as well. Penbygull and Milverley, for instance, distinguish between non-identity and difference, deny that difference implies non-identity, and affirm that the two notions of difference and real identity are logically compatible, thus admitting that there are degrees of distinctness.[28] Sharpe, in his turn, treats identity and difference as the two possible inverse measures of the coincidence of the metaphysical components of two given entities. On his view, although formal identity is stronger than real identity (since the former entails the latter), a real distinction is stronger than a formal distinction (since the latter is entailed by the former). Sharpe also recognized degrees within the formal distinction (*Quaest. super universalia*, ed. Conti, pp. 91–2).

Among the Oxford Realists, the most original was Paul of Venice, who studied in Oxford in 1390–3 before returning to Padua, where he spread Oxford Realism to a wider audience.[29] He fully developed the new form of realism started up by Wyclif, but was open also to influences from other directions, giving serious attention to moderate realism and critically discussing the doctrines of the main fourteenth-century nominalists. Paul's world consists of finite beings (such as human beings and horses), which are aggregates of an individual substance and a host of formal items (substantial and accidental forms, both universal and singular) existing in and through that individual substance. The components of finite beings are nothing but the categorial items themselves, together with their own modes of being. All these items are real, in the sense that they are mind-independent beings, none of which can be reduced to another; still, only individual substances *exist*, inasmuch as only they are actual beings

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[26] Alyngton, *Super Praedicamenta* [*De substantia*], ed. Conti, p. 289; Milverley, *Compendium*, p. 160; Tarteys, *Problema*, Lambeth Palace ms. 393, ff. 204(235)r–v, 209(240)r–v; Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, ed. Conti, pp. 89–91.

[27] Penbygull, *De universalibus*, ed. Conti, pp. 186–8; Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. Conti, pp. 190–2.

[28] Penbygull, *De universalibus*, ed. Conti, pp. 190–1; Milverley, *Compendium*, ed. Conti, p. 163.

[29] On Paul of Venice's form of realism see Alessandro Conti, *Esistenza e verità: forme e strutture del reale in Paolo Veneto e nel pensiero filosofico del tardo medioevo* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1996).

(*entia in actu*). Individuation thus involves the passage not just from universal to individual, but also from being (*esse*), which is the universal condition of reality for every kind of entity,[30] to existence (*existentia*), which is the mode of being peculiar to individual substances only. Common natures, which correspond to the ideas in the mind of God, are the main type of beings within Paul's world; individuals exist only as material substrates (*partes subiectivae*) of the natures themselves, since the principle of individuation (the *haecceitas*, *ratio individualis*, or *suppositalis*) within the individual compound plays the role of the matter that is to be determined, while the common nature plays the role of the determining form.[31]

Like the other Oxford Realists, Paul claims that universals and individuals are really the same and only formally distinct. Yet, since common natures have a kind of being of their own, if all the individuals belonging to some natural species were annihilated, their corresponding nature would continue to have being, even though only potentially, as a mere metaphysical possibility (*Super Porphyrium* prooem. [ed. 1494, f. 8va]). In commenting on Aristotle's seemingly contrary claim at *Categories* 2b5–6, Paul restates that same thesis, adding 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.[32] Since the potential being of individuals is nothing but the essential being proper to universals,[33] the destruction of the individuals in relation to their potential being just *is* the destruction of universals themselves.

CONCLUSION

If we consider the moderate realist view of universals, it is easy to see that it is determined by a general evaluation of the *Categories*, together with the main principles and theses stated by Aristotle in that book. When moderate realists interpret the relation between universals and individuals in terms of identity, they are trying to save the ontological primacy of individual substances, while at the same time reading in a realist way the nature and division of predication, and the twofold partition (into substantial and accidental, individual and universal items) described in the second chapter of the treatise. On the one hand, they assume

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[30] Paul of Venice, *In Metaph*. IV.1.1 (Pavia ms. 324, f. 125vb); *Super Porphryrium* [*De specie*], ed. 1494, f. 22rb.
[31] On Paul's theory of individuation see Alessandro Conti, "Paul of Venice on Individuation," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 65 (1998) 107–32.
[32] *Super Praedicamenta* [*De substantia*], ed. 1494, f. 57va–b.
[33] *Summa philosophiae naturalis* VI.1 (ed. 1503, ff. 92vb–93ra), VI.5 (ff. 95vb–96ra).

that being a universal is equivalent to being said of something as a subject; on the other hand, they consider the being-said-of relation as a real relation between two different kinds of beings. As a result, they are compelled to postulate a form of identity between universals and individuals: universals are (metaphysical) parts of their individuals. Otherwise, it would be impossible to distinguish the being-said-of relation (essential predication) from the relation of being in something as a subject (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 (*Cat.* 2, 1a24–5). Still, universals and individuals cannot be entirely identical, since there is not a complete transitivity in predication between them.

Realists of the fourteenth century elaborate new notions of identity and distinction, judging that the logical machinery they have at their disposal is insufficient for their purposes. Because of Ockham's critique of moderate realism and the formal distinction, almost all the realists of the later Middle Ages become dissatisfied with Henry's and Scotus's formulations of distinctions midway between the real distinction and the distinction of reason. They therefore try to improve the realist theory of universals by modifying both the standard Aristotelian analysis of predication and the notion of formal distinction. Indeed, the only other possible way of overcoming Ockham's arguments against realism is to assume, as Burley does, that universals and individuals are really distinct – a choice that entails a change from an Aristotelian to a Platonic metaphysics and that leads to a paradoxical result: the partial dissolution of the Aristotelian doctrine of categories. Within the new metaphysical system of the Oxford Realists, universals and individuals, as well as essential and accidental predication, are far removed from their Aristotelian patterns. According to the moderate realists of the second half of the thirteenth century, the actual existence of at least one individual is necessary in order to guarantee the existence *in potentia* of the corresponding universal. In Paul of Venice's view, in contrast – which is the final culmination of the realist tradition initiated by Wyclif – the being of a universal essence is a necessary condition for the existence of individuals, but not vice versa. Thus the metaphysics proper to the Oxford Realists is substantially a Platonic metaphysics, where universal essences, and not individual substances, are the main kind of being.[34]

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[34] A comprehensive survey of the connected problems of universals and of categories in the late Middle Ages is provided in Alessandro Conti, "Categories and Universals in the Later Middle Ages," in L. Newton (ed.) *Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's* Categories (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 369–409.