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Dependence, Separability, and Theories of Identity and Distinction
in Late Medieval Philosophy: Case Studies from Scotus and Ockham

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy

by

Joshua Blander

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dependence, Separability, and Theories of Identity and Distinction
in Late Medieval Philosophy: Case Studies from Scotus and Ockham

by

Joshua Blander

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Calvin Normore, Chair

Theories of distinctions surface some of the most fundamental elements of metaphysical and logical inquiry. For many medieval philosophers, theories of distinctions provided some semblance of rational order and unity to metaphysical, logical *and* theological questions. The two philosophers on which I focus, John Duns Scotus and William Ockham, discuss distinctions and metaphysical adjuncts in a variety of philosophical and theological contexts. When discussing Scotus, I emphasize his development of a robust theory of identity and distinction. I give special attention to his accounts of what he calls qualified non-identity or qualified distinction, which he surprisingly says is compatible with real identity. When I turn my attention to Ockham, I focus on his use of the real distinction in the context of the common fourteenth century disputes about universals.

The question of separability has long been a central one for various theories of distinctions. Students of medieval philosophy who have interacted with Scotus's theory of

distinctions have generally assumed two distinct claims: (1) that the real distinction entails separability; and (2) that the formal distinction entails inseparability. I raise concerns for both of those claims. The rejection of assumption (2) depends on a careful (and controversial) reading of Scotus's account. On the other hand, the rejection of (1) is comparatively straightforward, though perhaps still controversial.

Ockham's interesting claims about universals make reference only to the real distinction (or its denial). Thus the emphasis in what follows is on Ockham's account of the real distinction and the proper conditions for separability when such a distinction obtains. Because Ockham's account of the distinctions is simpler than Scotus's in important ways, the discussion of separability might initially seem like it ought to be simpler as well. Surprisingly, Ockham's account of separability in relation to the real distinction – the only relevant case, since he denies the general usefulness of the formal distinction – is complicated, and he seems to deny that separability is possible in every case in which a real distinction obtains.

The dissertation of Joshua Blander is approved.

John Carriero

Brian Copenhaver

Debora Shuger

Calvin Normore, Committee Chair

For Claire and Nick, and especially Jen,
who sacrificed more than she could ever hope to gain in return

Sine qua ego non

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VITA

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Introduction

Ever since the waning of medieval scholasticism, critics of the intellectual activity of the period have mocked medieval philosophers for their obsession with so-called metaphysical minutiae. Humanists frequently suggested that the medievals had lost track of what was valuable in philosophizing. One topic of regular scorn for such philosophers was the continual attention to the development of theories of distinctions, for one major task to which medieval philosophers directed their considerable talents was working out careful theories of distinctions. When someone jokingly asks “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” she is invoking one pejorative way of invoking the medieval concern with various sorts of distinctions. To those without ears to hear, such a question can seem foolish or pointless.

However, as will become clear in what follows here, theories of distinctions surface some of the most fundamental elements of metaphysical and logical inquiry. In the following pages, we shall see that when John Duns Scotus and William Ockham discuss distinctions, they ordinarily intend to raise a number of other critical issues, including the following: (a) whether there are varieties of distinctness and sameness and, if so, what those varieties are; (b) the relationship between distinctness and sameness (in general or for particular varieties); (c) the nature of possibility (and whether there are varieties of possibility) and its relationship to powers; (d) what sorts of entities there are in the world and what sorts of relations they bear to one another (e.g., sameness, distinctness, modal, etc.); (e) the different things we could mean when we say that one thing depends on another or that one thing is prior to another. If one is willing to take the metaphysical enterprise seriously at all, then it is a straightforward matter to grasp that these topics must be considered in any full-formed metaphysical picture.

Furthermore, theories of distinctions were often intended to provide some semblance of

rational order to various theological commitments, such as the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the Incarnation. If we do not engage with the metaphysical questions already mentioned, then there is little hope that we can make progress in developing rational accounts of these dogma. For many medieval philosophers, theories of distinctions provided a way forward in thinking about these theological questions. And for some, they offered a unified way of handling metaphysical, logical *and* theological questions. While it can certainly seem that questions about angels and pins fail to be the most pressing questions of our day, Scotus and Ockham charge us to consider the implications of the answers to such questions, so that we can recognize the immense import of our answers to such questions. My project in what follows is to illustrate some of the ways in which they engage with those implications.

Scotus and Ockham discuss distinctions and metaphysical adjuncts in a variety of philosophical and theological contexts. I intend to focus on just a few of those contexts in order to bring out some of the fundamental commitments that underlie their theories. When discussing Scotus, I will emphasize his development of a robust theory of identity and distinction. I will give special attention to his accounts of what he calls qualified non-identity or qualified distinction, which he surprisingly says is compatible with real identity. When I turn my attention to Ockham, I will focus on his use of the real distinction in the context of the common fourteenth century disputes about universals. Ockham's discussion of the real distinction brings out several key topics in these disputes, and can enable us to surface interesting implications of his own views, especially his thinking about the connection between the real distinction and topics such as dependence, priority, and separability. Examining his views about distinctions in the context of his discussion of universals will be particularly enlightening because he provides systematic discussion and criticism of his opponents' views on these topics. As a result, it will also be

helpful to look at some features of the views of Walter Chatton and Walter Burley in order to contrast them with Ockham.

As should be clear, any discussion of theories of distinctions must be selective in its focus, since the metaphysical and logical implications of such views are incredibly wide-ranging. Nonetheless, there are adjunctive topics that I must discuss in order to address properly my central concerns, including the scope of ontological commitment and reduction (or proliferation, as the case may be) for both Scotus and Ockham. For example, whether x is separable from y depends, at least in part, on whether x is (or can be) ontologically distinct from y , or a different thing than y ; if x and y are just the very same thing, it is hard to grasp how they could be considered separable, even if we conceive of x and y in different ways or believe them to be different things. In order to explore these topics, then, we must also consider the relationships that obtain between things, thought, and language. As one should expect, both Scotus and Ockham take up these matters, and we must explore those discussions in order to examine how they approach questions of ontological commitment.

This question of separability has long been a central one for various theories of distinctions, especially since the separability question involves so many of the topics already mentioned (and then some). Students of medieval philosophy who have interacted with Scotus's theory of distinctions have generally assumed two distinct claims: (1) that the real distinction entails separability; and (2) that the formal distinction entails inseparability. As it turns out, I raise concerns for both of those separability assumptions. Furthermore, I deny that each of the distinctions entails anything about metaphysical separability. The rejection of assumption (2) depends on a careful (and controversial) reading of Scotus's account. On the other hand, the rejection of (1) is comparatively straightforward (though nonetheless controversial, according to

some). For Scotus holds that the divine persons are really distinct; but the divine persons are inseparable; therefore (somewhat enthymemically), the real distinction does not entail separability.

Ockham's interesting claims about universals make reference only to the real distinction (or its denial). Thus the emphasis in what follows will be on Ockham's account of the real distinction and the proper conditions for separability when such a distinction obtains. Because Ockham's account of the distinctions is simpler than Scotus's in important ways, the discussion of separability might initially seem like it ought to be simpler as well. Surprisingly, Ockham's account of separability in relation to the real distinction – the only relevant case, since he denies the general usefulness of the formal distinction – is complicated, and he seems to deny that separability is possible in every case in which a real distinction obtains.

I intend to evaluate some arguments in Ockham in which he supplies us with some clues about the relationship between the real distinction and separability. Though the results should not be entirely surprising, the claims for which I argue are not precisely in line with how most interpreters have understood Ockham. In particular, I argue that Ockham places some restrictions on whether real entities distinguished by a real distinction are separable. As a result, we can easily see that a real distinction is not sufficient for separability, even if it is necessary. As an aid to that conclusion, I intend to discuss and explain the conditions that must supplement the real distinction, and especially focus on the relevant metaphysical facts that must be true of something in order for it to be the kind of thing that can be separable.

Similarly, when discussing Scotus's formal distinction, I argue that the question of separability is not determined by the presence of a particular type of distinction, as this just gets the order of explanation reversed. There does not appear to be anything about the distinctions

themselves that would make them entail such significant metaphysical expectations, unless the distinctions were said to be present in all (and perhaps only) those circumstances in which the appropriate types of entities are present that could account for the separability proposed.

Separability is a consequence of metaphysical facts about the entities in question. If they have the sorts of features that would allow them to be separated, then they are separable. Of course we might, then, also suggest that a real distinction is present. But the analysis must be done in the proper order if it is to make sense of the metaphysical issues in question. To that task I now turn.

Chapter 1:

Being the Same Without Being the Same: Duns Scotus on Distinction and Identity

Introduction

Most medieval discussions of the various sorts of distinctions suggest that they come in two types, both of which are reasonably familiar. The first is the real distinction – a distinction which indicates that two non-identical individuals are present that are genuinely distinct or diverse from one another. The second is the distinction of reason, or conceptual distinction – a distinction that indicates that only a single, non-diverse individual is present, but that the individual is or at least can be conceived by the mind in at least two distinct ways. For a variety of both theological and philosophical reasons, many medieval philosophers were unconvinced that this list of distinctions was exhaustive, and proposed various so-called intermediate distinctions. One fundamental motivation for such alternatives – though assuredly not the only one – was to provide an account of a distinction that could be co-present with identity and simplicity. For the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity demanded that one adhere to the Trinitarian claim of the Athanasian Creed: “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet they are not three Gods, but one God.” In other words, the Christian who desires orthodoxy must affirm the following claims:

- (1) There is exactly one God.
- (2) There are exactly three divine persons, and each of those divine persons is God.
- (3) No divine person is identical to any of the other divine persons.

Furthermore, Christian theologians have traditionally argued that orthodoxy include a commitment to divine simplicity, so the Christian must also affirm that:

- (4) God is ontologically simple.

As we will encounter while we explore the theory of identity and distinction present in the works of John Duns Scotus, these doctrinal commitments offer sizable challenges to the believer who wishes to maintain quite ordinary beliefs about the nature of identity and distinction.

Nonetheless, most Christian medieval philosophers believed that they could overcome these challenges in ways that are both logically and metaphysically plausible. Furthermore, most also thought that there were plenty of other cases – both theological and non-theological – that demanded such alternative views, so that it was not unreasonable to offer such a view, even if, *prima facie*, their views were not intuitive. As one might expect, these cases involved a good deal of complexity, so puzzling through them requires a good bit of metaphysical and logical exploration. As we will see in the ensuing discussion, Scotus had no shortage of interesting cases and incredibly subtle ways of engaging with those cases in order to provide a defense of the view that he outlines in his works.

What we will encounter in Scotus, then, is a theory that takes seriously the need for additional notions of distinction and identity in order to account for cases like the Trinity. Thus, like many of his contemporaries and predecessors, he eschews the view that the simplistic division between the real distinction and the distinction of reason is exhaustive. Furthermore, he offers an incredibly puzzling but profound alternative way of thinking about identity that offers the proper complement to his theoretical apparatus for distinctions. Though the task of offering an alternative account of distinctions was hardly an idiosyncratic one, the particulars of his account are quite unique. But it is the latter task, in his discussion of identity, where his creative genius is unparalleled – regardless of whether we accept his views or even make full sense of them. There are few, if any, discussions of identity in the medieval period that are quite so

subtle and intriguing for thinking about how to handle non-standard philosophical and theological cases.

The task that I have set myself, then, is to offer an exploration and explanation of the account of identity and distinction that emerges from a careful review of Scotus's discussions of these matters. We will encounter novelties such as the formal distinction and the adequate distinction, as well as their complements - formal identity and adequate identity. We will also discover that what Scotus calls "real identity" is not quite what most people would identify as identity. What I develop here is the suggestion that Scotus has (at least) two different notions of identity. Many accounts of identity in contemporary philosophical discussion suggest that – whether one is giving a so-called classical account of identity or some sort of alternative account – all identity claims reduce to, or should be analyzed in terms of, a single type of identity. Unlike those accounts, however, Scotus does not reduce identity to one or the other notion that he develops. For Scotus, each notion of identity functions in a specific sphere of metaphysical and logical commitments. My hope here is to motivate the plausibility of this picture.

The Texts, and Motivation for a Study of *Reportatio I-A*

Scotus discusses identity and distinction in a number of different places in his writings. For ease of exposition, I will focus my attention at first on Scotus's discussion of distinction and identity in his Paris *Reportatio I-A*, especially distinctions 33 and 34. This text, an examined report of Scotus's Paris lectures on Lombard's Sentences, has recently been edited and published by Oleg Bychkov and Allan Wolter.¹ The discussion of these topics in the *Reportatio* is not an isolated account; and ultimately the understanding derived from this text must be integrated with

¹ John Duns Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis I-A*, in *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture (Reportatio I-A)*, 2 vols., eds. & trans., Allan B. Wolter and Oleg Bychkov (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2004, 2008). Unless otherwise noted, I use the translations provided by Wolter and Bychkov.

Scotus's other texts on the topic. However, my initial explication will be derived primarily from the *Reportatio* text. There are a number of reasons for focusing on this particular text.

First of all, I think it is helpful to focus on a single text in order to ensure that the account is developed correctly on its own merits. In some cases, one must look at other texts in order to make sense of the single text. Despite the fact that making the textual discussions cohere will be the ultimate goal, there is a great deal of value in attending to the *Reportatio* text alone; for the extant interpretations of other texts may impact a reading of this text if we bring them to bear upon our best reading of the *Reportatio* by itself. So I will begin my discussion with it.

Second, the subject matter of these distinctions in the *Reportatio* involves extended attention to the topics of the Trinity and the divine essence. These seem to be the very topics motivating Scotus to posit and develop his complex account of identity and distinction. Though Scotus discusses these issues in connection with a variety of topics in metaphysics, his concern with getting a central doctrinal question right would seem to be at its apex, especially since he is strictly speaking a theologian. Furthermore, there is no more compelling case in metaphysics requiring simplicity and unity, on the one hand, and diversity or difference, on the other, than the doctrine of the Trinity. Subtle theories of distinctions were generated often for just that reason; so the divine case should be exactly the sort of case that we should want for understanding the details of his theory.

Thirdly, Scotus's treatment of identity and distinction in the *Reportatio* is one of the most detailed discussions that he offers on the topics. He discusses both logical and metaphysical implications of his views, a range of issues relevant to the theory, and arguments in favor of his own view and against alternative views. As a result of these discussions, this text provides us with a clearer picture of Scotus's logical and metaphysical commitments with respect to identity.

All of the reasons that I have offered thus far provide us with a motivation to study the *Reportatio* text. Unfortunately, none of the reasons I have offered so far provide us with a motivation to *begin* with that text, or treat it as the primary entry point into the discussion. So let me add a pair of additional reasons that should motivate my consideration of the *Reportatio* in particular.

For starters, the *Reportatio* I-A text has only recently been edited and translated, and is just now receiving a significant level of attention. Most commentary on this material derives from a text that was originally thought to have been written by Scotus, but in fact is now believed to have been written by William of Alnwick (albeit via firsthand contact with Scotus). This text, referred to as *Reportatio* I (rather than I-A) has received careful discussion from a number of philosophers, including Marilyn Adams, Martin Tweedale, and Hester Gelber. However, as a result of the discovery that Scotus did not himself write or edit the text now credited to Alnwick, there might be some fear that our views of Scotus have gone wrong by attending to a text that he did not write.² Of course, suggesting that we should reject older interpretations simply because Alnwick wrote or compiled what is now called the *Additiones Magnae* is far too strong a claim. Most medieval philosophers immediately after Scotus, such as Adam Wodeham, believed Alnwick to be faithful to Scotus in his reporting. Nonetheless, as Wolter and Bychkov point out, Alnwick's text appears to be "an attempt to update the *Ordinatio* Scotus began at Oxford in 1300 with what he taught somewhat differently at Paris before his exile in the June of 1303."³ Even if the Alnwick text seems to discuss things in a manner similar to the *Reportatio* I-A text, it is important to develop an account of the I-A text to ensure the

² Allan Wolter and Oleg Bychkov, introduction to *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, vol. 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), xix.

³ *ibid.*

independent status that it deserves as a text *of* Scotus. In particular, we want to get Scotus's account of identity (or anything else, for that matter) right through a careful examination of the text.

Finally, the *Reportatio* text seems to be among Scotus's latest and most detailed texts on the topic.⁴ There is an emerging consensus amongst medieval scholars that Scotus's writings from Paris are among his very latest works. This represents a shift in direction for the scholarly consensus. The Vatican-commissioned critical edition of Scotus's theological works has used the thesis that Scotus's *Ordinatio* was the latest and most definitive discussion on nearly every topic, and that it incorporated material both from his early Oxford *Lectura* and his Parisian lectures. Charles Balic, the longtime chief editor of the critical edition, argues that "whenever disagreement exists between the teaching of the *Ordinatio* and the teaching of the *Reportationes*, the text of the *Ordinatio* is to be followed as that which reflects Scotus's final and definitive doctrine."⁵ More recent thinking, however, suggests that (at least the first book of) the Paris *Reportatio* was in fact composed at a later date than the *Ordinatio*. The thesis seems to be that Scotus composed a substantial portion of the *Ordinatio* at Oxford, before leaving for Paris. Then, while at Paris, he composed the *Reportatio*. Though Scotus may have spent some time editing the *Ordinatio* while in Paris, there is a reasonable amount of evidence to maintain the new thesis about the textual chronology; I will mention just a couple of items in this regard.

First, Scotus mentions in his prologue to the *Ordinatio* that he wrote it in 1300, which is before he left for Paris. Additionally, the organization of material in the *Reportatio* is rather

⁴ I do not intend to provide a full defense here of the claim that this text is among his latest.

⁵ Carl Balić, "The Life and Works of John Duns Scotus," in *John Duns Scotus 1265-1965*, edited by J K Ryan and B M Bonansea (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 12.

different in some cases than what we find in the *Lectura* and the *Ordinatio*, which suggests a sort of independence for the Parisian text. Wolter and Bychkov raise this point in the Introduction to their edition of the *Reportatio*:

Though some portions of the *Ordinatio* I indicate that Scotus used the *Reportatio* I-A in composing it (e.g., Dist. 4), in many respects this report seems to reflect a later and more expanded development of the subjects treated compared to the *Ordinatio* I (e.g., Dist. 26) or *Lectura* I.⁶

Even if we find *some* evidence that Scotus continued work on the *Ordinatio* in Paris, the weight of evidence still seems to lie on the side of those who claim a later date of composition, editing, and revision for the *Reportatio* than what we think most plausible for the *Ordinatio*. This is suggested primarily because of the variation in structure and discussion of certain topics at greater length in the *Reportatio*. Wolter and Bychkov point, quite rightly, to the discussion of the Incarnation and persons in d. 26. I suggest that an even clearer case can be made from Scotus's discussions of identity and distinction. In particular, the development of his theory in the *Reportatio* provides a prime example both of the difference in structure and the extended development of his account. For in the Oxford writings, much of his discussion in Book 1 is concentrated in distinctions 2 and 8. However, in the *Reportatio*, his discussion gets its greatest attention in distinctions 33 and 34, and is more detailed than what we find in the corresponding portions of the *Ordinatio*.

Since the *Lectura* can definitively be dated earlier than both the *Ordinatio* and the *Reportatio*, the continuity between the Oxford lectures suggests that the *Reportatio* represented something of a new start for Scotus, one that is not reflected in the *Ordinatio*. If the *Ordinatio* were the later text, then one might indeed expect to see some of this revised organization in the latest versions of the *Ordinatio* that we possess.

⁶ Wolter & Bychkov, introduction to *The Examined Report*, xix.

If this text is, indeed, one of his very latest discussions of these issues, and the discussion of the divine essence and the divine persons is the most significant test case for his view, then this text of the *Reportatio* seems like an excellent place to begin our discussion. However, there are obvious concerns with focusing exclusively on this text. First of all, the evidence provided in favor of the view that the Paris *Reportatio* is one of Scotus's latest texts, or at least later than the *Ordinatio*, is perhaps equivocal. Second, there may be topics not addressed in the *Reportatio* that receive attention in other texts. Third, there may be illuminating discussions in other texts on points that are obscure or opaque in the *Reportatio*. (Indeed, it is not unlikely that we will find Scotus to be both obscure and opaque on a regular basis.) As a result, in order to establish the importance of Scotus's *Reportatio* text, I must discuss central topics in his theory of identity and distinction as they occur in Scotus's other (and perhaps earlier) texts, such as the *Ordinatio* and the *Lectura*, as well as his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* – all of which were likely composed at Oxford - and the so-called *Logica Scoti*, which seems to have been written while he was in Paris.

One important point of difference arises from a supposed shift in the ontological commitment of the formal distinction, which occupies a central place in Scotus's theory. Marilyn Adams, among others, has argued that Scotus seems to revise his account of the distinction in ways that suggest a difference in ontological commitment between the Oxford texts and the Paris texts.⁷ In the former texts, he appears committed to distinct ontological items (that he terms, *inter alia*, 'formalities') that are distinct vis-à-vis the formal distinction; this suggests

⁷ See Marilyn Adams, *William Ockham* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Marilyn McCord Adams, "Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, eds. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony J Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 411-39; and Marilyn Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," *Franciscan Studies* 36, no. 1 (1976): 5-74.

the “metaphysical” or “entitative” interpretation of the formal distinction. In the latter texts, however, Scotus provides an account that is not committed to any such entities as formalities; this interpretation, instead, suggests that the formal distinction involves merely a difference in the mode or type of identity involved, rather than a difference in things. What is this notion of mode, according to Scotus? Generally, Scotus suggests that many things have their own intrinsic modes that specify only the *ways* in which those things exist, rather than indicating some further entity. In the first book of his *Ordinatio*, he contrasts the case of a distinction between two different realities with the case of “some reality with its own intrinsic mode”.⁸ The former involves multiple ontological commitments, while the latter does not. For example, whiteness exists with particular modes of intensity and saturation, even though those modes are nothing (ontologically) over and above the individual whiteness. The distinction involving the intrinsic mode merely provides the foundation for a difference in the types of concepts that can be formed: the perfect concept of the thing includes the intrinsic mode, while an imperfect concept of the thing does not include the mode. The perfect concept of a whiteness would include its modes of intensity and saturation, but the imperfect concept could include mere whiteness without the intrinsic modes present in the whiteness.⁹

As a result, Adams’ interpretation of Scotus’ later work involves a much weaker

⁸ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 8 p. 1 q. 3 n. 138, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 4, edited by C. Balić, M. Bodewig, S. Bušelić, P. Čapkun-Delić, B. Hechich, I. Jurić, B. Korošak, L. Modrić, S. Nanni, I. Reinhold, and O. Schäfer (Città del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1956), 222: “Respondeo quod quando intelligitur aliqua realitas cum modo suo intrinseco, ille conceptus non est ita simpliciter simplex quin possit concipi illa realitas absque modo illo, sed tunc est conceptus imperfectus illius rei; potest etiam concipi sub illo modo, et tunc est conceptus perfectus illius rei. Exemplum: si esset albedo in decimo gradu intensionis, quantumcumque esset simplex omni modo in re, posset tamen concipi sub ratione albedinis tantae, et tunc perfecte conciperetur conceptu adaequato ipsi rei, - vel posset concipi praecise sub ratione albedinis, et tunc conciperetur conceptu imperfecto et deficiente a perfectione rei; conceptus autem imperfectus posset esse communis albedini illi et alii, et conceptus perfectus proprius esset.”

⁹ See text in previous footnote.

ontological commitment than what she sees in his earlier work. Most commentators on this issue identify these shifts in the content of the formal distinction account with different chronological stages of Scotus's work. And if we assume the chronology offered above – that the Oxford texts predate the Paris texts, an assumption accepted by Adams – then Scotus begins with the metaphysical view during his pre-Paris period, but then shifts to the modal view while in Paris.

Another point of difference bears on the sorts of formal properties that obtain in Scotus's discussion of identity. In the *Reportatio*, Scotus seems to abandon some of the ordinary formal properties of identity when he discusses what he calls "real identity". Martin Tweedale has argued that Scotus seems to have toyed with a rejection of transitivity, for example, at some point in his career, but ultimately declined to give up on such a central formal feature of identity.¹⁰ Of some intrigue here is that Tweedale cites the *Ordinatio* as offering evidence that Scotus gave up on the rejection of any of the formal properties of identity, indicating that he is wedded to the view that the *Ordinatio* is the later text, and that the *Reportatio*'s proposal of a rejection of any of the formal properties was a view from an earlier period that Scotus ultimately abandoned (as indefensible, presumably). Like Adams, Tweedale sees a conflict (or at least a straightforward tension) between the texts of the *Reportatio* and the *Ordinatio* on topics central to a discussion of Scotus's theory of identity and distinction. Unlike Adams, however, Tweedale settles the conflict in favor of the Oxford text, because he urges that the Oxford text is the later, more authoritative representation of Scotus's considered views.

The result of such controversies is that commentators have given a great deal of attention

¹⁰ Martin Tweedale, "Comments on Blander's 'Duns Scotus on Formal Distinction, Identity, and Material Constitution'", presented at the Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (2008). A more detailed discussion of these matters can be found in Martin Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham: A Medieval Dispute Over Universals*, 2 vols. (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1999). The first volume includes a large quantity of central texts, while the second volume contains his extensive commentary on those texts.

to the development of well-crafted chronologies of the texts, often with the aim of using those chronologies to help structure and organize the texts and their contents in ways that make sense of Scotus's final, ultimate account. In other words, much of the conversation about these questions implies that getting the chronology correct is a matter of grave importance. However, developing an airtight case in favor of one's favored chronology is extremely difficult. As a result, some discussions of chronology end up offering extremely puzzling proposals about the ordering and structure of the texts. For example, much of the early discussion about ontological commitment focused on a supposed difference between question 1 and question 2 of distinction 33 in the first book of the *Reportatio*. This proposal would require treating those two questions as though they were from entirely different periods of Scotus's work, and reflected quite divergent theories. Though such a proposal is not impossible, it seems incredibly unlikely, especially if Scotus himself had any role in the composition of this material. Therefore, we ought to be extremely cautious about formulating a chronology that then requires that we perform textual or philosophical acrobatics in order to make sense of it. Perhaps chronology plays some role, but it's more important figure out what the actual claims are, their context, etc. There may be fewer differences than we think, or the differences might not follow a perfect chronological order. The differences might arise from context and the particular arguments in which the claims are embedded.

Perhaps more importantly, I will later argue that my examination of the *Reportatio* text suggests that his discussions of identity and distinction are remarkably similar, and that there are few important differences. Though there are variations in emphasis and detail between texts, I suggest that the general account he provides does not differ substantially from text to text. In particular, I will point to his discussions of the pair of topics mentioned above to illustrate the

consistency of his views: (a) what degree of ontological commitment should be maintained in cases of distinctions *ex parte rei*; and (b) the formal properties that obtain in Scotus's account(s) of identity. For example, I believe that Scotus is committed to the metaphysical view even in his work from the Parisian period and after, so my view that the *Reportatio* text is later than the *Ordinatio* ultimately has no impact on whether I should think that "mature" Scotus denied or affirmed ontological commitment in the case of the formal distinction.

Though there is clear value in a study that integrates the claims of the *Reportatio* with other discussions, our starting place should be with a careful exposition of the philosophical content of this particular text. I argue that there are few, if any, substantive differences in Scotus's picture of the formal distinction from text to text, contrary to the claims of a number of commentators; and since the *Paris Reportatio* provides one of the latest and most complete accounts, it is the most appropriate text for laying the groundwork for this discussion of identity and distinction.

Real Distinctions

As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, there seems to be a straightforward division of distinctions into two basic types: real and conceptual. This division suggests that there are distinctions grounded in reality external to the mind (or as Scotus would say, *ex parte rei*) and distinctions grounded in the activity of the mind. Of course, real distinctions may have correlates in the mind, such that there is a distinction between concepts corresponding to the distinction in reality. However, that distinction between concepts is not a distinction of reason, because it is ultimately grounded in reality, not the activity of the mind. As an example, my can of Monster Energy Drink is really distinct from the frightening yet fulfilling liquid found inside the can. In virtue of my contemplation of the can and beverage, I am able to form distinct

concepts of those two really distinct entities. However, we ought not say that there is a distinction of reason between them, for the difference between the concept of the can and the concept of the liquid is grounded in the real ontological distinction between the can and liquid.

On the other hand, if there is not a grounding *ex parte rei* for the distinction between our concepts, then we can claim that there is a (mere) distinction of reason. Such a distinction could plausibly apply to various cases that have received considerable attention in contemporary philosophical contexts, such as the case of Cicero and Tully, the Morning Star and the Evening Star, or Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper. In each of these cases, there is a single object about which we have formed multiple concepts, regardless of whether there might be some basis in that single thing that grounds the generation of more than one concept. And it is that single object to which our concepts properly connect. When I see Alice Cooper in concert, I have the concept of Alice Cooper in mind, a concept that includes various features related to his role as inventor of “shock rock”. When Vincent Furnier’s mother anticipates seeing him at Thanksgiving, she has a concept of Vincent Furnier in mind, a concept that includes features such as how frequently she had to change his diaper as an infant. Nonetheless, the concept I have of Alice Cooper and the concept that Vincent Furnier’s mother has of Vincent Furnier are of the very same being, viz., the human being born Vincent Furnier but known on stage as Alice Cooper. The distinction between Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper, then, is merely a distinction of reason, since there is only one object, and no distinction external to the mind (or *ex parte rei*), according to Scotus.

The rich metaphysical picture to which many medieval philosophers were wedded made this basic division far too simple to accommodate all of the cases such a story must account for. Additionally, many medieval philosophers held doctrinal commitments that required them to take seriously dogmas that demanded metaphysical and logical ingenuity in order to ensure that

their systems could account for these commitments. Among these were the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Eucharist. As a result, many medieval philosophers had a variety of both theological and philosophical reasons for remaining unconvinced that this pair of distinctions was sufficient for proper theological and philosophical explanation. Some believed, for example, that the division was not exhaustive; they argued that there are ways of being distinct that are not captured by the difference between the real distinction and the distinction of reason.¹¹ Perhaps we could resist this concern, since there is some sense in which we could regard the proposed division as exhaustive, since it seems plausible to suggest that the division was intended to cover (a) everything that was grounded in reality; and (b) everything that was not so grounded. But even if that exhaustive rendering were accurate, it remained insufficiently fine-grained to the philosophical sensibilities of many thinkers of the period. As a result, a great deal of effort was expended in order to develop more detailed accounts of distinction; and as noted above in the discussion of the distinction of reason, a discussion of identity was crucial as well, since the question of whether identity obtains features prominently whenever we propose the presence of any sort of distinction. Thus we get varieties of theories of identity and distinction emerging in the medieval period. Regardless of whether we should regard these theories as proposing various so-called *intermediate* distinctions, or as offering more fully fleshed out accounts of each of the two basic types (i.e., real and conceptual), we will consistently notice that these thinkers thought that more fine-grained detail was needed to explain a variety of philosophical and theological cases, and we will encounter several additional distinctions (or

¹¹ Very useful discussions of the history of such proposals can be found in Hester Goodenough Gelber, "Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in in Scholastic Thought, 1300-1335" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1974); and Sandra Edwards, "Medieval Theories of Distinction," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974).

distinction types) as we read their texts.

As I mentioned earlier, one central motivation for alternative accounts – though assuredly not the only one - was to provide an account of a distinction that could be co-present with identity and simplicity, especially divine simplicity. This motivation certainly informed the account offered by John Duns Scotus. His own discussion of distinction and identity in the *Reportatio* includes at least five varieties – real, formal, adequate, modal, and conceptual. Each of these notions marks out conceptual space for both a distinction and a type of identity; as we explore his account, we should consider the array over which each of these pairs ranges, and whether any of these pairs serves as a complete and exhaustive division of reality. My emphasis in what follows will be on real, formal, and adequate identity and distinction; but I will mention at the appropriate times the modal and conceptual distinctions. The primary reasons for my emphasis on the former three are that those (a) are the notions that Scotus suggests are on the side of things, so to speak; (b) seem to be where we will encounter puzzling claims by Scotus about the nature of identity; and (c) will most helpfully clarify Scotus’s understanding of ontological commitment in relation to his theory of identity and distinction.

Regarding (a), when we are speaking of the distinctions in particular, we will be discussing those distinctions that Scotus says are *ex parte rei* – or perhaps more perspicuously, they are notions that most closely connect with extramental reality. Again, we may find a difference in concepts in these *ex parte rei* cases, but any such difference will be grounded in some difference in the external world, and will be prior to the activity of the mind. This family of notions, then, seems most relevant for getting a grip on reality, which of course is the purpose when engaging in the sort of philosophical and theological reflection that occupied Scotus. Regarding (b), discussions of identity in relation to the distinction of reason ordinarily involve

just one object about which we distinguish between multiple different concepts. Since there is just one object in such cases, the attendant notion of identity should ordinarily follow standard views of identity (though not always). On the other hand, distinctions *ex parte rei*, at least in the hands of someone struggling to work out a logic of identity in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity – such as Scotus in the present case, or contemporary figures like Peter Geach or Peter Van Inwagen – often yield alternative models of identity that offer substantial revisions to our usual logic of identity, especially in relation to the formal properties associated with identity. Regarding (c), the presence of a distinction on the side of reality suggests, at least initially, that there will be more than one entity present in order to explain that such a distinction obtains, which offers a more robust ontological commitment than cases of conceptual distinction, since such a distinction in the mind does not (or at least need not) have any grounding in extramental reality. In other words, the distinction of reason can be understood as a *mere* distinction of reason (as should already have been clear from my earlier discussion of it).

These considerations offer ample justification for focusing attention on the distinctions that Scotus regards as *ex parte rei*. Additionally, (b) and (c) provide strong reasons for emphasizing formal and adequate distinction and identity in particular. As we will shortly see, Scotus thought this as well, as his discussion in distinctions 33 and 34 of *Reportatio I-A* addresses some fundamental questions about how to think about those two notions.

Scotus's *Reportatio* Account of Identity and Distinction

I have already mentioned one central element of Scotus's view of identity and distinction: his differentiation between distinctions that are *ex parte rei*, and those that are not. This is not, however, where Scotus begins his discussion. Instead, he emphasizes the need to explain various distinctions in terms of identity. His discussion of identity, though, is non-traditional; and his

basic divisions in this discussion are between (a) identity and (b) non-identity, each of which is either (c) qualified; or (d) unqualified. Various combinations of these four yield necessary conditions for the distinctions described in Scotus's theory. We can begin with the familiar ones. In the case of the distinction of reason, and ultimately any distinction that is not *ex parte rei*, he indicates that:

If x and y are not distinct "on the side of things", then x and y are simply and unqualifiedly identical.

This seems like a reasonably straightforward suggestion, since no qualification should be needed on the identity that holds in cases involving a mere distinction of reason. On the other hand, in the case of the real distinction, Scotus suggests that:

If x and y are really distinct, then x and y are simply and unqualifiedly non-identical.

Again, this appears quite appropriate, as there is seemingly no good reason to offer any qualification on the non-identity between really distinct entities. We will explore the details of these proposals in short order. However, for the sake of proper exposition of the view, we must first see that Scotus would note an important asymmetry between these two accounts. The first description bears on all cases in which there is no distinction on the side of things. According to Scotus, however, the latter does not; it discusses only one particular way in which there can be a distinction on the side of things. As I have already mentioned, Scotus claims that the real, formal, and adequate distinctions all obtain independent of or prior to the activity of the intellect, and mark off some genuine difference in the world or reality. Yet the second description only discusses the real distinction and its corresponding notion of non-identity. Therefore, we need (at least) one more description of the necessary conditions for any additional distinctions *ex parte rei*. Scotus offers the following:

If x and y are either formally or adequately distinct, then x and y are (a) qualifiedly non-

identical and (b) simply and unqualifiedly identical.

Unlike the previous two proposals that were seemingly intuitive and rather straightforward, this offering can seem quite puzzling. To begin with, Scotus suggests that both the formal and adequate distinctions will involve both identity *and* non-identity, which appears *prima facie* paradoxical or perhaps even contradictory. Secondly, Scotus now introduces the idea of qualification; he claims that where there is a formal or adequate distinction, there is qualified non-identity. What this qualification amounts to is not quite clear. Where we thought we might find clarity and explanation of the formal and adequate distinctions, we instead find obscurity. Therefore, if we hope to make any progress in understanding Scotus's view, we must carefully examine the text of the Paris *Reportatio* I-A, d. 33, qq. 2-3, in which he describes and explains these distinctions, along with the puzzling co-presence of identity and non-identity, and the relevant absence or presence of qualification. My discussion in the remainder of this section will quote primarily from d. 33. All references to this distinction in the remainder of this section will point only to the question and paragraph number within d. 33.

Let us first examine what Scotus specifically says about qualified non-identity. In q. 2, he examines what sort of distinction holds between the divine essence and the personal property had by each divine person (e.g., paternity in the Father), and whether such a distinction would violate the stricture of simplicity in God. In q. 2 n. 57, Scotus argues that “the [divine] essence and the relation [e.g., the property of paternity in the divine person] are distinguished in such a way that prior to any act of the intellect this property is distinguished from the essence in a qualified manner.”¹² Though Scotus does not yet specify the sort of distinction that applies in

¹² John Duns Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 57, in *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture* (*Reportatio I-A*), vol. 2, eds. Allan B. Wolter and Oleg Bychkov (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute,

this case, he does indicate that whatever distinction is present is *ex parte rei*, excluding the option of considering this distinction to be a distinction of reason, since such a distinction is dependent on or posterior to the activity of the intellect. For example, the distinction between Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper is not a distinction, as Scotus would say, on the side of things; it is only the *concepts* in our minds that differ. Though there might be some basis in that single thing that grounds the generation of more than one concept, Scotus will insist that such a basis does not provide us with the foundation for a distinction *ex parte rei*, since there is nonetheless just one object to which our multiple concepts refer.¹³ On the other hand, he also points out that the divine essence and the personal property are qualifiedly distinct or non-identical,¹⁴ which seemingly rules out the presence of the real distinction.

From this, we can presumably infer the claim mentioned earlier, namely that Scotus thinks that there are distinctions that divide reality but that ought not be considered real distinctions (in the traditional sense). In q. 2 n. 59, he makes this point even more clearly:

The essence and relation from the very nature of things are distinguished in a qualified way...the distinction of the essence and relation is of thing and thing simply, but the distinction is qualified.¹⁵

Here once again Scotus makes explicit that the distinction between the relation and the essence is a distinction in reality, and not merely one that is generated by the activity of the intellect, but

2008), 327: “essentia et relatio sic distinguuntur, quod ante omnem actum intellectus haec proprietas distinguitur ab essentia secundum quid.”

¹³ He argues this point at length in his *Questions on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 7 q. 19 n. 22, where he suggests that Henry of Ghent's intentional distinction ought not be understood as a distinction *ex parte rei*.

¹⁴ For now, I will assume the appropriateness of interchanging the terms “distinct” and “non-identical” (and their cognates). Later in the discussion I will argue that Scotus affirms this as appropriate both in the *Reportatio* and the *Logica Scoti*.

¹⁵ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 59, 328: “essentia et relatio ex natura rei distinguuntur secundum quid....distinctio essentiae et relationis est rei et rei simpliciter, - sed distinctio est secundum quid.” (my translation)

that the distinction is what is qualified. Scotus adds something additional here, as well. He indicates that this qualified distinction distinguishes thing and thing, which seems to suggest the presence of two real things. Scotus wants to emphasize that *only* the distinction is qualified. Despite the absence of a real distinction, we should not think that the *entities* distinguished here are in any way qualified or diminished, such as entities in the mind (alone) would be. To the contrary, the divine essence is as real an entity as there is in reality, as it is formally infinite. Thus the distinction is not called qualified in virtue of the distinguished things being qualified, which of course accords with Scotus's commitment to this distinction being *ex parte rei*. (I will discuss the matter of ontological commitment in more detail later.) However, it does not yet help us understand what Scotus means when he discusses the notion of qualification when he refers to qualified distinction or non-identity.

At this point, we likely need to turn to Scotus's discussion of simple identity (identity *simpliciter*) if we are to make headway in understanding his view. In the midst of his discussion of the distinction between the personal property and the divine person itself in q. 3, he provides some helpful detail in n. 88:

The property and the person are identical simply, and are distinguished from the very nature of things in a qualified way.¹⁶

So the property (of, say, paternity) and the first person of the Trinity (i.e., the Father) are distinct by way of a qualified distinction *ex parte rei*, and are also simply identical, which suggests that

¹⁶ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 88, 337: "proprietas et persona sunt idem simpliciter et tamen distinguuntur ex natura rei secundum quid." (my translation) The presence of the language of "*simpliciter*" and "*secundum quid*" may suggest that Scotus is fully aware that he must exercise caution in order to avoid the fallacy of *secundum quid et simpliciter*. His treatment of the connection between distinction and identity, as I discuss below, makes clear not only that he is not guilty of this fallacy, but that he is very careful to avoid it. In particular, see footnote 17 for further discussion of the contrast.

there is no qualification on the identity in place here.¹⁷ Therefore, this qualified distinction is compatible with, or can be co-present with, simple identity. He similarly affirms this in q. 2 n. 63, when he points out that, from the distinction (or non-identity) between divine essence and property, “it does not follow that that the first cannot be simply identical with the other.”¹⁸ In other words, the presence of distinction or non-identity between one thing and another does not entail that the first cannot be simply identical with the other. Once again, we see Scotus claim that this simple identity is compatible with some kind of distinction in reality.

To this point, the account remains puzzling, since it is not yet clear how such a distinction can be co-present with real identity. Should we suggest some sort of reductive account of identity? Perhaps we should distinguish between identity that is “loose and popular” and identity that is “strict and philosophical”, where only the latter is a genuine sort of identity; so perhaps real identity can be considered to be akin to loose and popular identity. However Scotus clearly regards real identity as a genuine sort of identity. Surely Scotus would not affirm that the Son and the Divine Nature are identical in a loose and popular sense. So it will do us no good to suggest that “real identity” is some weakened or qualified notion of identity, for Scotus has already indicated that the sort of identity that is present between both (a) the property and the person; and (b) the property and the divine essence is said to be, in both cases, a simple, unvarnished identity. He states this clearly in relation to the former in q. 2 n. 63 (as noted

¹⁷ Wolter and Bychkov translate Scotus’s language of “idem simpliciter” as “identical in a simple and unqualified sense”. Though it may be a stretch to translate “idem simpliciter” in this way, I think that their point in doing so is a plausible one, since Scotus does contrast “idem simpliciter” with distinction “secundum quid”; that is, he seems to contrast simple notions on the one hand and qualified, non-simple notions on the other.

¹⁸ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 63, 330: “Et tamen propter non-identitatem formalem non sequitur quin unum simpliciter sit idem alteri.” (my translation)

above); and he could hardly be clearer than his statement in the case of the latter in q. 3 n. 89: “their identity is true and perfect.”¹⁹

But perhaps we should not be so puzzled by the co-existence of qualified distinction and simple identity. There is, after all, significant literature discussing alternative notions of identity in contemporary philosophical work, some of which involve the co-presence of distinction and identity or sameness. I already mentioned cases involving a distinction of reason. Partial identity seems to suggest this character as well. Perhaps even relative identity can be thought of along these lines. Can any of these proposals help us understand what Scotus is up to here? It seems unlikely.²⁰

Let’s take cases involving a distinction of reason first. For reasons I have discussed above, this cannot be what Scotus has in mind. Consider again the case of Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper. The distinction between Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper is not a distinction on the side of things; it is only the *concepts* in our minds that differ. Though there might be some basis in that single thing that grounds the generation of more than one concept, Scotus will insist that such a basis does not provide us with the foundation for a distinction *ex parte rei*, since there is nonetheless just one object to which our multiple concepts refer. Thus there is an identity between Vincent Furnier and Alice Cooper, because they are names for the very same human being. If we generalize, we note that in such cases there is some one object to which our multiple concepts apply. Since Scotus suggests that whatever distinction is present is *ex parte rei*, the current suggestion cannot capture the heart of Scotus’s proposal.

¹⁹ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 89, 337: “ergo eorum identitas est vera et perfecta.”

²⁰ There may be other alternative proposals that bear some resemblance to Scotus’s account, such as Aristotelian accidental sameness; but it seems likely that those will fail to fit Scotus’s strictures for reasons similar to the ones I will discuss here, so for the sake of economy, I will not attempt an exhaustive cataloging of possible alternatives.

What about partial identity? The notion of partial identity here seems to be that there can be overlapping entities without complete coincidence – and the absence of coincidence might be in terms of difference in inhering accidents or perhaps in terms of spatial, temporal, or modal properties, depending on the notion with which we are working.²¹ First of all, Scotus explicitly denies in q. 3 n. 89 that there could be any partial identity between person and property or essence and property:

The [divine] person as a quasi-whole contains a property and the essence; therefore, there will be some identity between them: not some qualified or partial identity...their identity is true and perfect.²²

Perhaps more importantly, all of the proposed cases of partial identity seem to involve difference involving some sort of contingency, such as the distinction between a substance like Socrates and an aggregate like seated-Socrates; that will be a real distinction on Scotus's account.²³

However, Scotus's case involves the divine essence, in which there can be no contingency.

²¹ I think it plausible to consider temporary, contingent, and accidental identity to be species of the genus of partial identity. I don't think much in my discussion here ultimately rises or falls on this assumption, but it ought to be explicit in order to avoid any confusion about my description at present.

²² *ibid.*: "persona quasi quoddam totum habet essentiam et proprietatem; ergo inter illa est aliqua identitas: non identitas secundum quid vel partialis, quia unum eorum est infinitum, et infinitum nec est pars nec partem habens, quia tunc esset componibile cum alio, vel aliud sibi; ergo eorum identitas est vera et perfecta." His reason in this particular case for denying partial identity is because of the infinity of the divine essence. According to Scotus, anything that is infinite "is neither a part nor can it have a part, because then it would be part of a compound with that other, or that other with it".

²³ cf. Gareth B. Matthews, "Accidental Unities," in *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G.E.L. Owen*, eds. Malcolm Schofield and Martha Nussbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 223–40.; Gareth B. Matthews, "On Knowing How to Take Aristotle's Kooky Objects Seriously," presented at the Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (1992); Frank A. Lewis, "Accidental Sameness in Aristotle," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 42 (1982): 1–36; Michael C. Rea, "Sameness Without Identity: An Aristotelian Solution to the Problem of Material Constitution," *Ratio: An International Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (1998): 316–28; Jeffrey E. Brower and Michael C. Rea, "Material Constitution and the Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 22, no. 1 (2005): 57–76.

So we are left to consider relative identity. The relative identity strategy, as developed by Peter Geach, was explicitly developed to work out a logic for the Trinity.²⁴ And there do seem to be family resemblances between Scotus's account and the relative identity strategy. Therefore, it should be instructive to understand whether there any important similarities obtain between relative identity and Scotus's own account of identity. In order to do so, we need to look at the central features of relative identity. Among the most salient for our purposes are the following:

- (i) it is possible that, for some x and some y , and sortal terms F and G , x is the same F as y , but x is not the same G as y (where x and y are F and x and y are G);
- (ii) sortal-relative identity claims are more fundamental than non-sortal-relative identity statements; therefore, all identity statements of the form $x = y$ must be analyzed in terms of identity that is sortal-relative.

At first glance, claim (i) is compatible with Scotus's view. Scotus might seem to endorse (i) explicitly in his discussion of the Trinity: the Father is God, the Son is God, the Father is a divine person, the Son is a divine person; the Father is the same God as the Son, the Father is not the same divine person as the Son. Claim (ii) also seems compatible with Scotus's view. Arguably, Scotus could say that the identity of x and y in a pure and simple sense depends on whether x and y are formally identical or adequately identical; and if these notions of identity can be indicated by way of sortal term expressions, then Scotus's view would seem compatible with (ii). Though it is not obvious that the dependence goes in the direction proposed in (ii), rather than the other way round, but as far as I can tell, there is nothing in what Scotus says that would force us to reject (ii).

²⁴ See, for example, Peter Geach, "Identity," in *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 238–47; Peter Geach, *Reference and Generality*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); and Nicholas Griffin, *Relative Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

Nonetheless, we must be cautious about attributing something like this pair of theses to Scotus. For example, (ii) arguably does not express the only view of relative identity regarding the relationship between the different types of identity statement. Relative identity theorists ordinarily seem convinced that claims about non-sortal-relative identity are not merely incomplete, but rather more strongly that they are all malformed and hence fail to express any identity claims. Thus we might consider (ii*) to represent at least varieties of relative identity:

(ii*) sortal-relative identity claims are malformed and fail to express any identity claims; therefore, all identity statements of the form $x = y$ must be translated in terms of identity that is sortal-relative.

Unlike (ii), (ii*) suggests that non-sortal-relative identity claims cannot be inferred from sortal-relative identity claims. This implies that we are unable to state any simple identity claims; identity must always be specified in relation to a sortal term; there cannot be identity full stop. But Scotus seems to deny this. His language of identity that is “true” and “perfect” seems to suggest that we ought not suggest that all identity must be qualified in some way. This implies that identity need not always be sortal-relative.

Finally, relative identity theorists seem committed to an additional claim, viz., that there is no privileged or fundamental sortal that would be sufficient for grounding a non-sortal-relative identity claim (even for someone who affirms (ii) rather than (ii*)).

(iii) there is no fundamental sortal S such that if x and y are the same S , then $x = y$.

Why would the relative identity theorist affirm (iii)? If we were to allow such fundamental sortals, it would seem to render irrelevant the considerations that motivate (i) and (ii). Why consider, for example, whether there are different sortals that apply both to x and y , when one could simply consider only the fundamental sortal. Similarly, in giving an analysis of $x = y$,

there would be no reason to offer a complete analysis of all of the relevant sortals under which x and y fall; one could merely supply the analysis in terms of the fundamental sortal. Though such an approach is hardly incoherent, it is difficult to see why this would offer any genuine advantage over the account of classical identity that relative identity was supposedly developed to reject. And it hardly seems helpful in developing a sortal-specific account of differences in cases such as the Trinity, which demands variation in identity claims relative to distinct sortals, and would be of little value theologically if it failed to do so.

So once again we are back where we began, in puzzlement about the nature of these co-existing notions. However, we can remove much of our puzzlement – and perhaps all of it – if we examine Scotus’s discussion more carefully. Recall that I previously discussed a passage in q. 3, n. 88 in which Scotus indicates the presence of both this qualified distinction and simple identity. However, in addition to indicating this pair, he also specifies the reason why he says that the distinction is qualified, saying that “they are distinguished from the very nature of things in a qualified sense, because they are not formally the same.”²⁵ In other words, since the person and property are formally distinct or non-identical, then they are qualifiedly distinct. And this formal non-identity is compatible with, or can be co-present with, simple identity. He had already affirmed this in q. 2 n. 63 when he points out that, from the distinction between divine essence and property, “it does not follow that the first cannot be simply identical with the other.”²⁶ Once again, we see Scotus claim that simple identity is compatible with some kind of

²⁵ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 88, 337: “proprietas et persona sunt idem simpliciter et tamen distinguuntur ex natura rei secundum quid, quia non sunt formaliter eadem.”

²⁶ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 63, 330. (my translation)

distinction in reality – in this case, formal distinction or non-identity. What account of this formal non-identity does Scotus offer? In n. 63, he continues by describing it as follows:

One speaks of the absence of a formal identity between things when one does not pertain to the primary and *per se* notion of the other (in the way the definition or parts of the definition pertain to the notion of what is defined) – in other words, when neither is included in the formal meaning of the other, although they are really the same.²⁷

Scotus explains formal distinction and identity by way of the idea of *ratio*, translated here as “meaning”. *Ratio* can suggest meaning or concept, but in this context, it does not have a sense restricted to the mind, especially since Scotus has already argued that we are discussing a difference in reality, not by way of the intellect. Even if Scotus meant to suggest something related to the intellect here, he would plausibly mean to say that whatever difference is found in the intellect is grounded in a difference in reality. However, more plausibly, Scotus is using *ratio* to indicate the quidditative features of some thing or things. He seems to invoke it in order to provide a broader notion than Aristotelian definition.²⁸ *Rationes* can tell us about the quidditative features of a thing even where there is no Aristotelian definition available. We can also know that there is a difference in *ratio*, even if we do not have full access to the contents of such *rationes* (for example, in the case of the individuating principle that contracts a common nature to make a particular object, there is a *ratio*, but it is, in principle, unknowable to us, although it is knowable by God). There is some quidditative difference present that is indicated by a difference in *ratio*.

²⁷ *ibid.*: “Dicuntur autem aliqua non habere identitatem formalem quando unum non est de per se et primo intellectui alterius (ut definitio vel partes definitionis sunt de intellectu definiti), sed quando neutrum includitur in ratione formali alterius, licet tamen sint eadem realiter.”

²⁸ Peter King, “Duns Scotus on Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10.

If we return to the text in n. 63, we can see what Scotus's account suggests. As he indicates, the absence of formal identity indicates that there is some difference in the quidditative accounts. But what sorts of difference are the crucial ones here? When he speaks of the way in which "one [thing] does not pertain to the primary and *per se* notion of the other", he quickly explains that this is analogous to the way in which either (a) the definition of a thing pertains to the notion of the thing defined; or (b) the *parts of* the definition pertain to the notion of what is defined. What Scotus seems to have in mind is that formal identity can hold where there is complete overlap of quidditative notion, which is suggested by (a); or formal identity can hold where there is *partial* overlap of quidditative notion, which is suggested by (b). The latter proposal will find further support and development in my discussion of symmetry in relation to real identity below. For now, it is worth noting that this suggestion entails that formal identity, like real identity, can allow for some sort of quidditative difference between the relata of the relevant identity relations.

Formal distinction or non-identity, on the other hand, implies that there is neither complete nor partial overlap of the quidditative notions. Scotus seems to think that the presence of this formal distinction, far from excluding real identity, actually *entails* real identity. The account here, briefly put, is this

x is formally distinct from y iff (a) x is really identical to y ; (b) the account of what it is to be x is not the same as the account of what it is to be y ; and (c) the account of what it is to be y is not included in the account of what it is to be x .

Scotus's language of "what it is to be" is purposefully quidditative. Therefore, Scotus proposes that there is some important metaphysical difference between x and y , despite the claim that they are really identical.

However, Scotus does not suggest that formal distinction is the only sort of distinction compatible with simple identity. In q. 2, n. 78, Scotus discusses what he calls adequate identity and distinction:

For although ‘human’ and ‘animal’ are the same by identity in the truest sense, they are not [identical] adequately or formally, because the notion of humanity is derived from the specific difference, namely rationality, but the notion of animality from the sensitive soul. The same is evident in the case of being and unity, or whiteness and color, where the formal distinction coexists side by side with true identity, although [this identity] is not one of adequacy: not according to coextension, and neither according to predication nor according to excellence and perfection.²⁹

Scotus here describes the relationship between ‘human’ and ‘animal’ as involving true identity – indeed, the *truest* identity – but lacking either adequate or formal identity. To make sense of this, we should have in mind some individual human being, say Socrates, to whom the terms ‘human’ and ‘animal’ both can be applied. Though Socrates (or Socrates’ human nature, perhaps) is just one thing, Scotus asks us to consider the difference within that nature between the quidditative account of ‘human’ and the quidditative account of ‘animal’. We can see that they are not formally identical because what it is to be human is different than what it is to be animal; the former involves rationality, while the other involves sensation. But that is not the end of the distinction that he draws. He also asks us to consider a further difference between ‘human’ and ‘animal’, one involving difference in extension, predication, and perfection (or excellence), which are all the marks of an adequate distinction; and their absence is the mark of adequate identity. What Scotus suggests is that the terms ‘human’ and ‘animal’ are not

²⁹ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 78, 335: “Licet enim homo et animal sint eadem verissima identitate, non tamen adaequate et formaliter, quia ratio hominis accipitur a differentia specifica, scilicet a rationalitate, sed ratio animalis ab anima sensitiva. Hoc idem patet de ente et uno, de albedine et colore, ubi cum distinctione formali stat identitas vera, licet non-adaequata: nec secundum convertibilitatem, nec secundum praedicationem, nec secundum virtutem et perfectionem.”

coextensive, even though they are co-present in Socrates. For the extension of the term ‘animal’ depends on what things have a sensitive soul, while the extension of the term ‘human’ depends on which things have a rational soul, which requires something over and above a sensitive soul, viz., rationality. Therefore, the term ‘human’ will have a smaller extension than the term ‘animal’. Additionally, Scotus notes that, despite the fact that both ‘human’ and ‘animal’ are correctly predicated of Socrates, their predications will differ. The predicate ‘animal’ can be applied to more things than the predicate ‘human’ can, for the same reasons that explained the difference in extension. However, Scotus adds that the difference cuts in both directions on this point; ‘human’ indicates something of greater eminence than ‘animal’, since the former includes a perfection – rationality – that the latter lacks. From this, we can develop a generalized account of the marks of the adequate distinction. If x is adequately distinct from y , then (a) the extension of x is greater than the extension of y and (b) x is predicated of more than y and (c) y is greater in eminence than x ; or vice versa.

Now we can see that Scotus claims that true or real identity can co-exist with either of two types of qualified non-identity/distinction: either formal or adequate non-identity. For as we have already seen Scotus explicitly state in q. 2, n. 63, “absence of formal identity” occurs in cases where things “are really the same”. As puzzled as we might be by the structure of Scotus’s account, the best way to understand what he is suggesting may, in fact, be quite straightforward. Real identity is what obtains where there is a distinction marking out the presence of something simple. Simplicity, including divine simplicity, guarantees real identity. In q. 2, n. 56, Scotus notes that “it is consistent with the simplicity of the divine person that the relation and the essence be distinguished not only by an act of the intellect.”³⁰ The force of this

proposal is that a distinction *ex parte rei* is not inconsistent with divine simplicity; there can be genuine difference or distinction in reality even in or despite the presence of simplicity. In q. 2, n. 78, Scotus goes on to say that “although God is what he has by the truest identity because of his simplicity...it is not formal or adequate [identity].”³¹ Though God is really (or truly) identical with everything that is said of Him, that identity is neither formal identity nor adequate identity. There are distinctions *ex parte rei* in God, despite His simplicity and real identity with everything that He has. God possesses the unity of simplicity, which allows for internal difference in what is one thing (*res*).

How then should we ultimately understand Scotus’s usage of the terms “qualified distinction” and “simple identity”? To say that the identity present is simple is to say that there is truly and simply one thing. In the presence of a distinction of reason (or even no distinction at all), that would be the end of the story; in such cases, there is no qualified distinction, because to say that there is a qualified distinction indicates a distinction that is *ex parte rei*. Simple identity, then, is identity to which no qualification is applied. Qualified distinction, on the other hand, is distinction (on the side of reality) to which some qualification applies. Distinction is qualified in cases of formal or adequate non-identity because neither of those sorts of difference can destroy the simplicity of the entity to which the distinction pertains. Presumably, a real distinction between what are truly two things would be an unqualified distinction. And the presence of a real distinction would, in fact, undermine simplicity. More than anything, Scotus intends to use

³⁰ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 56, 327: “cum simplicitate divinae personae stat quod relatio et essentia non tantum per actum intellectus distinguuntur”

³¹ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 78, 334-335: “licet Deus propter sui simplicitatem sit quidquid habet...verissima identitate, non tamen formaliter et adaequate” (my translation)

the notions of simple identity and qualified distinction in order to explain how there can be real diversity within what is genuinely one simple unity.

One extremely important outcome of Scotus's discussion is that he seems to articulate multiple senses of identity. Recall the text noted above from q. 2, n. 78, where Scotus says that "although God is what he has by the truest identity because of his simplicity...it is not formal or adequate [identity]." Perhaps one could interpret this passage as attempting some sort of special pleading, since we are, after all, discussing the case of the divine, in which there might be some strange consequences because of divine infinity or simplicity. To demonstrate that Scotus is not making some special exemption for divine cases, he goes on in the same paragraph to make the same point in conjunction with an ordinary case involving creatures:

although 'human' and 'animal' are the same by identity in the truest sense, they are not [identical] adequately or formally...The same is evident in the case of being and unity, or whiteness and color, where the formal distinction coexists side by side with true identity, although [this identity] is not one of adequacy.³²

What we have here is the suggestion that even if we have a case involving the *truest* sense of identity, the identity may not be formal or adequate. We have already seen that formal identity would involve complete or partial overlap of the formal *rationes* of the entities (or, strictly speaking, entity) in question; and that adequate identity would require that the terms involved had the same extension, were predicated of all and only the same things, and were equally eminent. Therefore, the truest sense of identity can allow that there is difference in any of these ways in which there are formal or adequate distinctions. Furthermore, Scotus points out that this truest sense of identity should also be considered simple identity; recall that in q. 2, n. 63, when

³² Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 78, 335: "Licet enim homo et animal sint eadem verissima identitate, non tamen adaequate et formaliter...Hoc idem patet de ente et uno, de albedine et colore, ubi cum distinctione formali stat identitas vera, licet non-adaequata."

discussing the distinction between the property and divine essence, he says that “[f]rom their formal non-identity, it does not follow that that the first cannot be simply identical with the other. Earlier in the same paragraph, he says that the “absence of a formal identity” can occur even when two things are “really the same”. Therefore Scotus is arguing that identity which is true, simple, and real is compatible with the absence of formal or adequate identity.

As a result of examining this account, we can see that Scotus is an identity pluralist. His basic notion of identity, which he has variously called real, true, simple, seems to allow for at least some sort of genuine ontological difference, which would stand in contrast with our ordinary notions of identity. On the other hand, he does not appear to abandon a strict account of identity; for Scotus seems to think that wherever we find *both* formal and adequate identity together, there appears to be strictly no difference. Though it might seem odd that Scotus calls real identity an actual type of identity, if we keep in mind his concern for preserving simplicity in a variety of cases, especially in the divine, we can understand his motivation for understanding it as a type of identity, even the most basic type. What Scotus has done, then, is disambiguate what he considers two different notions of identity, both of which will enable us to understand identity claims both in relation to various cases in creatures as well as (perhaps more importantly) in divine cases – and the Trinity in particular. Unlike some of the alternative approaches to identity offered in order to make sense of the logical and metaphysical requirements of the doctrine of the Trinity, such as Geach’s relative identity strategy, Scotus’s identity pluralism does not require us to abandon an account of strict identity that includes the standard, formal properties of identity. His account does, however, claim that this less than absolute identity is a genuine sort of identity. Thus Scotus seems to be suggesting a middle way by avoiding the abandonment of absolute or

simple identity, while differentiating an additional notion of genuine identity that falls short of absolute identity.

What Scotus means, at least in part, is that real identity, although a weaker notion than formal identity, is nonetheless a true and simple sort of identity. Thus x and y can be truly, really, and simple the same even without being strictly identical. Formal, adequate, and real identity seem all to be species of true identity. As I already mentioned, the conjunction of formal and adequate identity seems to accord with standard views of strict identity. But real identity appears to present some *prima facie* puzzles about how it fits into the identity family. To these types of concerns we will now turn.

Chapter 2:

Implications of Duns Scotus's Theory of Identity and Distinction

An Unorthodox Account of Identity?

By now, it should be clear that Scotus countenances types of identity that differ from the standard notion of identity. He argues that the presence of difference does not entail the absence of identity, a position that runs contrary to the standard approach to identity. To better understand Scotus's position, it will be instructive to contrast it with the standard picture in which any sort of discernibility or distinguishability (on the side of things) is sufficient for non-identity. Even that characterization immediately suggests that there will be tension between the standard account and Scotus's account, since, for Scotus, discernibility is sufficient for some kind of distinction or other on the side of reality, but not necessarily a real distinction; and that, in turn, means that there may be some sort of identity present.

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate the difference between Scotus's notion of real identity and the more common notion is by examining which of the formal properties that are normally attributed to identity will also hold true for Scotus's real identity. In particular, we can assess whether real identity is compatible with reflexivity, transitivity, symmetry, and the indiscernibility of identicals. After all, if real identity is genuine identity, then presumably it should satisfy these formal properties. As we will quickly see, Scotus's claim that entities can be simply identical while also qualifiedly non-identical or distinct seems to pose serious troubles for the sustainability of these formal properties in relation to real identity.

We can first consider the case of *reflexivity*, in which an entity bears the relation in question to itself. In standard cases of identity, using the traditional equals sign to represent

identity, this would look like this: ($x = x$). In the case of real identity, we can express reflexivity in the following way:

(x is really identical to x)

Can x bear this relation of real identity to itself? Wherever Scotus discusses real identity, he indicates the presence of some sort of difference. So if x is really identical to y , according to Scotus, there is some sort of difference – in the nature of things – between x and y . But then it should be clear why x cannot bear this relation to itself, for if it did, then it would seem that x differs in some way from itself, and that is impossible. Indeed, Scotus himself suggests something along these lines when discussing identity in q. 3 n. 93, where he says that “something identical with another formally and adequately....does not determine [or qualify] it, for then it would be determining itself.”³³ That is, where there is formal and adequate identity, there cannot be any sort of difference, and that sort of identity is the proper locus of reflexivity. In other words, according to Scotus, x is *formally* identical to x , but x is not *really* identical to x . The reason for this is simply the fact that formal identity precludes any difference in *ratio*, but real identity allows for, and perhaps even entails, a difference in *ratio*. Thus real identity seems to be non-reflexive. And if we presume that where x and y are really the same then they are not formally the same, real identity seems to be irreflexive.³⁴

Next we can look at the indiscernibility of identicals, which states that if x and y are identical, then they will have all of the same properties; there will be no difference between

³³ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 93, 339: “quod est idem alteri formaliter et adaequate non determinat ipsum, quia tunc idem determinaret se.”

³⁴ Though I think Scotus is committed to the claim that real identity and formal identity do not overlap in any cases, I will not argue for this here, since at this point I simply wish to show that real identity is not, as a rule, reflexive.

them. Expressed formally, it appears as follows: $((x = y) \rightarrow \forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy))$. In the context of real identity, then it should yield:

$$(x \text{ is really identical to } y \rightarrow \forall F(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy))$$

Once again, it seems as though Scotus will deny that this feature obtains in cases of real identity. In q. 2, n. 69, he says that “because there is no formal identity between essence and relation and conversely, therefore it is not necessary that whatever belongs formally to the one belongs to the other.”³⁵ Scotus indicates that in the absence of formal identity, there is no guarantee that what is true of the relation is true of the essence and vice versa. In q. 1, nn. 22-23, he explains how this bears on the present case. In n. 22 he says that “the divine essence is paternity...and vice versa, but not formally.”³⁶ In n. 23, he adds that

[t]here is, therefore, some difference between the essence and a property, because the essence is really one, and the properties are really several by a relative reality. Also, the essence is formally infinite, but the properties are not.³⁷

Scotus’s point is this: paternity and divine essence are really (and not formally) identical. The property of paternity is formally finite, but the divine essence is formally infinite. So it follows that a real identity between x and y does not entail that x and y would have all of the same properties. Thus the indiscernibility of identicals fails for real identity.

³⁵ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 69, 332: “quia non est identitas formalis essentiae ad relationem nec e converso, ideo non oportet quod quidquid convenit uni formaliter, quod conveniat alteri.” (my translation)

³⁶ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 1 n. 22, 315: “est ergo essentia divina paternitas...et e converso, licet non formaliter.”

³⁷ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 1 n. 23, 315: “Est ergo inter eam et proprietatem aliqua differentia, quia essentia est una realiter, proprietates sunt plures realiter realitate respectiva. Essentia etiam est formaliter infinita, non sic proprietates.”

Third is transitivity: if x and y are identical, and y and z are identical, then x and z are identical. It can be expressed formally like this: $((x = y) \cdot (y = z)) \rightarrow (x = z)$. Making the relevant adjustments to show real identity explicitly, we get:

$$((x \text{ is really identical to } y) \cdot (y \text{ is really identical to } z)) \rightarrow (x \text{ is really identical to } z)$$

As with the previous two features, Scotus denies that transitivity holds for real identity. In q. 2, n. 70, he says that “because property and essence are not the same adequately, it is not necessary that one property be identical to another, despite the fact that they are all the same as the essence.”³⁸ More generally, he claims there that “when any two things are related to some third thing...if neither is adequately [identical to] the third, then they need not be identical to each other, even though each is the same as the third”³⁹ Here Scotus specifies that he is talking about cases in which there is real identity rather than formal identity, since he points out the lack of adequate identity. In this case, the property of paternity (i.e., the particular property of the divine person named Father) is really identical to the essence; and the property of filiality (i.e., the particular property of the divine person named Son) is really identical to the essence. But Scotus denies that the property of paternity is really identical to the property of filiality. And he argues similarly in relation to the lack of formal identity; in n. 71 he says:

The divine essence is formally infinite, but one cannot say that about any property. Therefore, if some property is the same as the essence, and another is likewise, it is not necessary for those two properties to be identical between themselves.⁴⁰

³⁸ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 70, 332: “quia proprietates et essentia non sunt eadem adaequate, non oportet quod una proprietates sit eadem alteri, licet sint eadem essentiae.”

³⁹ *ibid.*: “quando aliqua duo comparantur ad aliquod tertium...quia neutrum est adaequate ipsum, non oportet illa esse eadem inter se, licet sint eadem tertio.” (my translation)

⁴⁰ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 71, 333: “Essentia divina est infinita formaliter, et nulla proprietates est formaliter infinita. Et ideo non oportet quod, si aliqua proprietates sit eadem essentiae, et alia similiter, quod propter hoc duae proprietates sint eadem inter se.”

For each of the personal properties of the divine persons, the formal notions of divine essence and property are (formally) non-identical, but the property and person are really identical.

Because of the lack of formal identity, however, each property lacks real identity with the other properties. Once again, Scotus will deny that the property of paternity is really identical with the property of filiality. This case is especially helpful for understanding Scotus's position, since lack of *either* adequate identity or formal identity is sufficient for transitivity to fail.

The final feature to review is symmetry. In the case of identity, symmetry functions as follows: if x is identical to y , then y is identical to x . In order to formalize it, we express it as follows: $((x = y) \rightarrow (y = x))$. Substituting real identity for the equals sign, we derive:

$$((x \text{ is really identical to } y) \rightarrow (y \text{ is really identical to } x))$$

Of the four formal features of identity that we are examining, it is most difficult to assess the connection of symmetry to real identity. There is at least some evidence for claiming that Scotus denied that real identity is symmetrical. In q. 3, n. 88, Scotus says exactly what we would expect about the relationship between the property and the divine person:

The property and the person are identical simply, and are distinguished from the very nature of things in a qualified way, because they are not formally the same.⁴¹

There is a qualified non-identity between property and person, and that the particular qualified non-identity here is formal non-identity, just as it is in the case of the property and the divine essence. Scotus explains how this bears on the present case in n. 90, pointing out that formal non-identity between them is evident, because “insofar as the identity is founded in the property and terminates in the person, the property is not formally the same as the person, any more than a

⁴¹ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 88, 337: “proprietas et persona sunt idem simpliciter et tamen distinguuntur ex natura rei secundum quid, quia non sunt formaliter eadem” (my translation)

part is formally the same as the whole.”⁴² When we consider the relation between the property and the person by beginning with the property, we recognize that the property is formally non-identical to the person, because (a) the formal notion or quidditative account of the property is not the same as the formal notion of the person; and (b) the formal notion of the property does not include the formal notion of the person. In order for there to be a formal identity between them, one or the other of these two conditions must obtain; and since neither do, there is no formal identity between them. Scotus’s mention of part and whole here is interesting, because it points out that the property is, in a sense, a part of the whole that is the person. The divine person is, as Scotus puts it in n. 89, a “quasi-whole [that] contains the property and the [divine] essence”⁴³, and there is no formal identity between the property and the quasi-whole considered in itself. This connection between part and whole plays a significant role in the rest of his discussion, as well.

Despite his claim that the formal non-identity between property and person is clear, Scotus goes on to say in n. 90 that if we consider the relation between person and property (in that order or direction), then we will see that the divine person is formally identical with the property:

so far as the identity is founded in the person and terminates in the property, the person and the property are formally identical, because the person as a kind of whole includes in its formal notion the property as something of itself, just as ‘human’ includes ‘animal’ or ‘rational’ formally (but not vice versa).⁴⁴

⁴² Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 90, 337-338: “Patet, quia eorum est non-identitas secundum quid, quae attenditur penes non-identitatem formalem et non-identitatem adaequatam dupliciter. Primum patet sic:...ut identitas fundatur in proprietate et terminatur ad personam, sic non est proprietate formaliter idem cum persona, sicut nec pars est formaliter idem cum toto.”

⁴³ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 89, 337: “sed persona quasi quoddam totum habet essentiam et proprietatem.”

The person and property are formally identical, Scotus argues, because the person contains the property in its *per se* notion (e.g., the *per se* notion of the Father includes the *per se* notion of the property of paternity). Similarly, he claims, there is a formal identity between (a) human and animal because the formal notion of animal is included in the formal notion of human; and (b) human and rational because the formal notion of rational is included in the formal notion of human. And just as he claimed that there is a formal non-identity when considering the relation of property to person, his remark about inclusion suggests once again that there is a formal non-identity when considering the relation of animal to human or rational to human, because both animal and rational are parts (or quasi-parts) of a whole (or quasi-whole) – in this case, the human. The upshot, of course, is that symmetry seems to fail in the case of formal non-identity (and for that matter, formal identity).

However, things are not as straightforward even as that complex bit of analysis might make things seem. For there are texts that seem to undercut the claims I have offered regarding non-symmetry in cases of formal non-identity. Once again, we must note that in q. 2 n. 63, Scotus said that formal non-identity obtains “when one [thing] does not pertain to the primary and *per se* notion of the other...in other words, when *neither* is included in the formal meaning of the other, although they are really the same.” (emphasis added) The first part of the quote does not seem to entail symmetry; it seems consistent with the analysis offered above. However, the claim that neither *per se* notion is included in the *per se* notion of the other suggests that formal non-identity is symmetrical. Perhaps we could massage our understanding of the passage by arguing that Scotus is speaking of a case in which we can claim that there is a formal non-

⁴⁴ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 90, 338: “secundum enim quod identitas fundatur in persona et terminatur ad proprietatem, secundum hoc persona et proprietas sunt formaliter idem, quia persona ut quoddam totum includit in sua ratione formali ipsam proprietatem ut aliquid sui, ut homo includit animal vel rationale formaliter (non tamen e converso).”

identity in both directions. Though this may not be the most natural reading of the text, at least it renders it consistent with the other texts we have already examined. There is another text, however, that seems even more problematic for this analysis. Recall that in q. 3, n. 90, Scotus discusses the connection between human and animal, suggesting that if we consider them in that order, the relation between them involves formal identity, because human is a (quasi-)whole that includes the formal notion of the genus (viz., animal) along with the formal notion of the specific difference (viz., rational). He claims that there is formal identity because of the inclusion or overlap that holds between human and animal. So when we notice that Scotus takes up the same case in q. 2, n. 78, we would expect to get the same analysis. Oddly, the outcome is just the opposite of what we might have expected. Scotus claims in n. 78 that

although ‘human’ and ‘animal’ are the same by identity in the truest sense, they are not [identical] adequately or formally, because the notion of humanity is derived from the specific difference, namely rationality, but the notion of animality from the sensitive soul. The same is evident in the case of being and unity, or whiteness and color, where the formal distinction coexists side by side with true identity.⁴⁵

Here Scotus indicates that human and animal are formally non-identical, because the quidditative account of humanity includes rationality but not the sensitive soul, and the quidditative account of animality includes the sensitive soul but not rationality; and Scotus says that it is just like the other cases – being and unity, whiteness and color in including formal non-identity. Contrast this with n. 90, where he suggests that they are formally identical. Notice especially in n. 78 the direction in which he evaluates the relation; he begins with human and moves to animal. Yet human includes the formal notion of animal in its own formal notion, which should imply that

⁴⁵ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 78, 335: “Licet enim homo et animal sint eadem verissima identitate, non tamen adaequate et formaliter, quia ratio hominis accipitur a differentia specifica, scilicet a rationalitate, sed ratio animalis ab anima sensitiva. Hoc idem patet de ente et uno, de albedine et colore, ubi cum distinctione formali stat identitas vera.”

human and animal are indeed formally identical, according to the account thus far described. If Scotus had said that animal is formally non-identical with human, this would plausibly fit with our account, since the formal notion of animal does not include the formal notion of human. Since he considers them in the other direction, though, it generates a significant puzzle. The same point can be made if we consider whiteness and color, especially in light of Scotus's claim that both the formal distinction and true identity occur in that case. Thus his discussion in q. 2, n. 78 suggests that formal non-identity is symmetrical, which is at odds with the conclusion we drew from his discussion in q. 3, n. 90, which suggests that formal non-identity is non-symmetrical.

At this point, I see no direct way of addressing this puzzle. Instead, the best way forward is to focus on a broader issue that more fundamentally bears on our original concern in the discussion of symmetry. In particular, we should keep in mind that our original concern in our examination of symmetry was to determine its connection with real identity. But real identity is not confined to cases of formal non-identity; it also holds where there is adequate non-identity. Strict identity, according to Scotus, only occurs where there is an absence of both adequate *and* formal non-identity. Where we find either one, we will find real identity. As Scotus explains in n. 90, the relation between the property and person “is a qualified non-identity which is derived from two types of non-identity: formal and that of adequacy.”⁴⁶ Of course, we already discussed the apparent asymmetry that occurs for formal non-identity when we examine the case by beginning with person and moving to property (which yields formal identity). But in n. 92,

⁴⁶ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 90, 337-338: “Patet, quia eorum est non-identitas secundum quid, quae attenditur penes non-identitatem formalem et non-identitatem adaequatam dupliciter.”

Scotus turns to the presence of adequate non-identity.⁴⁷ And it is in this discussion that we can perhaps uncover the symmetry that we might suspect should hold for real identity. If we rehearse the primary conditions for adequate non-identity, we can see why. For adequate non-identity of x and y requires that (a) the extension of x is greater than the extension of y and (b) x is predicated of more than y and (c) y is greater in eminence than x ; or vice versa. Notice in particular that requirements (a) and (b) function conversely with (c), insofar as the former two describe ways that x is greater than y , and the latter one describes a way in which y is greater than x . Since all of these will be co-present in cases of adequate distinction, we seem to be able to derive symmetry in such cases; and the vice versa clause suggests (quite literally) the presence of symmetry. And since the presence of adequate non-identity secures real identity, we seem to have some evidence for symmetry as a formal property of real identity.

Unsurprisingly, the solution is not so simple, as we need to consider cases of real identity in which there is merely a formal non-identity without adequate non-identity. For if we consider such cases, perhaps we will continue to find cases in which the formal non-identity is non-symmetrical, which means that symmetry cannot be a necessary, formal feature of real identity. At this point, it is noteworthy that the only cases in which the puzzles for symmetry occur for formal non-identity are those cases in which adequate non-identity is present. The cases that have posed problems for our analysis of symmetry have been cases involving genus, species, and specific difference, which involve adequate non-identity and violate the partial overlap stricture for formal identity. Perhaps we can suggest that, in any case in which adequate non-identity fails, there will not be any room for partial overlap of the formal notions being compared. The question will be whether or not there is complete overlap between the formal notions, and in

⁴⁷ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 3 n. 92, 339.

those types of cases, formal non-identity seems to be symmetrical. So it may seem reasonable – though far from certain – to claim that symmetry is a formal property of real identity. However, as we shall see later in this discussion, even this does not seem to settle the matter. When I take up the question of the relationship between separability and distinction, I encounter additional motivation in Scotus’s discussion of the Incarnation for a denial of symmetry in at least some cases of real identity. And of course if there are any cases where symmetry is lacking, then it cannot be a necessary, formal feature of real identity.

At this point, the result of this discussion is that real identity satisfies, at best, one of the four formal properties discussed here; and even that case – of symmetry – may be unlikely, pending further argument. Though it was reasonable to expect that real identity would fail to satisfy one or more of the formal properties, it may be surprising that it possibly satisfies none of them, and definitely not more than one of them. Even more surprising, perhaps, is Scotus’s claim that we should regard real identity as true, simple, and perfect identity. His language, in fact, suggests that it is the most basic type of identity, and that strict identity, formal identity, and adequate identity add features that make them more complex varieties of true identity. But they should not be considered “real identity”, since Scotus restricts the usage of that phrase to cases in which either the formal or the adequate distinction are present. Strict identity, on the other hand, requires that both formal and adequate identity obtain. Only in this latter case will all four of the formal properties discussed above be affirmed. As a result, we can see that Scotus describes at least two different types of unqualified identity:

- (a) *Merely Unqualified Identity*, which obtains where x and y are simply (and truly) the same, and where there is neither formal nor adequate non-identity. Since this seems to satisfy the

standard formal properties of identity, it is arguably seen as equivalent to our ordinary, strict notion of identity.

(b) *Unqualified Identity With Qualified Non-Identity*, which obtains where x and y are simply and (and truly) the same, and where there is either formal or adequate non-identity. This variety of unqualified identity satisfies at most one (and probably none) of the standard formal properties of identity.

Real Identity as Real Identity?

The account I have offered may seem odd, but there is a significant level of textual warrant in the *Reportatio* for the view as I have developed it. Nonetheless, there is no consensus either that this is the correct reading of the text or that we should be beholden to this text rather than some other. In part, this arises from disputes about the proper textual chronology for Scotus's writings. Perhaps most prominently, Martin Tweedale has argued that Scotus ultimately committed himself to the presence of at least the following three formal properties, even in the case of real identity: transitivity, reflexivity, and symmetry.⁴⁸ Tweedale suggests that Scotus seems to have toyed with a rejection of transitivity, for example, during the period of his career when he wrote the *Reportatio*, but ultimately declined to give up on such a central formal feature of identity. Tweedale's argument, of course, depends on the claim that Scotus wrote about these topics in the *Reportatio* earlier than when he wrote in the texts to which Tweedale refers, which are taken from the *Ordinatio*. Indeed Tweedale, following the Vatican Commission and Charles Balic, explicitly commends the *Ordinatio* text as later and more

⁴⁸ In what follows, I discuss Tweedale's extremely helpful comments on my paper at the 2008 Pacific Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, noted above. The *Ordinatio* text and the proofs for the formal properties of identity are drawn directly from his comments. See Tweedale, "Comments on Blander"; cf. Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, 487ff. Despite my disagreement with him, Tweedale's contributions to this discussion are extremely valuable and fruitful. In discussing his arguments, I follow his formulations quite strictly.

authoritative than the text of the *Reportatio*. Tweedale sees a conflict (or at least a straightforward tension) between the texts of the *Reportatio* and the *Ordinatio* on the question of the formal properties that obtain for various types of identity and distinction. And as a result, he dismisses the *Reportatio*'s proposal of a rejection of any of the formal properties as arising from a view from an earlier period that Scotus ultimately abandoned (as indefensible, presumably).

Tweedale's primary reason for rejecting the account I have developed above derives from a text in *Ordinatio* I where Scotus offers what Tweedale calls the Triple-E or EEE principle. The name derives from the Latin construction that forms the basis of the principle - *eidem eadem eadem* – and offers what Tweedale considers a straightforward defense of transitivity. Tweedale articulates the principle as follows:

If A and B are each identical with some third item C, then A and B are themselves identical.

He derives the principle from the following text:

Any items that are by some sort of identity the same as something are the same as each other by just that sort of identity. This is because it is possible for some identity of the extremes with each other to be inferred only if it is in virtue of that identity that they are the same as the middle and the middle is in itself something the same in that way. It is on the proposition so understood that every syllogistic form depends, for if either condition fails, either as regards the unity of the middle in itself or as regards the unity of the extremes with the middle, there is no syllogism but rather a fallacy of accident.⁴⁹

Based on this principle, he argues that we can derive reflexivity, symmetry, and transitivity.

First he argues that Triple-E implies reflexivity:

⁴⁹ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 p. 2 qq. 1-4 n. 411, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, edited by C. Balić, M. Bodewig, S. Bušelić, P. Čapkun-Delić, I. Jurić, I. Montalverne, S. Nanni, B. Pergamo, F. Prezioso, I. Reinhold, and O. Schäfer (Città del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950), 362: “quaecumque aliqua identitate sunt eadem alicui, tali identitate inter se sic sunt eadem, quia non potest concludi aliqua identitas extremorum inter se nisi secundum illam identitatem sint eadem medio et medium in se sit sic idem; et per hanc propositionem sic intellectam tenet omnis forma syllogistica. Omissa enim altera condicione, vel unitatis medii in se vel extremorum ad medium, non est syllogismus, sed paralogismus accidentis.” Unless otherwise noted, translations of the *Ordinatio* I, d. 2 are from Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, vol. 1.

Assume: $A=B$

Repeat: $A=B$

Therefore, $A=A$ (by Triple-E)⁵⁰

Next he shows that Triple-E implies symmetry:

Assume: $A=B$

$B=B$ (by reflexivity)

Therefore, $B=A$ (by Triple-E)⁵¹

Finally he argues that Triple-E implies transitivity:

Assume: $A=B$ and $B=C$

$C=B$ (by symmetry)

Therefore, $A=C$ (by Triple-E)⁵²

Most importantly, Tweedale holds that the Triple-E principle applies to every type of identity, including, most significantly, real identity. Tweedale believes that the view in the *Ordinatio* text is in conflict with the view I have derived from the *Reportatio* text. And since he believes that the *Ordinatio* is both a later and a more authoritative representation of Scotus's view than the *Reportatio*, we should revise the account from the *Reportatio* in light of the *Ordinatio* account because the *Ordinatio* reflects a change of mind in Scotus. Tweedale agrees that in Paris, where Scotus discussed the ideas recorded in the *Reportatio*, Scotus seems to suggest that the Triple-E principle had exceptions. However, he then suggests that by the time of the *Ordinatio*, Scotus accepted the principle's universal validity.

I have already suggested that the *Reportatio* is a later text than the *Ordinatio*. Indeed, I believe that the *Reportatio* text reflects some of Scotus's latest and most considered views on the

⁵⁰ Tweedale, "Comments on Blander".

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

topics related to distinction and identity, and (at the very least) should be understood to provide a later and more considered view than the *Ordinatio* provides. However, in the end, I do not think that there is a great deal of difference on the questions at hand between the views articulated in the *Ordinatio* and the *Reportatio*. As a result, I do not think that getting the chronology exactly right will matter very much, if at all. Instead, I will focus on the point of the text in distinction 2 cited above, as well as a pair of similar texts in the *Reportatio* that should help us decipher what Scotus had in mind.

My primary aims here are (a) to suggest an alternative reading of the text Tweedale cites from the *Ordinatio*, and (b) to show that the *Reportatio* articulates much the same view that we find in the *Ordinatio*. This will require, among other things, a different interpretation of the Triple-E Principle than the one offered by Tweedale. Tweedale suggests that the principle found in the text guarantees that we can derive the transitivity, symmetry, and reflexivity of identity, for any type of identity that we select. As I read the *Ordinatio* text, this claim seems too strong. The principle that we find here, I suggest, is fundamentally a principle for *denying* generalized identity inferences *across* different types of identity, for he says that only the same sort of identity can be inferred when making identity claims. Two paragraphs after this text, in n. 413, Scotus says that “[w]hen in the minor it is accepted that whatever is in the divine essence is the same as that essence, this is not true as regards formal identity, and thus it is not possible for a formal identity of the extremes with each other to be inferred.”⁵³ To use Scotus’s Trinitarian example: the Father is really identical but formally non-identical to the divine essence; similarly the Son is really identical but formally non-identical to the divine essence; therefore, it is not

⁵³ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 p. 2 qq. 1-4 n. 413, 362-363: “Cum accipitur in minori quod quidquid est in essentia divina, est idem illi, non est verum de identitate formali, et ideo non potest concludi formalis identitas extremorum inter se.”

possible to infer that the Father is formally identical to the Son. Similarly in other passage, he offers restrictions on various inferences that others might be tempted to draw when discussing the Trinity.

Furthermore, Scotus says that such inferences are merely “possible” when we align identity types between the extremes and the middle; such inferences are only possible when certain conditions are met. And the conditions he specifies are necessary but not sufficient conditions. What Scotus has described, then, hardly seems sufficient to warrant the claim that the formal properties are entailed or implied by Triple-E. Furthermore, an examination of the specified conditions seems to work against Tweedale’s reading, as well. Recall that in n. 411, Scotus says that the “identity of the extremes with each other” can be inferred

only if it is in virtue of that identity that they are the same as the middle and the middle is in itself something the same in that way. It is on the proposition so understood that every syllogistic form depends, for if either condition fails, either as regards the unity of the middle in itself or as regards the unity of the extremes with the middle, there is no syllogism but rather a fallacy of accident.⁵⁴

What Scotus indicates here is that whatever identity we say obtains between the extremes must be the same sort of identity as each extreme has with the middle, and that the middle has in itself. He seems to think that the same sort of identity – or unity, as he says in the latter part of the quote – must hold in every case in order to guarantee the proper warrant for syllogistic form, and avoid the fallacy of accident. His proposal here is obscure, so we will need to unpack additional parts of the text to understand more fully what he has in mind.

Scotus discusses the sort of relation that holds between each extreme and the essence several times in this question. Scotus adds that

⁵⁴ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 p. 2 qq. 1-4 n. 411, 362.

If you say that at least from their real identity with the essence is inferred their identity with each other, I say that the essence does not have so unique an identity of subsistence (as do the persons or personal attributes) that the extremes are united in the essence, and thus it is not possible for an identity of subsistents or subsistence to be inferred on the basis of their identity in the essence as in a middle.⁵⁵

Each extreme – each divine person, in this case – is really identical with the essence. Scotus says, however, that we cannot infer from this the real identity of the extremes (i.e., the persons, such as the Father and the Son). Indeed, this is precisely the claim that he wishes to block, and he has theological reasons for wanting to do so, so it would be odd if we gave a reading of the text that undercut the very position he wrote this in order to defend. He argues that the inference is blocked because the essence lacks the identity (or unity) of subsistence that each of the divine persons possesses, and so cannot serve as the ground for an identity of subsistences. Scotus seems to be suggesting that the relevant sort of identity here is *subsistent identity*; and that the middle term in the syllogism does not provide the warrant for inferring subsistent identity because it lacks the identity of subsistence required for the inference to go through. In n. 414, then, it appears that we have a case of identity – more importantly, real identity, in which transitivity fails, because the strictures demanded for the inference to go through simply are not met. There is no identity of subsistence or subsistents between, for example, the Father and the divine essence, and as a result, we cannot infer the identity of the Father and the Son.

When discussing real identity once again in n. 417, Scotus makes a similar point, denying the inference that would guarantee unrestricted transitivity:

If you argue that at least the extremes are really the same as each other because they are really the same as the middle, I allow that an essential identity can be inferred, but not a formal or

⁵⁵ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 p. 2 qq. 1-4 n. 414, 363: “Et si dicas quod saltem ex reali identitate eorum ad essentiam concluditur identitas eorum inter se, dico quod essentia non habet identitatem talem unicum subsistentiae prout personae vel personalia ut extrema uniuntur in essentia, et ideo non potest concludi identitas subsistentium vel subsistentiae per rationem identitatis eorum in essentia ut in medio.”

suppositive. Thus ‘The Son is the Father’ ought not be inferred....Rather the following ought to be inferred: ‘The Son is the same as that which is the Father’ or ‘The Son is that which is the Father’.⁵⁶

Here Scotus explains that the real identity that holds between each extreme and the divine essence is in virtue of presence of the divine essence in the extreme (i.e., the divine person). Scotus says that the only way one can derive an identity in the extremes at all is by restricting it to the identity of essence. He denies that it is appropriate to say that the Son is the identical to the Father. But he does allow “The Son is the same as that which is the Father”, because “that which is the Father” can be taken to be referring to the divine essence. So the permissible forms should be read as “The Son qua divine essence is identical with the Father qua divine essence”. But we cannot infer that “The Son qua supposit or divine person is identical with the Father qua supposit or divine person.” That, says Scotus, is an impermissible inference.

If Scotus intended the Triple E Principle to apply to all types of identity, it seems likely that he would have drawn the inference that Tweedale’s reading of Triple E would suggest, viz., that the Son is really the same as the Father, for this would be a significant claim that would have made clear the novelty of his view in the *Ordinatio*. Indeed, he doesn’t address this, but focuses on what inferences cannot be drawn (“Thus ‘The Son is the Father’ ought not be inferred...”). The focus of this discussion, then, seems to be how to restrict inferences with respect to identity claims. And those restrictions prevent the inference of identity among the extremes in a number of cases. Returning to our original discussion of Scotus in n. 411, we can perhaps more perspicuously see what he meant when he said that the identity of the extremes depends on the presence of the same sort of identity between each extreme and the middle as well as the middle

⁵⁶ Scotus, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 p. 2 qq. 1-4 n. 417, 364: “Quod si saltem arguas extrema realiter esse idem inter se quia et in medio, concedo quod potest inferri identitas essentialis, non formalis vel suppositiva. Et ideo non debet inferri ‘Filius est Pater’...sed sic debet inferri: ‘Filius est idem cum eo quod est Pater’ vel ‘Filius est illud quod est Pater’.”

itself. For Scotus seems to be arguing that where there is real identity between one extreme and the middle, we can only infer real identity between that extreme and the other extreme if we restrict our claim of real identity to the type of entity or unity present in the middle. If there is a real identity between the person and the essence, this is because the divine essence is a quasi-part in the person (i.e., the quasi-whole). So as long as we restrict our identity claims to the essence (qua essence), then we can infer identity between the extremes – but again, only if we restrict our identity claims to the essence in *both* extremes. On the other hand, if we take the real identity between the person and the essence and propose that identity claim can be transmitted to the other person qua person, the inference does not follow, because the persons are subsistents, but the middle by which they are being compared is not a subsistent. So there is no unity that provides the ground for the connection of identity between the extremes. That is what is required for proper syllogistic form, and for the avoidance of the fallacy of accident.

My position has the virtue of harmonizing Scotus’s *Ordinatio* and *Reportatio* texts. Tweedale has suggested that Scotus changed his mind on the applicability of Triple-E. My reading, however, is consistent with the *Reportatio* texts I have cited, such as nn. 69 and 71. It is also consistent with his discussion of principles in the *Reportatio* that seem quite similar to Triple-E. For example, in d. 34, q. 1, n. 6, where Scotus is considering whether a divine person is identical with the divine essence, he offers a very similar principle:

For if something is one and the same by some identity, things that are the same by some identity [with that third] are the same as each other by that identity, and if that identity is varied in some way, the conclusion does not follow.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 34 q. 1 n. 6, 344: “Nam quaecumque uni et eidem aliqua identitate sunt eadem aliqua identitate, inter se sunt eadem illa identitate, et variata aliquo modo identitate, non sequitur conclusio.”

Just prior to this, he has said that his reply is clear from distinction 2, where he makes a similar point.⁵⁸ In both d. 34 and d. 2, Scotus points out the required restriction on such inferences, namely that if there is an identity between the extremes, it must be because they are identical with some third in all of the same ways. More specifically as it relates to the passage from the *Ordinatio*, he argues in the *Reportatio* that the identity of the extremes has to match the unity proper to the middle. For example, the divine essence does not have unity or identity in virtue of being a subsistence, so no identity of the extremes qua subsistent beings can be inferred from the identity that holds between each person and the essence. On the other hand, we can infer an identity of the extremes qua essence – i.e., an essential identity – in virtue of the essential identity that obtains between each person and the essence. This just is the same point that we see Scotus making in the *Ordinatio*, so there is no reason to think that he has changed his mind on these matters, regardless of which text we think is earlier and which we think is later.

Furthermore, this account is consonant with another (arguably) late text of Scotus's that seems to have been composed in Paris, viz., his *Logica Scoti*, which, as Stephen Dumont argues, goes beyond the *Reportatio* by explaining what inferences are licensed from premises about formal – that is, qualified – non-identity.⁵⁹ For example, Scotus suggests that certain ways of understanding the inference from

A is formally distinct from B

to

Formality A is distinct from formality B

⁵⁸ cf. *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A, d. 2, p. 3, q. 4, n. 224ff.

⁵⁹ Stephen Dumont, "Duns Scotus's Parisian Question on the Formal Distinction," *Vivarium* 43, no. 1 (2005): 7-62.

are unlicensed, because it would commit a fallacy, since the move involves going from a qualified non-identity in (1) to an unqualified non-identity in (2). The commonality of theme with my suggestion above suggests that Scotus was quite worried about the proper structure of identity inferences while working at Paris, and the *Ordinatio* text is explicable in terms of such worries, especially if we suggest, with Tweedale, that this section of the *Ordinatio* (along with the *Reportatio* and *Logica Scoti*) is a very late text. If my denial of Tweedale's interpretation of Triple-E has any merit, we can again defend my claim that reflexivity and transitivity are not true of real identity.

Afraid of Ontological Commitment?

As I mentioned earlier, Marilyn Adams, among others, suggests that Scotus abandons the ontological commitment of his youth in cases of real identity. In the *Ordinatio*, she points out, Scotus ordinarily spoke of formalities when speaking of the formal distinction, and generally seemed to suggest that there were entities that were said to be formally non-identical to one another. However, she argues that Scotus seems to revise his account in the *Reportatio*.⁶⁰ He no longer speaks of formalities or otherwise seems to propose that such a distinction implies ontological commitment to the things distinguished, despite the fact that the distinction is *ex parte rei*. Presumably, Adams would see Scotus's discussion of which inferences are appropriate when discussing the formal distinction as supporting her position. Consider again the discussion I mentioned from the *Logica Scoti*, where Scotus argues that the following inference is illegitimate:

A is formally distinct from B

⁶⁰ Adams, "Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century," 411–39. cf. Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," 5–74.

to

Formality A is distinct from formality B

One might think that the problem is not merely the change from qualified non-identity to unqualified non-identity, but also the move to a discussion of formalities, which reifies what need not be reified. But I argue that this proposal misses the point both of the argument of the *Logica* as well as the *Reportatio*.

For instance, in *Reportatio* I-A, d. 33, q. 2, n. 58, Scotus tells us that the approach taken by some suggesting that the personal property only expresses a mode of the divine essence, rather than a real thing,

is not my way of thinking...because then the sense would be that the distinction of the essence and the relation is a distinction of qualified realities, which is inappropriate, because the essence is a real thing simply.⁶¹

That is a robust degree of ontological commitment, regardless of the terminology that is invoked here. If anything is a genuine entity, the divine essence is one. In n. 59, he goes on to say that when he speaks of a qualified distinction, he means that (in the present case)

The essence and relation from the very nature of things are distinguished in a qualified way...the distinction of the essence and relation is of thing and thing simply, but the distinction is qualified.⁶²

Here he speaks of the reality not only of the divine essence, but also the relation or personal property. Both of these are real things, not qualified things that lack a proper state of real existence. Scotus makes much the same point in q. 3, n. 90 when discussing the relation between

⁶¹ Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 58, 328: “Sed non sic pono ego essentiam et relationem distingui secundum quid realiter, quia tunc esset sensus quod distinctio essentiae et relationis est distinctio realitatum secundum quid, quod est inconueniens, quia essentia est res simpliciter.” (I have slightly modified the last clause of the Wolter & Bychkov translation.)

⁶² Scotus, *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A d. 33 q. 2 n. 59, 328: “essentia et relatio ex natura rei distinguuntur secundum quid...distinctio essentiae et relationis est rei et rei simpliciter, - sed distinctio est secundum quid.”

property and person. Thus there seem to be no clear reason based on the *Reportatio* or *Logica* for substantially revising the view of ontological commitment seen earlier in the *Ordinatio*. His focus throughout these discussions seems to be making sure that his readers understand where the qualification lies – with the distinction – rather than making any claims about ontological commitment. Instead, he actually emphasizes that his account does *not* offer a qualification of things. Presumably, he mentions this precisely because someone might object that formalities seem like they could be “diminished” things. Of course, that would be unacceptable, since one of those things is the divine essence. More to the point, though, Scotus suggests that whatever the subjects of the formal distinction might be, they are not to be considered ontologically lesser entities, in the way that, perhaps, mental entities like concepts might be considered to have less ontological weight than entities external to the mind, since the former type would seem not to be distinct *ex parte rei*. Thus, if we take for granted the view that Scotus’s account in the *Ordinatio* includes a robust ontological commitment – a view not disputed by Adams or others who think he revises his view – it seems as though we lack motivation from these texts for rejecting such commitment. Indeed, we might even think that his emphasis on avoiding diminishing the entities suggests an even strong commitment than we found in the *Reportatio*.⁶³ So it is puzzling that some commentators find a lack of ontological commitment in these passages.

Furthermore, as Dumont has suggested, there is little reason to read Scotus’s discussion of the inferences mentioned above as ruling out ontological commitment. First of all, the removal of the terminology of formalities seems irrelevant to a determination of whether Scotus is theoretically committed to the formalities. In the *Logica* he still allows for a difference in

⁶³ Richard Cross argues similarly; cf. Richard Cross, “Scotus’s Parisian Teaching on Divine Simplicity,” in *Duns Scot À Paris, 1302-2002*, eds. Olivier Boulnois, Elizabeth Karger, Gérard Sondag, and J.-L. Solère (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 519–62.

formalities, but clarifies that they must be formally distinct, regardless of what they are. Scotus says that though the inference mentioned above is illegitimate, the following is acceptable:

A is formally distinct from B

to

Formality A is formally distinct from formality B

Scotus's concern, it seems, is restricted to the problem that results from the removal of the qualification on the distinction present in the first proposition. He is unconcerned with the fact that the latter proposition seems committed to distinct formalities. As a result, I suggest that we find ontological commitment throughout Scotus's discussion of real identity and formal non-identity, even in his later works – the *Reportatio* and the *Logica*.

Univocity and Simplicity

This level of ontological commitment might present some problems for other elements of Scotus's metaphysics and theology. For example, it may become difficult for him to adhere both to divine simplicity, univocity, and ontological commitment in cases of real identity. In order to see why, we must first look at his discussion of the claim that at least some of our language about God and creatures is univocal.

As it turns out, Scotus's commitment to the univocity of at least some of our language about God, when conjoined with his commitment to divine simplicity, seems to surface a significant tension. I intend to address this tension by developing briefly his accounts both of univocity and of divine simplicity, and then examining the way in which his discussion of the formal distinction can help us resolve the tension.

Scotus is somewhat well known for his view that at least some of our language about God is univocal; that is, at least some terms that are applied to God carry the same sense when they

are applied to creatures. Scotus intends this position as a rejection of the view of his predecessors, such as Thomas Aquinas. For Aquinas held that all theological terms are, at best, analogical to those terms used in connection with creatures; that is, the terms are used in different, albeit related, ways. To be clear: Scotus does not hold the view that *none* of our theological language can be analogical. He simply rejects the view that all discourse about God is either analogical or equivocal; and argues that at least some of our language about God will be univocal. For example, when we utter ‘God’s goodness’ and ‘Jennifer’s goodness’, there must be some sense or concept shared by these utterances, if we are to say that we are speaking univocally; in this case, it would be the concept ‘goodness’, which Scotus would say is a basic or simple concept. Aquinas, on the other hand, thinks that concepts like goodness are only properly ascribed to God as they exist in themselves, as proper perfections, and they apply to creatures in a derivative and weaker sense; and he claims further that this is true for all divine attributions.

In the standard Thomistic picture, divine simplicity precludes a number of different sorts of complexity. In general, for something to be simple, it (at least) must lack parts, must not be composite (whether this is spelled out in terms of form and matter or otherwise), and cannot have any accidents. In the case of divine simplicity, there are additional conditions: namely, the divine attributes are identical with God, and each of the divine attributes is identical to each of the other divine attributes.⁶⁴ Now Scotus happily affirms divine simplicity. But his account of univocity is inconsistent with the account of simplicity that I have just specified. In particular, Scotus cannot accept the claim that the divine attributes are identical with one another and with God.

Both Aquinas and Scotus believe that there are multiple attributes that can be ascribed

⁶⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I q. 3 aa. 2-7.

truly to God, and agree that many of these seem to be ascribed to creatures as well. The list includes being, goodness, intellect, will, wisdom, knowledge, power, life, and justice. Insofar as these are ascribed to creatures, they are ascribed severally; for example, there are many instances of goodness amongst humans. However, because Aquinas holds that all theological language is non-univocal, he can deny that these are several in God, for he can claim that this multiplicity in creatures has no bearing on how these attributes are ascribed to God. For these attributes become several in creatures as they are denominated in creatures, but they are all one and the same as they exist in God. Aquinas thinks there is no difference of any sort amongst the attributes or between the attributes and God. They are strictly identical. Goodness and justice in God are identical; indeed, goodness and God are identical.

Scotus, on the other hand, cannot avoid the implication that these attributes are several in God, for the following reasons. The concepts of, say, goodness and wisdom are univocal between God and creatures. For goodness in God will be said univocally with goodness in humans. But in creatures, the concept of wisdom differs from the concept of goodness. Since we are working just at the conceptual level, this might not immediately seem problematic. However, these are cases in which the difference in our concepts is grounded in a difference in reality. And since the terms for these attributes differ in sense or concept, then the attributes signified by these concepts will differ in some way in reality, regardless of whether they are found in God or in creatures. For if they differ in creatures, they will differ in God, since each is signified by the same univocal concept (goodness, in one case, and wisdom, in the other), and each differs from the other attributes. Scotus even suggests that if they were identical in God, they would be identical in creatures as well. But since they are not identical in creatures, then they are not identical in God.

Let me ward off one potential worry for Scotus. A common complaint against Scotus's account of univocity suggests that he must say that these attributes are exactly the same in God and creatures; that is, that he must deny divine transcendence. But this is not true, for in *themselves*, the attributes in question are indeterminate with respect to being had by God (infinitely) or by creatures (finitely). So there is a single univocal sense for each; there is a single concept for each of these attributes as they are in themselves. The difference arises in the concepts as they are had in either God or creatures; goodness in God will, it turns out, differ from goodness in creatures. But this is not because of a shift or change in the concept of goodness as it is in itself. Goodness just is goodness, and in itself, it is neither finite nor infinite. It can be determined either to finite (or creaturely) goodness or to infinite goodness (that is, God). But as it is in itself, it is neither finite nor infinite. Similarly for knowledge and power. In God, power becomes infinite power and wisdom becomes infinite wisdom. These attributes do not exist in God in the same way that it exists in humans. So the view doesn't pose any serious trouble for the radical distance that is supposed to hold between God and creatures.

Nonetheless, we do have a worry about simplicity. Is there a way to save his position, and avoid reverting to the doctrine of analogy? The most straightforward escape for Scotus would be the denial of divine simplicity. Unfortunately, this simply isn't an option. Scotus argues for God's simplicity in a number of ways and in a number of different places, and it plays a critical role in his argument for the existence of God in his *De Primo Principio*, where he argues for the primacy, in any causal story, of a being that is simple.⁶⁵ So we cannot take lightly Scotus's commitment to simplicity.

Recall that, for Scotus, the divine attributes are, in some sense, distinct from God, and

⁶⁵ More specifically, he argues that primary being must be simple, infinite, and a unity.

distinct from one another; this much seems true just in virtue of his doctrine of univocity.

However, this claim is consistent with all of the conditions on simplicity except for the identity conditions. So perhaps Scotus could accept divine simplicity, but reject the identity conditions in the inherited Thomistic notion of simplicity. To do so, he will need to provide an account of the difference between the attributes that does not introduce parts or separability into the account of God; otherwise, the story will fail other conditions on divine simplicity. The account that Scotus provides, in fact, suggests that the attributes are formally distinct from one another.

It might have seemed that Scotus would reject the identity conditions for divine simplicity; for if we understand those identity conditions as including the strict notion of identity, then Scotus will certainly agree that each of the divine attributes is not strictly identical with God or with any of the other attributes, because those attributes differ in their *rationes*, i.e., their accounts of what it is to be each of the attributes. And of course God's *ratio*, if God can be said to have one, will differ from each of the attributes. However, if we construe the identity conditions embedded in the account of divine in terms of real identity (in Scotus's sense of course), then Scotus can perfectly well affirm the richer notion of simplicity that includes the identity conditions. So in the case of the divine attributes, Scotus will suggest that there is real identity and formal distinction between each of the divine attributes and between each attribute and God, and he believes that this will preserve divine simplicity, including the identity conditions in the traditional account. In the end, Scotus will concede that his view differs from Aquinas's view. But the differences don't run all that deep, since he retains all of the other conditions for simplicity without modification, and the sense of identity may be weaker in some sense, *but*, as Scotus claims, it is a genuine sense of identity. It turns out that Scotus can, after all, retain the identity conditions included in the traditional account of simplicity. However, these

need to be understood as requiring no more than this weaker sense of identity or sameness that is present in cases of formal distinction.

Separability and Distinction

One major topic that must be addressed in any discussion of distinctions is the relationship between each distinction and separability. Does each type of distinction imply the separability or inseparability of whatever it is that is said to be distinct? This is even more important in light of my claim that there is space in the account of real identity and the formal distinction for ontological commitment to both entities related by such identity. In light of Scotus's strong views on divine power, one might be inclined to think that any such ontological distinction should allow for the possibility of separation of the entities in question. The standard view is that there is, indeed, a tight connection between distinction and separability. Nearly every discussion of distinctions surfaces the relationship between them. In his book on medieval theories of relations, Mark Henninger indicates in his discussion of Scotus's theory that there is a "separability criterion for real distinction" which is to be explained as follows: "there is a real distinction between two entities if it is possible to separate one from the other in such a way that at least one can exist without the other."⁶⁶ In this quote, we find two quite significant claims being made. First is the suggestion that separability is a sufficient condition for the presence of a real distinction. Second is the characterization of separability, which (according to Henninger) is to be understood as the possibility that at least one of any pair of entities can exist without the other. Both of these claims must be evaluated if we are to gain clarity on the position that Scotus defends regarding the relationships holding between separability and distinction.

Before turning to those issues, however, I want to comment briefly on a significant

⁶⁶ Mark G. Henninger, *Relations: Medieval Theories, 1250-1325* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 71.

historical claims that Henninger goes on to make about the tie between real distinction and this so-called separability criterion. He suggests that, after Scotus, “a commonly held meaning for ‘real distinction’ involved some form of the separability criterion.”⁶⁷ Though this may turn out to be true, I suspect that the situation is more likely to turn out to be far more complicated than this comment suggests. The subsequent medieval tradition includes a wide range of thinkers, including many followers of Scotus (who were of many varieties themselves). These philosophers were often quite keen to develop increasingly detailed and complex theories of distinctions, and it is difficult to believe that the matter of the relationship between separability and real distinction would have been more or less settled. Indeed, as the reader will discover below, I suggest that the connection in Scotus himself is not as straightforward as most commentators have suggested; if I am right about that, then there is even more reason to think that his various followers should not be expected to have a single way of thinking through the connection, and that there would have been plenty of wrangling about how best to understand various elements of Scotus’s theory.

Such a claim does, however, seem quite plausible as a reading of Ockham’s (and perhaps Ockhamists’) influence on the discussion. As is consistent with his parsimonious or reductionist approach to questions of ontological commitment, Ockham argues that there are only two types of distinction: the conceptual distinction and the real distinction. These distinctions are distinguished by the attendant ontological commitments of each. In the case of the conceptual distinction, there is just one thing present, distinguished by different ways of thinking about that one thing. For example, the Morning Star is merely conceptually distinct from the Evening Star, since they are just the very same thing (*viz.*, Venus). More generally, if *x* and *y* are conceptually

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

distinct, then $x = y$. In the case of the real distinction, there is more than one thing present; so it brings with it an ontological commitment to more than one thing. For example the Morning Star is really distinct from Mars, since they are two different things (again, considered *de re*). More generally, if x and y are really distinct, then $x \neq y$.

Ockham then conjoins this account of the distinctions with a strong view about divine power. Ockham claims, in particular, that for all x and all y , if x and y are really distinct (and hence really two), then it is possible - at least by divine power - that x exist without y and it is possible that y exist without x . The conjunction, then, of the straightforward story about ontological commitment and the account of separability in terms of divine power provide Ockham with a very clean and simple way of drawing the connection between separability and the real distinction, one that does seem to reflect the claim about the historical tradition proposed by Henninger. For these reasons, Henninger's claim does seem like a reasonable way to understand the direction the discussion took in Ockham. Though I have not explored the broader Ockhamist tradition on this point, it also seems reasonable to think that it too would be characterized in this manner. Though I will treat of Ockham's theory in later chapters, my primary focus here is the account we get from Scotus. Therefore, I do not wish to belabor this historical point, and will attempt no further historical review of Henninger's suggestion. Instead, I wish to turn my attention now to Scotus's own account, and emphasize the claims made about Scotus's view in particular.

Recall that I mentioned two significant claims in Henninger's discussion of the separability criterion: (1) that separability is a sufficient condition for the presence of a real distinction; and (2) that separability should be understood as the possibility that at least one of any pair of entities can exist without the other. We should examine these in order as we proceed

toward a full account of Scotus's views on the relationships between distinction and separability.

First, the relationship between separability and real distinction: as I have already noted, Henninger suggests that Scotus understands separability to be a sufficient condition for real distinction. That is, if x is separable from y , then x is really distinct from y . Richard Cross articulates a similar claim; we will look at the textual evidence below. For now, I want to focus on the nature of the claims made by Cross. Cross's discussion of the relationship between separability and distinction draws an even tighter connection between them than we find in Henninger. In his *Physics of Duns Scotus*, Cross argues that Scotus is committed to the following two claims about the relationship between separability and distinction: (a) inseparability is both necessary and sufficient for real identity; and (b) separability is both necessary and sufficient for real distinction:

Scotus's criterion for real identity is real inseparability. In fact, real inseparability (such that the real separation of two or more realities is logically impossible) is necessary and sufficient for real identity. Conversely real separability is necessary and sufficient for real distinction.⁶⁸

Cross's reading of Scotus's view, then, is stronger than the one proposed by Henninger.

Henninger only commented on the relationship between separability and real distinction, and suggested that we find in Scotus only the claim that separability is sufficient for real distinction.

Cross, on the other hand, argues that Scotus believes separability to be both necessary *and* sufficient for real distinction; and furthermore regards inseparability to be both necessary and sufficient for real identity (or real sameness). In other words, x is separable from y if and only if x is really distinct from y ; *and* x is inseparable from y if and only if x is really identical to y .

The additional claims Cross offers regarding the relationship between *inseparability* and

⁶⁸ Richard Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus: The Scientific Context of a Theological Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 8.

real identity make his view more wide-ranging than Henninger's. And the inclusion of necessary conditions makes Cross's account stronger; indeed the presence of both necessary and sufficient conditions suggests that we may have definitions of real distinction and real identity - in terms of separability and inseparability respectively - something significantly more specific than what Henninger proposed. I will examine the evidence for these claims shortly.

Second, in articulating Scotus's accounts of separability and inseparability, Henninger argues that:

there is a real distinction between two entities if it is possible to separate one from the other in such a way that at least one can exist without the other.⁶⁹

Thus, he proposes that separability should be understood as follows: x and y are separable if and only if either x can exist without y or y can exist without x . Coupled with his claim about the connection between real distinction and separability, he is claiming that if either x can exist without y or y can exist without x , then x and y are really distinct.

If we look at Cross's discussion of this topic, we will, once again, see that Henninger's claims are more modest than Cross's. In this case, Cross again agrees with Henninger as far as he goes, but adds additional elements to his account of Scotus's view. In particular, Cross argues that we can give an account both of separability *and* inseparability in terms of whether it is possible for at least one of any pair of entities to exist without the other:

More precisely, two objects x and y are inseparable if and only if, both, it is not possible for x to exist without y , and it is not possible for y to exist without x ; conversely, two objects x and y are separable if and only if at least one of x and y can exist without the other.⁷⁰

In the spirit of Henninger and Cross, I shall label this the 'separability criterion'. Cross's

⁶⁹ Henninger, *Relations*, p. 71.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

rendering of the account of separability is essentially the same as Henninger's. That is, separability is a disjunctive claim about whether at least one of a pair of things can exist apart from the other; thus it is an existential separability claim. The difference between Cross's account and Henninger's is that Cross adds an account of inseparability, as well. As Cross describes it, the inseparability of x and y means that neither x nor y can exist apart from the other; they are existentially inseparable. In contrast to the separability account, this turns out to be a conjunctive claim: it is not possible that x exist apart from y ; *and* it is not possible that y exist apart from x . This account of inseparability does seem to follow from the account of separability that both Cross and Henninger offer; if the possibility of merely one of x or y existing without the other is sufficient for separability, then it seems as though inseparability demands that it be impossible for either of x or y to exist apart from the other. This seems to justify the fact that both Cross and Henninger refer to their accounts as offering a "separability criterion", despite the differences in their accounts.

If we conjoin this account of separability with Cross's account of real distinction, and this account of inseparability with his account of real identity, we then get the following proposals:

- (a) *Real Identity*: x and y are really identical if and only if (i) it is not possible for x to exist without y , and (ii) it is not possible for y to exist without x .
- (b) *Real Distinction*: x and y are really distinct if and only if (i) it is possible for x to exist without y , or (ii) it is possible for y to exist without x .

If we take real distinction and real identity as mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive (and similarly for inseparability and separability) - as seems likely for Scotus - then what Cross suggests provides us with what seems to be straightforward divisions. Though not as crisp and clean as we might find in Ockham, this seems like a helpful way to find orderly structure in what

is often considered a confusing and difficult way of dividing up logical and metaphysical space. Of course, that does not make such an account true. In what follows, I intend to raise some concerns about whether this account does, in fact, reflect Scotus's own views, as well as whether some aspects of this characterization ultimately are sensible ways of understanding the central notions of separability and distinction.

If we intend to examine these central claims about the content of Scotus's account of the relationships between distinctions and separability, it will be instructive to examine more fully the ways in which Cross and Henninger discuss them, and evaluate the textual evidence for the views that they propose. Because Cross offers a wider range of claims, and his accounting of Scotus's view demands a significant level of theoretical commitment, his suggestions will be especially instructive as we explore these proposals. In particular, I will evaluate whether either Henninger's account or Cross's stronger and wider-ranging account is warranted. This will demand that we consider the structure of the claims made about distinctions and separability thus far offered, and that we examine the texts in which Scotus discusses these topics. I suggest that we will be somewhat surprised by what we discover, viz., that Scotus's actual views do not square well with the traditional readings of his work.

Are Persons and Natures Separable?

In this section, I discuss Scotus's account of persons and natures. First and foremost, I attempt to sort out some concerns about the relationship between something's being a person and something's being a nature. In particular, I try to work out the best way to make sense of Scotus's claim that an individual human nature and a human person are formally distinct. Though Scotus's standard view about the relationship between a nature and a person is interesting and compelling to someone sympathetic to his metaphysical claims, particular worries

arise for his view as a result of the doctrine of the Incarnation, as we shall see. These worries provide the impetus for me to offer an alternative way to understand the relationship between the formal distinction and separability. Specifically, I propose that Scotus's account of the Incarnation and its relevance for the person/nature distinction offers compelling evidence in favor of the claim that the formal distinction allows for separability; that is, that there is an x , such that if x is formally distinct from y , then x is separable from y . In other words, I propose that, contrary to the received interpretation, Scotus's account of the formal distinction does not imply the inseparability of that which is said to be formally distinct.

As is true in many of his theological discussion involving various types of distinctions, Scotus's motivation is the preservation of the doctrines of the Trinity and divine simplicity, while maintaining a univocal account of concepts. In creatures, accidents are really distinct from one another, and substances are really distinct from their accidents; and really distinct entities generate distinct concepts in the intellect that apprehends them. Substances and accidents are distinct *supposita*, or distinct subsistences, since (at least by divine power, on Scotus's view) accidents can exist apart from any substance. (The Eucharist is the clearest case of this.) In God, however, the presence of divine infinity entails that the attributes corresponding to accidents in creatures will be really identical but formally non-identical from each other. If they were really distinct, this would undercut divine simplicity. And as a result, those attributes cannot be distinct *supposita* or subsistent entities. Nonetheless, Scotus argues, the concepts corresponding to each of these attributes will be different in virtue of the distinction that remains present in God between the attributes, and they will differ in just the same ways that the concepts differ for the corresponding accidents in creatures. This is precisely what motivates him to preserve the formal distinction between each of the divine attributes. Ultimately, the difference

between the sorts of properties had by God and those had by humans is merely a difference in intensive mode – God has properties infinitely, while humans have them finitely – so our concepts about those properties will remain univocal.

I offer this discussion, especially this last portion, in part to remind us how heavily motivated Scotus's metaphysics are by theological questions. We ought not think that questions in theology are, as they so often are in Ockham, *sui generis*. Instead, we should presume that Scotus is offering a unified metaphysical story that accounts both for creatures and divine cases unless we have compelling evidence otherwise.

I offer it for a second reason – namely, to suggest that there is nothing obvious in Scotus's account of the formal distinction (especially the one that we have discussed from the *Reportatio*) that commits us to thinking that the formal distinction entails inseparability. Perhaps we will find some further motivation to believe that this is the case. However, as I will shortly argue, we have good reason – grounded in the doctrine of the Incarnation – for thinking that the formal distinction does *not* entail inseparability. And if my claim in the preceding paragraph is correct, then we should accept guidance from theological explanation when forming our understanding of Scotus's views.

The best known example of the formal distinction in creatures arises in Scotus's discussion of individual (or individualized) natures themselves (leaving aside the question of persons, for now).⁷¹ In any individual nature, there are two elements: a common nature (that can be shared or had in common by many objects) and an individuating feature (the *haecceitas*) that renders the nature individual. These elements are or make up just one thing, but Scotus says that

⁷¹ cf. Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, p. 1, qq. 1-6, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 7, edited by C. Balić, C. Barbarić, S. Bušelić, B. Hechich, L. Modrić, S. Nanni, R. Rosini, S. Ruiz de Loizaga, and C. Saco Alarcón (Città del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973).

we can distinguish between them formally. Therefore, in an individual *human* nature, we can distinguish formally between the human nature and the individuating feature that makes that human nature an individual human nature.

However, Scotus thinks that if we want to understand what a person is, we must understand something more than this. We cannot merely read his account of individuation via common natures and *haecceitas* as giving us sufficient conditions for being a person. In his examination of the doctrine of the Incarnation, he uses his account of an individual human nature in order to draw the distinction between an individual human nature and a human person (as well as to draw a distinction between those notions and a divine person, though we will not take up this issue here).⁷² Focusing on their dependence relations, Scotus provides negative conditions for each. First he says that an individual human nature is not inclined to depend on something. Next Scotus specifies the conditions required for being a person: a person is an individual human nature that does not actually depend on another. Thus an individual human nature has a single negation (it is not inclined to depend), while a human person is described in terms of a double negation: it is not inclined to depend, nor does it actually depend. Suppose, then, the existence of some individual human nature. If it meets the pair of negative conditions for being a person, i.e., is disposed not to depend and does not actually depend – conditions that you and I and all humans walking the earth ordinarily meet – then it is a person. The elaboration of distinct (in)dependence conditions shows that Scotus is committed to the claim that being a person involves something distinct from being an individual human nature (or individual rational nature,

⁷² cf. *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, q. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9, edited by B. Hechich, B. Huculak, I. Percan, and S. Ruiz de Loizaga (Città del Vaticano: Typis Vaticanis, 2006); *Lectura* III, d. 1, q. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 20, edited by B. Hechich, B. Huculak, J. Percan, S. Ruiz de Loizaga, and C. Saco Alarcón (Città del Vaticano: Typis Vaticanis, 2003); and *Reportatio Parisiensis* I-A, d. 26.

to generalize).

Though an individual human nature is never inclined to depend – and hence never runs afoul of the first condition – if the second person of the Trinity were to assume the individual human nature, the nature is subsequently actually dependent, and so violates the second condition. As a result, the individual human nature would no longer be a person. Scotus’s primary aim in making this claim is the preservation of the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation; he wants to avoid the suggestion that there are two persons co-present in the Incarnation, i.e., both the Second Person of the Trinity and an assumed human person.

We should also note something else that Scotus wanted from such an account: the presence of a helpful structural parallel to the doctrine of the Trinity. As a result of his discussion of the Incarnation, he suggests that there is a formal distinction between the (human) person and the (individual human) nature. Similarly, in the case of each Trinitarian person, there is a formal distinction between the (divine) person and the (divine) nature. Given Scotus’s disposition toward generally unifying metaphysical principles, this should not be a surprising result. Scotus’s work here is helpful for extending our understanding of the metaphysical structure present in the Trinity, and his general account of constitution.

As the Incarnation case points out, the individual human nature can exist even if the human person does not (although not vice versa), at least in the case in which the human nature is assumed and thus rendered actually dependent. Thus there is one-way independence or separability between the nature and the person. This is problematic, because it seems as though Scotus suggests that the nature and person are really identical in his *Quodlibetal Questions*: “If the proper singularity of the nature of the person were formally his proper personality, then this

could not be without that.”⁷³ Scotus’s concern in this passage is to establish some sort of distinction between the individual nature and the person, in virtue of the fact that the nature can exist without the person (or without being a person). His suggestion is that the individuality of the nature, which makes the nature to be a suppositum, is formally distinct from personality, which is what makes the nature to be a person. However, Scotus’s contemporary commentators – including Richard Cross, Peter King, Marilyn Adams, and Martin Tweedale – claim that the formal distinction entails two-way inseparability; that is, if x and y are formally distinct, then each is inseparable from the other. Furthermore, they claim that a real distinction entails (at least one-way) separability, which would suggest that the proper distinction here should be a real distinction.

Indeed, Cross suggests that separability is logically impossible in cases of formal distinction, and that inseparability is both necessary and sufficient for a formal distinction:

Scotus’s criterion for real identity is real inseparability. In fact, real inseparability (such that the real separation of two or more realities is *logically impossible*) is *necessary and sufficient* for real identity. Conversely real separability is necessary and sufficient for real distinction. More precisely, two objects x and y are inseparable if and only if, both, it is not possible for x to exist without y , and it is not possible for y to exist without x ; conversely, two objects x and y are separable if and only if at least one of x and y can exist without the other.⁷⁴

Note that Cross frames his criterion in terms of logical possibility. Being good modal pluralists, we should see that separability would be impossible in itself, quite apart from any powers that presently exist. But we can also point out that, if separation is logically impossible, then God could not do it. On the other hand, if it were logically possible to separate, then God could do it.

⁷³ Scotus, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* q. 19 n. 55 (Wadding-Vivès 17), in *Cuestiones Cuodlibetales (Obras del Doctor Sutil Juan Duns Escoto)*, ed. Felix Alluntis (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1968), 685: “Si autem propria singularitas naturae personalis esset formaliter propria personalitas eius, non posset illa esse sine ista.” (my translation)

⁷⁴ Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus*, 8.

Tweedale is in agreement with Cross that two-way inseparability is the notion of separability that holds for the formal distinction. Tweedale's account is also consistent with Cross on the question of logical impossibility: "items which are formally distinct but really the same cannot, for Scotus, on pain of logical contradiction, be separated one from the other."⁷⁵

If Scotus's commentators are right to think that the formal distinction entails two-way inseparability, the case of the Incarnation suggests a serious conflict for his view, as it implies the co-presence of separability and a formal distinction. Rather than assume the traditional reading, however, I would suggest that we should interpret the Incarnation case as providing *prima facie* evidence that Scotus was committed to allowing conceptual space for separability in the presence of a formal distinction. As I mentioned above, Scotus seems committed to allowing his theological commitments inform his metaphysics. Indeed, he seems willing to use them as test cases for a proper metaphysical story. So we should be willing to allow his discussion of the Incarnation to inform how we understand the formal distinction. We must proceed, then, by evaluating the claims that there is a fundamental connection between inseparability and real identity.

Recall that Cross claims that real inseparability is both necessary and sufficient for real identity. Cross cites two texts in support of his claims about the necessity and sufficiency of separability/inseparability in relation to real distinction/identity. First he cites the second book of Scotus's *Ordinatio*, in favor of the claim that inseparability is necessary for real identity:

nothing is the really the same as something without which it is able to be really without contradiction; but there are many relations without which the foundations are able to be without contradiction. Therefore there are many relations which are not really the same as (a) foundation.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Tweedale, "Comments on Blander".

Cross then goes on to suggest that *Quodlibet* q. 3 n. 15 implies that inseparability is sufficient for real identity:

For it is universally the case that whatever belongs to a thing such that it would be a contradiction in every way for that to exist without this, then this is really the same as that.⁷⁷

Scotus's suggestion in this passage is if it is logically impossible for y to exist without x , then x is really identical with y . It is worth noting that there is no "vice versa" clause in either text; in other words, there is no demand here for symmetry in cases of real identity. If this is intended as a universal claim, then it suggests that real identity (and hence real distinction, if we assume that they are mutually exhaustive) is non-symmetrical. For if we plug any relation into the "former" slot, and some subject of that relation into the "latter" slot, then the subject is really identical to the relation, even though, as Scotus has elsewhere claimed, real relations are really distinct from their subjects. This result would be inconsistent with what Scotus says elsewhere unless we assume that it is non-symmetrical.

This way of reading the passage fits nicely with the discussion of the case of the Incarnation. If real identity were symmetrical, then the fact that a person cannot exist without the nature, but the nature can exist without being a person would imply that there cannot be a relation of real identity in this case. For it would suggest the following argument:

- (1) If it is logically impossible for person to exist without nature, then nature is really identical with person. (by sufficiency of inseparability for real identity)
- (2) If nature is really identical with person, then person is really identical with nature. (by symmetry)

⁷⁶ Scotus, *Ordinatio* II d. 1 qq. 4-5, n. 200, 101-102: "nihil est idem realiter alicui, sine quo potest esse realiter absque contradictione; sed multae sunt relationes sine quibus fundamenta possunt esse absque contradictione; ergo multae sunt relationes quae non sunt realiter idem cum fundamento." (my translation)

⁷⁷ Scotus, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* q. 3 n. 46 (Wadding-Vivés 15), 113: "Universaliter enim quod convenit alicui sic quod omnimoda contradictio sit illud esse sine hoc, hoc est idem realiter illi." (my translation)

(3) If person is really identical with nature, then it is logically impossible for nature to exist without person. (by necessity of inseparability for real identity)

But according to Scotus, (3) is false on theological grounds. If we take for granted the claims of necessity and sufficiency of inseparability for real identity, then we should deny symmetry. And of course, this accords nicely with my earlier discussion of symmetry in relation to real identity and formal distinction.

As further evidence for the claim that Scotus's theory of distinctions does not match what its interpreters have claimed for it, I also suggest that the case of the Trinity further militates against the standard understanding of the relationship between distinctions and separability. For Scotus – along with most medievals – believed that each of the Persons of the Trinity is really distinct from the others. If real distinction entailed separability, as Cross and others have claimed, then Scotus's view would fail the sniff test of orthodoxy, since it would suggest that the First Person of the Trinity could exist without the Second Person of the Trinity (and so on for all of the connections between the Divine Persons). Surely Scotus would not have failed to recognize if his views committed him to such a clear violation of orthodoxy. Hence, the most plausible reading of the real distinction is that it does not entail separability. So we have at least the beginnings of a suggestion that inseparability is neither necessary nor sufficient for a formal distinction, at least where inseparability is understood as 2-way inseparability:

Not necessary – because there is at least one case of formal distinction that allows for separability

Not sufficient – because there is at least one case of real distinction that involves inseparability.

As far as I can tell, Cross is the only commentator who attempts to address these puzzles.

Unfortunately, in each case, he merely sidesteps the problem – in effect – by claiming that Scotus’s uses of terms like “really distinct” and “person” differ in the divine case and the ordinary (human) cases. In his book, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, when he discusses the presence of a real distinction between each of the persons of the Trinity, he claims that “this is not quite Scotus’s usual sense of ‘real’ distinction, because real distinction usually requires separability.”⁷⁸ However, this move seems *ad hoc*, and inappropriately so, in part because Scotus seems otherwise to use these terms univocally, as well as his particular commitment to a structural parallelism between the Incarnation and Trinity cases. Indeed, it is important to note that the Incarnation case illustrates a distinction between individual *human* natures and *human* persons; of course, the Second Person is divine, but the human nature and person that are formally distinct in Scotus’s example are human. Nothing about the divine case, *per se*, raises worries in this instance. Hence we cannot claim that we have some *sui generis* case because of God’s involvement. To the contrary, I suggest that the theological cases will provide the clearest way to understand the metaphysical import of the formal distinction, and its implications for an account of identity.

I would suggest that the question of separability or inseparability has no intrinsic connection to the question of what type of distinction holds between entities. Instead, separability seems to depend on further metaphysical and structural features of the object(s) in question. And though in many cases formally distinct entities cannot be separated in the course of nature, at least in some cases, they can be separated by divine power. Since Scotus (like Ockham) sees a tight connection between possibility and divine power, his views about

⁷⁸ Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152, n. 17.

separability do not commit him to radical divine voluntarism or a *sui generis* account of power. As a result, he would not claim that it is logically impossible that p , while simultaneously claiming that God can bring it about that p . In other words Scotus will not claim that p is possible by divine power if p is logically impossible. Instead, Scotus thinks that God's ability to bring something about is an extremely useful heuristic device for testing the range of logical possibility.

Chapter 3:

Getting Ockham's Priority Straight: Natural Priority, Real Distinction, and Separability

Preliminaries

The medieval problem of universals has provided a rich and interesting philosophical legacy. Disputes about universals were frequently the canvas upon which medieval philosophers painted their fundamental ontological, semantic and logical positions. Perhaps the most interesting facet of the problem of universals is that for the medievals, the problem serves much the same role as the philosophy of time in contemporary philosophy, viz. it brings together many sub-fields within philosophy, and one can discover all sorts of interesting things about those various areas while taking up this seemingly unitary subject. Medieval disputes about universals are generally intriguing, and in what follows, I spend a considerable amount of time examining a pair of arguments in one particular text from Ockham in which he engages his contemporaries and immediate predecessors on a variety of topics tied to the problem of universals. In this text, Ockham criticizes a particular sort of ontological commitment to universals, but what makes this text so fascinating is the extent to which his discussion of the problem of universals illuminates his broader metaphysical and logical commitments.

Nonetheless, the problem's connection to other discussions and disputes in the medieval period is often misunderstood. The medieval division between realists and nominalists is frequently cast solely in terms of a distinction between those who affirm an ontological commitment to universals – the realists – and those who do not – the nominalists. Though that particular question may be relevant to the distinction(s) between realism and nominalism, framing the distinction in this way gives short shrift to the wider range of issues that bear on it. As a result, I will make explicit how I understand the realism-nominalism dispute to connect to

the problem of universals, as discussed in the material relevant to my project. The fundamental aspect of the nominalist-realist debate about universals can be characterized as dividing its interlocutors into two opposing positions regarding the truth conditions for sentences involving general terms: (a) realism is, roughly, the view that the truth conditions for such sentences require appeal to non-mental and non-linguistic entities that are part of the ontological furniture of the universe;⁷⁹ and (b) nominalism in its broadest sense, and as used (perhaps too loosely) in contemporary conversation about such disputes, refers to any non-realist position, i.e., any position suggesting that the truth conditions for such sentences need not make appeal to such entities.

As is well known, Ockham never met a version of realism about universals that he failed to abhor, an assessment he makes clear in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*:

But this opinion, to the extent that it maintains that there are external things besides singulars [and] existing in [singulars], I regard as completely absurd and destructive of all of Aristotle's philosophy, and of all knowledge and all truth and reason [too], and that it is the worst error in philosophy and [is] criticized by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, VII, and that those who hold it are incapable of knowledge.⁸⁰

One would think that pointing out that realists have committed the worst error *ever* would be harsh enough; but Ockham really pours it on, arguing further that Aristotle criticized their view,

⁷⁹ There was some debate about whether universals were categorial. However, since this issue does not bear on the present discussion, I will leave open the question of whether there can be ontologically real items that are not classifiable in the categories, and hence, whether universals must be categorial in order to be ontologically real.

⁸⁰ William Ockham, *Expositio in Librum Perihermenias Aristotelis*, §8, in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 2, eds. Angelus Gambatese and Stephen Brown (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1978), 363: "Sed istam opinionem, quantum ad hoc quod ponit esse aliquas res extra praeter singulares existentes in eis, reputo omnino absurdam et destruentem totam philosophiam Aristotelis et omnem scientiam et omnem veritatem et rationem, et quod est pessimus error in philosophia et reprobatus ab Aristotele in VII *Metaphysicae*, et quod tenentes eam sunt inhabiles ad scientiam." Translated by Paul Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals in the Middle Ages: Notes and Texts* (1995), 168, <http://pvspade.com/Logic/docs/univers.pdf>.

and that anyone holding the view was utterly ignorant.⁸¹ He maintains this critical stance toward the variety of realism under discussion in the text that we will examine here, as he claims that this view, like every other sort of realism about universals, is “absolutely false and absurd.”⁸² In order to demonstrate the absurdity of this particular view, Ockham offers a pair of arguments against it. It is that pair of arguments that will occupy our attention in detail here. However, before examining his critique, we must examine the view a bit more closely in order to understand what motivates the particular arguments that he offers.

Ockham describes the variety of realism about universals under discussion in the following manner:

There is one theory that says every univocal universal is a certain thing existing outside the soul, really in each singular and belonging to the essence of each singular, really distinct from each singular and from any other universal, in such a way that the universal man is truly one thing outside the soul, existing really in each man, and is really distinguished from each man and from the universal animal and from the universal substance. So too for all genera and species...⁸³

Most scholars seem to think that this describes the view of Walter Burley.⁸⁴ Although this is

⁸¹ Of course, realists ought not be held responsible for their error in reasoning, since they are, according to Ockham, incapable of knowledge.

⁸² Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, in *Opera Theologica*, vol. 2, eds. Stephen Brown and Gedeon Gál (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1970), 108: “Ista opinio est simpliciter falsa et absurda, ideo arguo contra eam.” Translated by Paul Spade, *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 119. All subsequent English references to Ockham’s *Ordinatio* I d. 2 will be to Spade’s translation.

⁸³ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 100-101: “Ad istam quaestionem est una opinio quod quodlibet universale univocum est quaedam res existens extra animam realiter in quolibet singulari et de essentia cuiuslibet singularis, distincta realiter a quolibet singulari et a quolibet alio universali, ita quod homo universalis est una vera res extra animam existens realiter in quolibet homine, et distinguitur realiter a quolibet homine et ab animali universali et a substantia universali; et sic de omnibus generibus et speciebus...” Trans. Spade, *Five Texts*, 115.

⁸⁴ Marilyn Adams and Paul Spade both discuss this issue. Adams notes Ockham’s awareness, revealed in *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 5, that this view had been mistakenly attributed to Scotus, and suggests that Ockham’s arguments in q. 4 seem directed at a position much like Burley’s. She also points out that there is no direct evidence that Ockham had Burley in mind; for example, he never quotes any of Burley’s texts in his critique. Spade explicitly attributes the view to Walter Burley. See Adams, “Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century,” 423, and Spade, *Five Texts*, 115.

Ockham's description of the view, it is generally considered to be a fair representation of this variety of realism, one similar to the views held by Burley.⁸⁵ In order to understand the central issues that Ockham's critique surfaces, it will be useful to spend a little bit of time unpacking the description of this brand of realism. A great deal hangs on a proper understanding of what is included in (and even what is essential to) a moderate realist account. The following five conditions elucidate the most important elements of this view, as articulated in Ockham's text above:

- (1) Mind Independence: Universals are mind-independent entities; they exist outside the soul. They are not concepts or merely linguistic items, but have their existence external to the mind or its activity.
- (2) Really in Particulars: Universals enter into the constitution of particulars; they do not remain separated from all particulars, or exist only in a separate realm of universals that is distinct from particulars.
- (3) Really In the Essences of Particulars: Universals constitute the essences of particulars. The description leaves open what extension of "particulars" the defender of such a view would have in mind.⁸⁶ On the one hand, we might read 'particular thing' or 'singular' as standing only for substance. This claim would then apply only to substantial and essential properties, since accidental properties presumably do not enter into the essences of particular things so understood. Humanity, for example, enters into the essence of

⁸⁵ Since my focus is on the claims embedded in Ockham's critique, I am not especially concerned here about how well his account of Burley's view accords with Burley's actual views. Nate Bulthuis has suggested to me that, based on the dates of the relevant texts from Burley, Ockham's critique cannot have Burley's view as its target. Burley does not explicitly defend a view like the one discussed here by Ockham until he responds to Ockham in later texts such as *Burlei super artem veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis* and in his commentary on the *Categories*.

⁸⁶ It also leaves open the question of whether universals constitute essences partially or wholly, a question that I do not consider here.

Socrates; so it meets that condition for being a universal. Paleness, however, does not enter into the essence of Socrates, so it would not be considered a universal on Burley's view. On the other hand, the view could be understood to include particulars in any category; so we could read 'thing' or 'singular' in a broader way than just standing for 'substance'. Of course, the number of categories will vary according to individual ontologies; but the claim here is that whatever categories one has in her ontology, the items in each of those categories will have associated with them universals that enter into their essences. For example, paleness may not enter into the essence of Socrates, but it *does* enter into the essence of a particular paleness. Therefore, on the account described above, paleness would meet this condition on being a universal. From the claim that this account is intended to apply across all genera and species, the most plausible reading of this view is this latter one, viz., that there are universals corresponding to each of the items across all of the categories.⁸⁷

- (4) No Diversification: Each universal is "one thing outside the soul". Universals are not diversified or multiplied when existing in particulars, i.e., they are numerically the same in distinct individuals. When a new human being comes to be, no new universal (i.e., humanity) comes into existence.
- (5) Distinguished from Particulars and from Other Universals: Though universals enter into the constitution of particulars (and their essences), they are nonetheless distinct from the particulars. They are also distinguished from every other universal, including those to which each one bears genus/species relations. The motivation for this view presumably

⁸⁷ If the reader finds such an ontology implausible (or implausibly attributed to Burley), it seems safe to read the remainder of the arguments in a way that squares better with the alternative view. I do not think that much in this discussion hangs on whether I am correct about this adjudication.

arises from the fact that particulars and universals have different (or at least contrary) features. In the arguments in favor of such a view at the beginning of q. 4, Ockham mentions that the defender of this view would argue that universals are incorruptible, while particulars are corruptible.⁸⁸ Since it is impossible for one and the same (created) thing to have contrary properties, then universals cannot be the same as particulars.

It is worth noting that conditions (2) and (3) arguably are incompatible with many forms of Platonism about universals – at least insofar as Platonism involves the view (that in some places seems to be defended by Plato) that particulars merely “participate” in universals, where participation is understood as including at least the following claims: (a) universals exist in a separate realm from particulars; and (b) universals do not enter into the composition of particulars. There seems to be very little interest in so-called Platonic varieties of realism in this period; most people working in this period seemed more interested in supposedly Aristotelian varieties of realism. However, for those who want to avoid immoderate forms of realism, the central concern in this period appears to be the question of whether universals can ever exist *apart from* particulars, rather than whether they can ever exist *as constituents of* particulars. As a result, there is one additional claim that is frequently found in medieval varieties of realism during this period, and it is the claim that is often considered a requirement in order for any sort of realism to be considered “moderate”:

- (6) Not Platonic: Universals do not and cannot exist apart from particulars. There are no universals existing separately from particulars; nor are there any uninstantiated universals. *Ex hypothesi*, if all humans were to cease existing, then the universal

⁸⁸ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 100: “Secundo, quod sit res distincta realiter videtur, quia impossibile est eandem rem esse corruptibilem et incorruptibilem; sed universalia sunt incorruptibilia et illa quibus sunt communia sunt corruptibilia; igitur non sunt eadem res cum singularibus.” Trans. Spade, *Five Texts*, 114.

humanity would no longer exist.

Those realists who were considered moderate ordinarily denied that universals exist apart from particulars, i.e., they affirm condition (6). Adams, among others, explicitly attributes this claim to Burley's view. She indicates that Burley essentially agrees with a claim that she originally assigns to Scotus, in which "the nature...exist[s] in reality as [a constituent] of a particular and...can exist in reality only as such".⁸⁹ The first part of this claim is captured in my (2) above. However, nothing in Ockham's description of the view demands or entails the further restriction that these natures – the universals – can *only* exist in reality as constituents of particulars. For example, (2) states that universals play some sort of constitutive role in particulars, but it does not claim that universals only exist insofar as they play that role. Furthermore, Ockham points out that an advocate of this view believes that universals are incorruptible. However, that would be in tension (at least) with the suggestion that the destruction of the last particular of a kind would also yield the destruction of the universal. Furthermore, (6) seem to conflict with the moderate realist's suggestion that there is a real distinction between the universal and the particular, since it seems as though a real distinction should allow at least for the possibility that the universal and particular can exist separately. As a result of these considerations, it is difficult to see how (6) can be seen as built into the moderate realist view that Ockham is attacking here, at least in the absence of further consideration on behalf of the claim.

In fact, I think it would be a misunderstanding of Ockham's project to suggest that he believes that the moderate realist would include (6) among the fundamental features of his position. Instead, Ockham seems to be attempting to show that the features he describes as part of the position under criticism here conflict with condition (6). This suggests that Ockham

⁸⁹ Adams, "Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century," 414, 422-423.

considers (6) to be a fundamental constraint on any plausible view of universals. So instead of (6) being one of the central features of Burley's view, Ockham treats it as a test for evaluating the commitments of the view. For the pair of arguments that Ockham offers are intended to show that an absurdity is entailed by premises to which the moderate realist is committed – namely, that if a universal is really distinct from every particular, then it is separable from every particular, and hence can exist apart from any particulars. Ockham, then, wants to argue that (5) entails a view that is (at best) inconsistent with (6).

Nothing in the view as articulated above tells us yet why Ockham thinks that this absurdity follows from the view. As a result, we must examine carefully his reasons for reaching this conclusion to determine what motivates his view. The text in which he registers his two arguments against Burley's view is taken from Ockham's *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 4.⁹⁰ I will consider each of these two arguments separately. I will begin with his first argument, in which we will examine Ockham's views of natural priority and separability, and evaluate the relationship between those ideas and the real distinction. Following that, I will discuss the second argument, where our examination will extend to Ockham's account of essential dependence in relation to separability and real distinction. My primary aim in examining this text is for the sake of understanding the way in which his discussion of universals illuminates his broader metaphysical and logical commitments regarding separability and divine power. However, I also hope to explain several puzzling features of his arguments in order to undercut any suggestion that Ockham has made simple logical or metaphysical mistakes in assessing the strength of this moderate realist position. A cursory examination of the structure of his arguments, and especially the second argument discussed below, suggests that Ockham is guilty either of

⁹⁰ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 115.

affirming a highly dubious principle or committing a serious error of reasoning (or both). In what follows, I attempt to show that Ockham's arguments do not commit the suspected fallacy, and that the purportedly dubious principle is grounded in further claims that Ockham defends. My focus here is not on the defense or rejection of realism about universals; indeed, my own sympathies lie with some variety of realism. Instead, I explore the reasons Ockham seems to have in support of the arguments and principles he invokes when arguing against the specific position in view here. In particular, I examine his accounts of natural priority, essential dependence, divine power, and possibility, in order to discover whether a proper understanding of their role in Ockham's system can provide support for his claims. The need for basic understanding stems from the seemingly implausible nature of important portions of Ockham's arguments, which might otherwise obscure the force of Ockham's arguments.

Ockham's Argument(s) from Separability and Divine Omnipotence

The matter of what relationship holds between separability and real distinction plays a prominent role in Ockham's discussion of various realisms. In the two arguments that I will discuss, it plays the central role in his attempt to establish that this variety of realism is false. As we see, Ockham seems to move from a seemingly ordinary version of separability to a much stronger variety. He argues as follows:

Every thing prior to another thing really distinct from it can exist without that other thing. But according to you, this universal thing is prior to and is really distinct from its singular. Therefore, it can exist without the singular thing.⁹¹

The second argument is similar:

I argue the same point in another way: When some thing really distinct from other things can in

⁹¹ *ibid.*: "omnis res prior alia re realiter distincta ab illa potest esse sine ea, sed per te ista est prior et est realiter distincta; igitur potest esse sine re singulari. Trans. Spade, *Five Texts*, 124.

the course of nature exist without any one of them taken separately, and it does not depend essentially on any of them, then it can exist without all of them taken all together, at least by divine power. But according to them, without any given singular man, the universal thing signified by ‘man’ can really exist. Therefore, by divine power the universal thing could exist without every singular thing.⁹²

In each of the two arguments in this passage, Ockham relies on the claim that any real distinction entails the separability of the really distinct entities. Much of the critical discussion of this passage, in my view, misunderstands the argument and Ockham’s purposes in the argument. There are two key misconceptions about these arguments, both of which I intend to address:

- (1) Most commentators view Ockham’s arguments in this passage as in one way or other suggesting the claim that any real distinction entails the separability of the really distinct entities. Though this seems to be a stronger claim than the view explicitly articulated by Ockham in these arguments, he does seem to understand there to be an important connection between real distinction and separability. What that relationship is, however, requires a good bit of development, as it is not obvious that the relationship is as straightforward as the common view suggests. In conjunction with this point, I argue that Ockham intends for his account of the connection between the real distinction and separability to be perfectly generalizable to all of (created) reality.
- (2) Most critical discussion of this passage suggests that Ockham is guilty either of (a) affirming a highly dubious principle about separability or (b) committing a serious error of reasoning (or both). In what follows, I show that Ockham’s arguments do not commit the suspected fallacy, and that the purportedly implausible principle is grounded in

⁹² *ibid.*: “Aliter arguo sic: quando aliqua res realiter distincta ab aliis rebus potest esse sine qualibet divisim, et hoc per naturam, et non dependet essentialiter ab aliqua illarum, potest esse sine qualibet illarum coniunctim, et hoc per potentiam divinam; sed sine quolibet homine singulari, secundum istos, potest realiter exsistere illa res universalis quae significatur per hominem; igitur per potentiam divinam posset esse illa res universalis sine omni re singulari.”

further claims that Ockham defends on quite reasonable grounds.

Ockham's Argument(s) from Separability and Divine Omnipotence

In the first argument, the primary considerations center on Ockham's view of natural priority and its relationship to the real distinction. Recall the first argument above:

Every thing prior to another thing really distinct from it can exist without that other thing. But according to you, this universal thing is prior to and is really distinct from its singular. Therefore, it can exist without the singular thing.⁹³

Despite its brevity, the argument covers a tremendous range of metaphysical ground. Ockham's argument indicates the realist's commitment to (a) a real distinction between a universal and a particular; and (b) the priority of universals to their corresponding singulars or particulars. The realist's commitment to (a) is explicit in the description of this view, as discussed in condition (5) above. A commitment to (b), though not explicit, is likely considered to be implicit in (3) and (4): universals must be prior to particulars in order for them to serve as the constituents or building blocks of essences and in order for them to avoid proliferation when additional particulars come into existence. This claim seems reasonably unproblematic, as essentially all realists would have believed universals (or common natures, depending on one's theory and/or terminology) were prior to singulars. I take that to be a crucial epistemological point about priority that was precisely at issue in medieval disputes about universals. Most realists think we need to explain individuality, while most nominalists think we need to explain how we get common notions,⁹⁴ precisely because universals are those entities from which particulars "derive". So I take it as unproblematic that the moderate realists discussed here held the priority

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ I take it that Scotus and Aquinas attempted to explain both, with common natures being neutral, but that seems like a wholly different story.

of universals to singulars. In the end, however, whether or not this is a justifiable inference for the realist to make is irrelevant for this discussion. What matters is whether the realist is committed to such a view; and it seems likely that the realist would, in fact, affirm it.

Ockham's criticism relies on the claim that the presence of a real distinction is necessary for the separability of what is really distinct (though many commentators seem to think that it is sufficient). Assuming that we take for granted the realist's own commitments, then we must explore the separability principle on which Ockham relies for his critique, as this seems to be the central element that Ockham adds to the account offered thus far, and is the element on which Ockham will rely in order to make his case that the realist's position is absurd. To gain clarity on the position he wishes to develop, it will be helpful to set out the distinct premises of the argument:

- 1.1 Every thing prior to another really distinct thing can exist without that other thing.
- 1.2 But according to the realist, this universal thing is prior to and is really distinct from its singular.
- 1.3 Therefore, it can exist without the singular thing.

The relevant, interesting claim here is, of course, 1.1, and we will focus our time on that premise. The claim in 1.1 seems relatively straightforward. When we express the claim more formally, it appears to be a nested conditional statement:

- 1.1' For all x and all y , if x is really distinct from y , then (if x is prior to y , then x can exist without y).

Ockham's suggestion seems to be that when we consider the universe of really distinct things, if we were to take those for which a relation of priority (and its converse, posteriority) obtains, then those that are prior can exist without those that are posterior. Put another way, if we were to examine all really distinct things, we would discover that only some of them are prior in the

relevant way, and hence separable in the relevant way. In this sense, the principle seems generally applicable to all really distinct things. Furthermore, it suggests that both (a) and (b) must be true in order for one thing to be separable from another, i.e., both real distinction *and* priority. And in this case, according to Ockham, the conjunction of (a) and (b) implies the rejection of (6), for which reason Ockham labels the consequence of the view (and hence the view itself) absurd.

At first blush, the principle seems reasonably uncontroversial, at least from an Aristotelian point of view. Ordinarily, categorial differences, at least when the relevant categories were supposed to be picking out genuine entities in the world, were taken to mark a real distinction. Generally an Aristotelian ontology will include the claim that substances are more basic than (and hence prior to) their accidents. And seemingly, substances can exist without the accidents that they in fact do have, even if not without any accidents whatsoever. For example, my cat Atra is really distinct from her blackness, and is prior to her blackness; therefore, she can exist without her blackness, since whiteness could inhere in her instead. Thus far, the claim seems unproblematic. However, we should be sure that we get clear on what Ockham has in mind here, as things may *seem* more straightforward than they actually are. If we look carefully, we can see that Ockham has an even stronger claim in mind than what I have thus far articulated. Ockham means to defend something stronger than the claim that my cat can exist without the particular inhering color accident that she has because she could have (or might have had) some other particular inhering color accident. Instead, he claims that the defender of 1.1 (himself included) is committed to the view that a substance can exist even without its necessary accidents, if only by means of the power of God.

Natural Priority: A First Pass

To see why, we must first determine the notion of priority that Ockham invokes in 1.1. There are many senses of priority, even if we restrict ourselves to standard medieval notions. Our most immediate grasp of priority involves the temporal sense, where we often speak of relations of “earlier than” or “later than”. If we look at Aristotle’s discussion of priority in *Metaphysics* 5 (Δ), we see Aristotle suggest temporal priority as one of the first and most straightforward senses of priority.⁹⁵ And we might be inclined to think that such a notion is what Ockham has in mind here if we conjoin the following two things: (i) the suggestion that the realist understands universals to be constituents of particulars; and (ii) the notion that the formation of particulars involves a temporal progression culminating in the genesis of the particular. Taking (i) and (ii) together implies that there is at least one time prior to the existence of the particular (and hence prior to the existence of the universal *qua* constituent of the particular) when the universal exists (and the particular does not).

However, there are a variety of reasons for thinking that Ockham does not have temporal priority in mind. First of all, 1.1 seems to apply to all really distinct things, and not merely to cases involving universals and particulars (and the formation of the latter). However, it is not obvious that all things that are really distinct bear the relevant temporal relations to other things. Second, suppose either that (a) at least some things have always existed along with God; or (b) at least some things have existed at every time at which God exists – such as angels or numbers or logical rules. Supposing that temporal attributions can be made in relation to God, such things would seem to be temporally simultaneous with God. Supposing that they cannot, then there would seem to be no fact of the matter as to whether God or these entities are temporally prior.

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.11.1018b9ff. in Aristotle, *Metaphysics Books Γ , Δ , and E* , trans. Christopher Kirwan, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44-45.

Therefore, though they are really distinct, this principle would not guarantee that God could exist without them since God would not be temporally prior. Perhaps more helpfully, the principle would not guarantee what Ockham wants in cases like the following: the sun's production of illuminating light is temporally simultaneous with the earth's being illuminated (because in the current medieval physical picture, light is transmitted through space instantaneously). Though these are arguably really distinct actions (or at least the subjects of the activities are – or the subjects that the activities supposit for, depending on how someone like Ockham would parse such a case), the principle would not enable us to say that the production of light could exist without the illumination of the earth if priority were construed as temporal priority. However, as I discuss shortly, Ockham makes clear that God can prevent the effect of any natural cause, even if the effect follows necessarily (and temporally simultaneously) from that cause.⁹⁶ Therefore, Ockham seems quite keen on showing that the former could exist without the latter, quite generally. It would be deeply puzzling if Ockham's principle here could not offer us assistance in this case or in similar cases involving really distinct agents and patients.

Alternatively, I suggest that there are compelling reasons to think that Ockham is invoking *natural* priority when he mentions priority in the *Ordinatio* argument. First of all, we find evidence for the link between natural priority and separability articulated by Ockham in an argument from his *Summa Logicae* that seems to parallel the argument in the *Ordinatio*:

if some universal were to be one substance existing in particular substances, yet distinct from them, it would follow that it could exist without them; for everything that is naturally prior to something else can, by God's power, exist without that thing; but the consequence is absurd.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Such a distinction would appear to require something like Scotus's instants of nature, which Ockham seems to reject.

In both passages, Ockham moves from some sort of priority to a claim about separability. When we examine the two parallel passages more carefully, we should notice that Ockham mentions natural priority in relation to distinction in the *Summa Logicae*; whereas in the *Ordinatio*, Ockham describes the connection between priority and real distinction. In each passage, he leaves out an important descriptor for one of the crucial notions he invokes: “real” for distinction in the *Summa Logicae*, and “natural” for priority in the *Ordinatio*. Considering these passages in conjunction, and in particular noticing that his primary concern seems the same, it seems highly plausible to suggest that he must have had both natural priority and real distinction in mind when forming the arguments in both passages.

Ockham offers further evidence that his targeted notion of priority is natural priority. In his *Quodlibetal Questions*, Ockham offers a claim that seems closely connected to the present discussion of premise 1.1. In *Quodlibet* 4.18, Ockham claims that “according to the Philosopher...one thing is prior in nature to another when it is able to be separated from the other, but not vice versa.”⁹⁸ Here he makes explicit reference to *natural* priority. Ockham’s reference to Aristotle in this *Quodlibet* passage is unsurprisingly to the same section of Book 5 of the *Metaphysics* mentioned above. In the particular passage to which Ockham alludes, Aristotle claims that “a thing is prior in respect of its nature and substance when it is possible for it to be

⁹⁷ Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I c. 15, *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 1, eds. Philotheus Boehner, Gedeon Gál, and Stephen Brown (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1974), 51: “Item, si aliquod universale esset substantia una, existens in substantiis singularibus, distincta ab eis, sequeretur quod posset esse sine eis, quia omnis res prior naturaliter alia potest per divinam potentiam esse sine ea; sed consequens est absurdum.” Translated by Michael Loux, in Ockham, *Ockham’s Theory of Terms* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 79.

⁹⁸ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 18, *Opera Theologica*, vol. 9, eds. Joseph C. Wey (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1980), 390: “quia prius natura est aliquid, secundum Philosophum, V Metaphysicae, quando unum potest separari ab alio et non e converso.” Translated by Alfred J. Freddoso and Francis E. Kelley in Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 321. All subsequent translations of Ockham’s *Quodlibeta Septem* will refer to the translation by Freddoso and Kelley.

without other things but not them without it.”⁹⁹ Aristotle continues by discussing other ways in which things can be prior and posterior, but then concludes his discussion in Chapter 11 of Book V by saying that the sense of priority and posteriority he has just discussed in 1019a1-4 is the most fundamental notion: “[i]n a certain sense, everything called prior and posterior is so called in respect of these last.”¹⁰⁰ Thus Ockham invokes Aristotle’s account of natural priority in order to develop his own account of priority here, and he seems clearly to have in mind natural priority.

Establishing that Ockham has natural priority in mind, however, does not on its own provide us with sufficient information; we need to know more about what natural priority is. If we attend carefully to the passages discussed above, we can see a clear thread tying them all together. All three passages – from the *Ordinatio*, the *Quodlibetal Questions*, and the *Summa Logicae* – suggest that, on Ockham’s view, natural priority has a great deal to do with separability, that is, whether one thing is separable from another. Ordinarily, discussions of separability focus on some sort of distinction, particularly the real distinction. More specifically, most ordinary notions of real distinction rely on the claim that the real distinction is a sufficient condition for separability, where such separability is usually construed as symmetrical or bidirectional separability. In these passages, however, Ockham explicitly links priority and separability, and suggests that natural priority has at least as much to do with separability as real distinction does. In particular, he indicates in these arguments that the nature of the separability in any particular case – for example, symmetrical vs. asymmetrical – is impacted by the presence or absence of features such as natural priority.

⁹⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.11.1019a1-4. in Aristotle, *Metaphysics Books Γ, Δ, and E*, 45.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 1019a11-12.

This insight suggests that the presence of real distinction is not a sufficient condition for such separability. What role, then, does the real distinction play? If we look more closely at these texts, we can see signs that Ockham understands there to be an important link between natural priority and real distinction. Recall that in the *Ordinatio* text, Ockham claims that “[e]very thing prior to another thing really distinct from it can exist without that other thing.”¹⁰¹ But in the *Summa Logicae*, his articulation of the related principle makes no mention of the real distinction: “everything that is naturally prior to something else can, by God’s power, exist without that thing.”¹⁰² Nonetheless, we can see the parallel between these texts if we examine the line in the *Summa* just prior to this one, where Ockham claims that “if some universal were to be one substance existing in particular substances, yet distinct from them, it would follow that it could exist without them.”¹⁰³ If Ockham has the real distinction in mind here, as I suggested earlier that he does, then these texts suggest that relations of natural priority (and posteriority) presuppose the real distinction. That is, in all cases of natural priority, that which is naturally prior is really distinct from what is naturally posterior, and vice versa. (This is not true of the converse, however; there are cases of real distinction that do not imply any sort of (natural) priority or posteriority relations.) This means that when Ockham mentions natural priority, he need not make explicit the presence of the real distinction, since the real distinction is entailed by natural priority. And in the *Summa Logicae* text, he is assuming that his reader will know that the priority/posteriority relations obtain in the case of universals and particulars, especially since that is a key ingredient of the position that he is subjecting to criticism in his argument. This

¹⁰¹ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 115.

¹⁰² Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I c. 15, 51.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

way of understanding Ockham's position helps us to understand both the absence of any mention of the real distinction in the statement of his separability principle in the *Summa Logicae*.

This interpretation also makes sense of the absence of any mention of the real distinction at all when he discusses the topic in *Quodlibet* 4.18, where he says that "one thing is prior in nature to another when it is able to be separated from the other, but not vice versa."¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, this is the only text of the three that I have discussed that includes the "vice versa" clause; that is, it is the only one that mentions that being prior entails that something can be separated from the posterior, but that being posterior does not. This is particularly important in light of the fact that, as I mentioned above, the real distinction is often considered a sufficient condition for symmetrical or bidirectional separability. In *Quodlibet* 4.18, Ockham's point seems to be that the appropriate sense of separability here is unidirectional or asymmetrical, in virtue of the presence of natural priority. Unsurprisingly, this is compatible with what Ockham says in the *Ordinatio* and *Summa Logicae*. Recall that on my reading of the argument in the *Ordinatio*, we get the following conditional claim:

- 1.1' For all x and all y , if x is really distinct from y , then (if x is naturally prior to y , then x can exist without y).

If I am right in understanding natural priority as entailing real distinction, then we can simplify this premise as follows:

- 1.1'' If x is naturally prior to y , then x can exist without y .

Ockham does not indicate that the priority of x to y permits y to exist without x , which is compatible with the claim in *Quodlibet* 4.18. If the separability involved here is asymmetrical, then it appears that natural priority has significant import for understanding separability.

¹⁰⁴ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 18, 390. Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 321.

Nonetheless, the differences between the *Quodlibet 4* text on the one hand, and the *Ordinatio* and *Summa Logicae* texts on the other, are instructive. For in the latter texts, Ockham claims that natural priority implies separability, apparently suggesting that natural priority is a sufficient condition for separability, without implying anything about the sort of separability, i.e., symmetrical or asymmetrical. Of course, this in turn implies that separability is a necessary condition for natural priority. However, as the passage from *Quodlibet 4.18* makes clear, Ockham does not claim that separability *simpliciter* is a sufficient condition for natural priority. Instead, he claims only that *asymmetrical* separability is sufficient for natural priority: if x is separable from y and y is not separable from x , then x is naturally prior to y (and, presumably, y is not naturally prior to x). Equivalently, we can read *Quodlibet 4.18* as providing *jointly sufficient* conditions for natural priority. This guarantees that only one-way separability can give us natural priority. This is unsurprising, since the very notions of priority and posteriority suggest that there should be some sort of asymmetry between them.

However, the differences also underscore the fact that natural priority, though a necessary condition for *asymmetrical separability*, is not a necessary condition for separability *simpliciter*, even though separability is a necessary condition for natural priority. Ockham never explicitly argues that natural priority is not a necessary condition for separability; and as a result, one might be tempted to think that we ought not infer this from Ockham's stated position. In fact, though, it seems that Ockham intends to deny that natural priority is a necessary condition for separability, because there are cases in which Ockham permits separability even for what is naturally posterior, such as occurs in the case of the Eucharist. According to Ockham's account of the Eucharist, which accords with the orthodox teaching of the Church, the substance of the bread is naturally prior to its accidents, but it is nonetheless possible for the accidents to exist

without inhering in the substance of the bread. Thus we have at least one case in which that which is naturally posterior can exist apart from that which is naturally prior, and even when the naturally prior no longer exists at all, at least by divine power. The accidents can exist (or be conserved) without the prior (substance) in which they normally inhere. Therefore, the case of the Eucharist clarifies why natural priority is not necessary for separability (and hence why separability is not sufficient for natural priority), and why Ockham can only assert the connection in terms of asymmetrical separability in *Quodlibet* 4.18.¹⁰⁵

One might be tempted to argue that cases like the Eucharist indicate that Ockham rejects the traditional Aristotelian picture of the natural priority of a substance to its accidents. However, Ockham affirms the view more than once. Perhaps the most perspicuous affirmation occurs in *Quodlibet* 4.22, where he claims that:

God is able to destroy a naturally posterior entity and to leave a [naturally] prior entity to its own nature, so that it executes its own proper motion. Therefore, suppose that God destroys every absolute accident of this piece of wood and leaves the substance of the piece of wood to its own nature.¹⁰⁶

By using the example of the substance of the wood and its accidents to illustrate a point about the connection between the naturally prior and the naturally posterior, Ockham here indicates clearly a commitment to the traditional view that a substance is naturally prior to its accidents. He continues with this example a few paragraphs later: “just as the substance of the piece of wood is prior in nature to its accidents, so too the substance is present to its place prior to the accidents’

¹⁰⁵ My comments here assume that the range of relevant cases includes only those in which there are relations of natural priority and posteriority between the entities. However, it is not obvious that we must limit the scope in this way. If we do not limit it, we could also argue that Ockham would deny that natural priority is necessary for separability by appealing to the case of a pair of created substances, neither of which is prior to the other, but each of which is separable from the other – at least by the power of God.

¹⁰⁶ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 22, 404: “Deus potest rem posteriorem naturaliter destruere et priorem suae naturae relinquere ut ipsa proprium motum agat. Destruat igitur Deus omne accidens absolutum istius ligni et relinquat substantiam ligni suae naturae.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 334.

being present to that place.”¹⁰⁷ Once again, Ockham indicates that the substance of the wood is naturally prior to its accidents.

If we think that the case of the Eucharist provides Ockham with a reason to think that it is possible for the naturally posterior to exist apart from the naturally prior – at least by divine power – then we seem to end up with a rather puzzling result, viz., that it is hard to see what role natural priority is playing in Ockham’s account at all. For if we are supposed to understand natural priority primarily in terms of separability, but separability can occur even in the absence of natural priority, why not appeal to some other condition (such as the presence of the real distinction) to explain fully why, for example, universals are separable from particulars. Though, as we have seen, Ockham does appeal to the real distinction in his argument, he also appeals to natural priority. What role, then, is natural priority playing in the argument? As far as I can tell, we have yet to understand the answer to this question.

If separability does not depend on natural priority, then why does Ockham appeal to natural priority at all? Perhaps we need to take a different tack in attempting to understand Ockham’s account of natural priority, and reconsider whether separability is the proper characteristic to consider in making sense of it. As the text from *Quodlibet* 4.18 discussed earlier suggests, natural priority is ordinarily explained by reference to Aristotle. Though both Ockham and Aristotle discuss separability when describing natural priority, Aristotle’s own discussion of extends beyond separability. In his *Categories*, Aristotle offers helpful development of the basis for the notion of natural priority.

[O]f things which reciprocate as to implication of existence, that which is in some way the cause of the other’s existence might reasonably be called prior by nature. And that there are some such

¹⁰⁷ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 22, 405-6: “sicut substantia ligni est prior natura accidentibus, ita prius est praesens suo loco quam accidentia.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 335.

cases is clear. For there being a man reciprocates as to implication of existence with the true statement about it: if there is a man, the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, and reciprocally – since if the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, there is a man. And whereas the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing's existence, the actual thing does seem in some way the cause of the statement's being true; it is because the actual thing exists or does not that the statement is called true or false.¹⁰⁸

Aristotle's point here is that, even in cases where each of two things formally follows from the other, there can still be relations of priority and posteriority between them. What is not clear from this passage is how the existence of the man could exist apart from the truth of the statement. I suppose we could give an account of statements such that they do not exist without being uttered or thought, but that seems at least controversial and not obviously what Ockham would have in mind. Instead, Aristotle's account seems to pick out some sort of dependence relation that obtains between what is prior and what is posterior. One option for the nature of the dependence is existential dependence. Marilyn Adams offers the following characterization of natural priority that takes up this suggestion: "x is naturally prior to y if and only if y depends on x for its existence but not vice versa."¹⁰⁹ Adams' emphasis on dependence relations seems to capture something crucial for understanding Ockham's view of natural priority. And if the only relevant cases to consider were like those involving my cat and her color, her analysis in terms of existential dependence might seem like a reasonably complete characterization of natural priority. My cat can exist without her blackness (albeit only insofar as she could have whiteness or some other color instead), but her blackness cannot exist without her. Indeed, this seems to cover the extent of Adams' reading of the passage, because she suggests that the conclusion of

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Categories* 14b9-19, in Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 39-40.

¹⁰⁹ Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," 10.

this argument does not seem at all surprising. However, there are at least two issues worth noting about this definition:

(1) Adams' characterization leaves ambiguous whether this means that y depends on x for its current existence (conservation) or for its production (causation). The case of my cat and her blackness suggests the former, a position that Ockham endorses. In *Quodlibet* 4.32, he says that

a created power is able to conserve an absolute prior thing in the absence of a determinate individual of a given species – e.g., it is able to conserve this substance without that designated accident.¹¹⁰

The implication here is that the prior thing – the substance – can continue to exist, or be conserved, even without the posterior thing – the designated accident – but not vice versa, at least insofar as we are talking about created powers. The suggestion, then, is that existential dependence and, hence, natural priority are tied to the preservation of something in existence. However, Ockham also claims in *Quodlibet* 4.32 that “it is not a contradiction for the prior thing to be produced without the posterior thing, if it so pleases God.”¹¹¹ Here Ockham seems to suggest that the notions of dependence and priority are tied to causal production. Thus Ockham's account seems to cover both conservation and production; he wants to claim that for existing objects, the prior can be conserved without the posterior; and he also wants to claim that where there is a priority of cause to effect, the effect depends on the cause, and can be prevented even if the cause exists.

(2) If the relevant sort of dependence is to indicate anything more than the sort of separability that was discussed earlier, then it must account for the sorts of cases discussed both

¹¹⁰ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 32, 457: “Praeterea virtus creata potest conservare prius absolutum sine certo individuo alicuius speciei, sicut hanc substantiam sine isto accidente demonstrato.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 376.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, 456: “non est contradictio quod producat prius sine posteriore si Deo placuerit.” Trans. *ibid.*

in the preceding paragraph as well as the Eucharist. In other words, it must address cases that involve divine intervention in conservation and production, and explain how existential dependence suggests something different than separability in all such cases. Recall that in the case of the Eucharist, the accidents, which are posterior, can be conserved apart from the substance – indeed, the substance of the bread can cease to exist, but the accidents remain. If the posterior can exist without the prior, in what sense does the posterior (existentially) depend on the prior? In *Quodlibet* 4.32, just before Ockham claims that there is no contradiction for a prior thing to be produced without a posterior thing, Ockham says that “everything other than God is such that if it exists, then it is produced by God, and, consequently, if the prior thing is produced, then the posterior thing will not exist unless it is produced by God.”¹¹² Ockham here indicates that God produces everything, which suggests that everything depends on God. Yet he retains the distinction between the prior and the posterior, even while describing this case in terms of divine production, suggesting that the prior and posterior are grounded in something else. Taking this case along with the Eucharist, it is difficult to see how Ockham’s account of natural priority could be construed in the way that Adams suggests, i.e., as fundamentally about existential dependence. Even if we can preserve something of her definition, it will need to be reworked. Otherwise, it is not clear, on this account, that anything really distinct will ever be naturally prior to anything else. The Eucharistic case provides us with one clear reason: apparently, real accidents do not depend on their substance for their continued existence, since the accidents can exist without the substance in which they previously inhered. Therefore, on Adams’ account, substances are not naturally prior to their accidents. And if substances are not

¹¹² *ibid.*: “omne aliud a Deo, si sit, producitur a Deo, et per consequens producto priore, posterius non erit nisi producatur a Deo.” *Trans. ibid.*

naturally prior to accidents, it is not at all clear where one could locate natural priority amongst created beings at all. Not only does this yield a bizarre result, but it also conflicts with the passages mentioned above, from *Quodlibet* 4.22 and 4.32, in which Ockham indicates his apparent commitment to the natural priority of substances to their accidents. Based on the foregoing discussion, Ockham thinks that a proper account of natural priority must make essential reference to divine activity, while preserving a natural way of understanding why substances are ordinarily understood to be prior to their qualities.

Inseparable Separables

The *Quodlibet* 4.22 and 4.32 texts suggest that divine power is an important consideration in this discussion. When we evaluate more closely Ockham's account of divine power, we can see how foundational a role it plays, and we can perhaps see more clearly why Adams' characterization won't be sufficient and how we can best account for Ockham's fundamental concerns. Ockham is committed to the view that God's power extends throughout nature and is limited primarily – and probably only – by contradiction. In *Quodlibet* 4.22, he articulates the source and core of his view, citing the first line of the Apostles' Creed, and developing his account from that starting point:

I base my argument on the article of the faith 'I believe in God the Father Almighty'. From this article I infer the proposition 'Whatever God produces by means of secondary causes, he is able to produce and to conserve immediately without those causes'.¹¹³

In *Quodlibet* 2.9, Ockham claims that God "is able to create only that which is possible....and

¹¹³ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 22, 404: "ad probandum fundo me in illo articulo fidei: 'Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem'. Ex quo articulo accipio istam propositionem 'quidquid Deus producit mediantibus causis secundis, potest immediate sine illis producere et conservare'." Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 333.

cannot efficaciously will any impossible thing that involves a contradiction.”¹¹⁴ He reinforces this idea in *Quodlibet* 7.11, where he argues against Scotus by claiming that God cannot create motion that exists only for an instant. He argues that this

is proved from the fact that [God’s producing a motion that exists in an instant] involves a contradiction, viz., that a motion would not be a motion, and that a movable thing would simultaneously be located in every part of the space in which it moves.¹¹⁵

If we assume that Ockham considers contradiction to be a fundamentally logical notion, and not a metaphysical one, then these passages indicate that there are things that God is unable to do, but he is unable to do them only because it is logically impossible for them to be done, since they are logically contradictory. From this basic claim, he specifies some of the implications of this strong view of divine power that he is developing in *Quodlibet* 6.6:

...whatever does not involve an obvious contradiction is to be attributed to the divine power...Whatever God produces by the mediation of secondary causes, he can immediately produce and conserve in the absence of such causes....Every absolute thing that is distinct in place and subject from another absolute thing can by God's power exist when that other absolute thing is destroyed.¹¹⁶

If every really inhering accident is an absolute thing distinct in place and subject from another absolute thing, then it can exist by God’s power no matter what other things have been destroyed in the world. However, one might wonder what has been added to the account by the invocation of divine power.

¹¹⁴ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* II q. 9, 154-155: “non potest creare nisi possibile...voluntas Dei [non est sic defectibilis,] nec potest efficaciter velle aliquid impossibile includens contradictionem.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 130.

¹¹⁵ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VII q. 11, 740-741: “Minor probatur, quia includit contradictionem, scilicet quod motus non esset motus, et mobile localiter simul esset in omnibus partibus spatii in quo movetur.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 624.

¹¹⁶ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VI q. 6, 604-605: “quodlibet est divinae potentiae attribuendum quod non includit manifestam contradictionem...quidquid Deus producit mediantibus causis secundis, potest immediate sine illis producere et conservare...omnis res absoluta distincta loco et subiecto ab alia re absoluta potest per divinam potentiam existere, alia re absoluta destructa.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 506.

In cases of what Ockham calls *separable* accidents, such changes occur by nature without extraordinary divine intervention. Where the role of divine power will become evident, though, is when he discusses what he calls *inseparable* accidents. In his *Summa Logicae* I chapter 25, Ockham explains the difference between these two types of accidents:

A separable accident is one which can as a matter of natural fact be removed from its subject without the destruction of that subject; whereas an inseparable accident is one that cannot. It could, however, be so removed by divine power.¹¹⁷

In the case of my cat, Atra, it can occur in the normal course of nature that her color cease to be black (and come to be white). Since color, in her case, is a separable accident, it doesn't appear that we need God to do something special in order for her color to change. On the other hand, substances cannot naturally exist apart from or be separated from their inseparable accidents. Since all crows are black, it is not possible, in the natural order of things, for my pet crow, Crowie, to cease being black: "the blackness of the crow cannot as a matter of natural fact be taken away from the crow."¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, Ockham claims that by divine power, Crowie could be non-black. Therefore, by divine power (and only by divine power) a substance can exist apart from any of its accidents,¹¹⁹ even those that are said to be necessary or inseparable. Indeed, they are not, strictly speaking, inseparable; they are only inseparable insofar as we consider them in relation to any natural or created powers. Ockham, then, is committed to the view that a

¹¹⁷ Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I c. 25, 83: "Accidens separabile est quod per naturam auferri potest sine corruptione subiecti; accidens autem inseparabile est illud quod per naturam auferri non potest sine corruptione subiecti, quamvis per divinam potentiam possit auferri." Trans. Loux, *Ockham's Theory of Terms*, 104.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* Despite Scotus's (and perhaps earlier thinkers') development of an alternative modal conception, Ockham seems here to have adopted an extensional account of modality; that all members of a kind have some attribute seems to be sufficient for that attribute to be necessary relative to (the members of) that kind.

¹¹⁹ Ockham is actually committed to saying that a substance can exist apart from any and all accidents, but that claim is not supported by the argument/premise we are considering here. In the next chapter, I take up the second part of the argument in the passage cited at the beginning of the paper, which does contain a premise which secures the claim that a substance can exist apart from any and all accidents.

substance can exist without both its contingent and its necessary accidents, at least by divine power. That is, Ockham claims that a substance can exist without at least some of the attributes that an object has by (natural) necessity.

We can contrast Ockham's account of necessary accidents with his account of propria. The suggestion that propria could be separated from their subjects would go against the very idea of propria, and would suggest that, though in the normal course of things humans cannot fail to be risible, that by divine power, it is possible that a human not be risible. For it seems reasonable to suppose that a human being is both prior to and really distinct from his risibility. If that priority and real distinction claim were true, it would seem as though Ockham ought to be committed to the claim that propria are, indeed, separable from their subjects.

However, Ockham rejects both the claim that God's power is radically unlimited in the sense of being able to contravene logical necessity as well as the claim that propria are separable from their subjects. For Ockham, God's power is restricted – at least – by logical possibility. He illustrates this by describing why he thinks that substances can be separated by God from their inseparable accidents, but they cannot be separated from their propria, even by God. It is simply impossible.

Risible is a property of man; for it belongs to every man, only to men, and always to men. God could not create a man without making him risible for the man would truly be able to laugh...Laughing however, is not a property of man; it is an accident. The two predicables laughing and risible are not one and the same.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I c. 24, 79: “‘risibile’ est proprium homini; sic enim competit omni homini et soli et semper quod Deus non posset facere aliquem hominem existere quin ille esset risibilis, quia vere posset ridere...‘ridens’ autem non est proprium homini, sed magis est accidens. Et ideo non sunt idem ista duo praedicabilia ‘ridens’ et ‘risibile’.” Trans. Loux, *Ockham's Theory of Terms*, 101. cf. Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 32, 457-458; trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 377.

An objector might wonder why, given the foregoing discussion. For surely propria, like necessary accidents, really inhere in their substances, and those substances are naturally prior to and really distinct from their propria. Therefore, by divine power, it is possible that a human not be risible, even though it is not possible in the normal course of nature. Of course, it seems odd to say that a human being could fail to be risible, but it also seems odd to say that a crow could fail to be black, and Ockham has already told us that is possible. So what's the problem?

Ockham avoids the charge that he is committed to separability in the case of propria by denying that a human being is neither (naturally) prior to nor really distinct from his risibility. Ockham argues that 'risibility' does not signify anything over and above what 'human' signifies; therefore, risibility is not some separate entity in the world over and above some particular human. To understand Ockham's point, we must examine his distinction between absolute and connotative terms in relation to his ontological commitments. Absolute terms are those which signify only in a primary sense, and which signify – in this primary sense - individuals in the world; 'human' is an absolute term, and signifies individual humans. Connotative terms (in general) signify in both a primary and a secondary sense; 'risible' is connotative because it signifies individual humans primarily and the accident of (the act of) laughing secondarily.

How does this relate to the question of separability? Ockham argues that there are three ways to understand the functioning of propria as attributes: (1) they are attributes predicated of a subject per se in the second mode; that is, the attribute is included in the definition of the thing; (2) such attributes refer obliquely to a genuine accident; and (3) the attribute supposits for the same thing as the subject. In the case of (1), there could be no separability, since it is impossible for something predicated in this fashion to be separated from the thing without destroying the thing (as with the rationality of a human being). In (2), he suggests that 'risible' refers to the act

of laughing obliquely or secondarily, rather than some accident of risibility in a thing. As for (3), if the attribute does not pick out anything other than the subject, then it is transparent that there can be no separability. If Superman just is Clark Kent, then we cannot separate them. Similarly, ‘*proprium*’ cannot be understood to denote any particular, real entity. For Ockham, *propria* are such that they belong to all and only the members of some particular species. Risibility, then, like other capacity-like predicables, and properties more broadly, is not an absolute thing according to Ockham. Since non-absolute “things” cannot be really distinct from anything else, then they are unable to be separated either, since separability and real distinctness seem to be extensionally equivalent for Ockham. If only one thing is being signified (by two different terms), then quite obviously there is no possibility for separation, even by the power of God.¹²¹ Hence the principle in 2.1 will not apply to properties.

Divine Power, Naturally

This discussion of the relations between accidents and substances illustrates how important it will be to make some reference to divine power in any explanation of the nature of natural priority and dependence. If we can understand the role of nature in the account of natural priority, then perhaps it will show us some difference between cases like the Eucharist and ordinary cases that do not involve special intervention by God, and we can try once again to improve on the earlier definitions of natural priority. It may be helpful to begin with an account of existential dependence. One plausible way we could describe this dependence is as follows:

y existentially depends on *x* iff either (i) *x* produces *y* or (ii) the existence or activity of *x* preserves *y* in existence.

¹²¹ Of course, this should be understood in a *de re* sense. There is a sense in which ‘Morning Star’ and ‘Venus’ are separable, but in the relevant sense, they are not, since they pick out the very same object.

This construal of existential dependence accounts for both production and conservation. More significantly, it accords nicely with the sort of picture that Ockham seems to describe when he discusses divine power. It enables Ockham to include an orderly Aristotelian naturalism within a world in which God can intervene to suspend the normal action of natural causes or conserve dependent qualities in the absence of their subjects. On the one hand, this proposal enables us to account for the ordinary dependence that occurs as the result of the natural production or conservation of y by x . On the other hand, because it is possible for God either to produce y or preserve y in existence, existential dependence does not and cannot involve the modal strength of necessity for the dependence relation between x and y , especially when both x and y are natural objects. In view of Ockham's strong view of divine power, this seems like exactly the sort of result we would want from an account of existential dependence.

Now that we have developed a proper account of existential dependence, we can return to the account of natural priority. Recall that Marilyn Adams proposed the following account:

x is naturally prior to y iff y existentially depends on x but not vice versa.

When initially discussing this construal of natural priority, I raised two concerns: (1) that the proposal does not distinguish between conservation and production; and (2) that it does not explain the nature of the dependence in a way that accounts for cases like the Eucharist, and perhaps fails to show that there are any cases of natural priority in the created order, despite Ockham's apparent insistence that there are. Having elaborated an account of existential dependence that deals with the first concern, we can now offer a modification of Adams' account that addresses the second concern, and arguably captures Ockham's account of natural priority:

x is naturally prior to y iff in the ordinary course of nature (or absent the extraordinary activity of divine power), y existentially depends on x but not vice versa.

This proposal incorporates the account of existential dependence articulated above, as well as the

commitment to understanding natural priority in terms that are fundamentally natural.

Additionally, it explains how one thing can be naturally prior to another even though, by divine power, the posterior thing can cease to depend on the prior thing, as occurs in the case of the Eucharist.¹²²

What the account of natural priority does not do, though, is explain the force of the separability claim of premise 1.1 in Ockham's argument from the *Ordinatio*. Recall that Ockham there claims that: "every thing prior to another really distinct thing can exist without that other thing."¹²³ The account of natural priority that I just proposed does not provide sufficient warrant for this claim, though. Consider the case of inseparable accidents discussed above. A substance is naturally prior to all of its accidents, including its inseparable accidents; it is also really distinct from them. However, as Ockham has pointed out in the *Summa Logicae*, the substance cannot naturally exist apart from those inseparable accidents, despite fulfilling both explicit conditions in premise 1.1. This tells us that there is nothing about either natural priority or real distinction that guarantees that one thing can exist without the other. Therefore, natural priority and real distinction are neither severally nor jointly sufficient conditions for separability. As the case of inseparable accidents demonstrates, the truth of premise 1.1 also depends on Ockham's account of divine power. Since Ockham does not mention divine power explicitly, one might have thought that his account of natural priority included essential reference to the ability of divine power to make the separability claim possible. As we have seen above, Ockham

¹²² Presumably there is no problem with suggesting that God acts in accordance with nature regularly, so this proposal for an account of natural priority does not exclude divine activity. It only suggests that where there is natural priority, there is a *natural* order to things, even when God acts. Only the *extraordinary* activity of God is supposed to be excluded from this account. Note that I do not attempt to explain fully what the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary activity is; nor do I think that I must provide such an account. The division at this point can remain extensional.

¹²³ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 115.

does not do this. Instead, it seems as though Ockham presupposes that the reader will understand that the conjunction of natural priority, real distinction, and divine power will guarantee that any naturally prior thing can exist without any naturally posterior thing. Presumably, Ockham thought his readers would assume or presuppose something like his account of divine power, and so felt no need to include a reference to it in his argument. In fact, this reading gains support from the similar argument mentioned earlier from Ockham's *Summa Logicae* 1.15: "everything that is naturally prior to something else can, by God's power, exist without that thing."¹²⁴ In this version of the argument, he makes explicit his reliance on God's power in order to establish the separability claim.

By explaining Ockham's position in this way, the account of natural priority can pertain to all those cases in which there is a natural asymmetrical dependence, including both separable and inseparable accidents. On Ockham's Aristotelian account, all substances are prior to their accidents, and all accidents are posterior to their substance subjects. As long as we construe priority, or even dependence, in terms of separability, we risk abandoning entirely this account of natural priority and posteriority, especially in light of Ockham's strong position on divine power. If we consider only natural cases of separability, we lose the ability to explain the force of the claim in premise 1.1. By construing natural priority in terms of dependence, rather than separability, we can maintain that asymmetry that is naturally proper to those objects, while still retaining the expanded role of divine power for separability claims that Ockham advocates. What we learn here, then, is that natural priority and dependence cannot be defined primarily or fundamentally in terms of separability.

Since the conclusion of Ockham's argument in the *Ordinatio* involves a claim about

¹²⁴ Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I c. 15, 51.

separability, Ockham must be relying on divine power in his argument. What role is divine power playing in his argument? Both Ockham and the moderate realist want to deny that the universal can exist apart from all existing particulars. Ockham points out that the moderate realist is committed to the view that the universal is naturally prior to and really distinct from the particular. In conjunction with his view of divine power, Ockham argues that this yields the unsavory conclusion. By appealing to divine power, Ockham intends to demonstrate that the moderate realist is committed to the claim that the universal, as naturally prior, can exist without any particulars. As it stands, however, the argument appears only to support the claim that the universal can exist without this particular. But we hardly need divine power to make that point. Cats come into existence and pass out of existence on a continual basis, but felinity (the universal) continues to exist regardless of which particular cats exist. Even if the universal is separated from this particular or that particular, it will still constitute some particular or other. Understood this way, the argument only supports separability of the sort discussed in the case of separable accidents. Not only is it difficult to see how the invocation of divine power would make the argument stronger, but it is also hard to understand what role it plays at all.

If we assume that Ockham did, in fact, intend to derive the stronger conclusion, viz., the universal can exist without any particular thing whatsoever, how might he have been conceiving of this argument? He can't have understood the claim as analogous to his discussion of inseparable accidents. Though that would provide a motivation for invoking divine power, it would not ensure his preferred conclusion, since presumably God can make an individual crow non-black without impacting any other crows. Even if it were non-natural for a universal to cease being related to a particular, it seems as though God could make some universal no longer exist in conjunction with this particular without causing any impact on any of the other

particulars related to that universal. So the suggestion that the universal/particular case is analogous to the inseparable accident cases does not appear to yield the right answer.

The only avenue I can see that Ockham may have had in mind is that he believes that the argument has sufficiently wide scope to yield the stronger claim that he wants. However, even in the case of the quantified nested conditional I used in 1.1' to construe the first premise of Ockham's argument, the scope is insufficiently wide to derive the conclusion that the universal can exist without any singulars whatsoever. As a result, the realist would be nonplussed by Ockham's conclusion. There is no "Platonist absurdity" embedded in this version of the argument, or so it seems. Despite the metaphysical power of the principle embedded in 1.1, its use in this first argument does not break the ground that he intends for it, as the argument severely understates the force of Ockham's concerns. When we turn to Ockham's second argument in the *Ordinatio*, discussed below, we will see the conclusion that Ockham needs to demonstrate the "absurdity" of realism. We will also see the stronger principles and different line of reasoning needed to reach this conclusion, which will, in turn, raise important questions about his argument.

Chapter 4

It All Depends...Well, Almost All: The Nature of Essential Dependence

The Second Argument for Separability

As I have already mentioned, in the passage from his *Ordinatio*, Ockham provides two arguments that apparently aim at very similar conclusions, if not just the same conclusion. Recall that immediately following the first argument discussed above, Ockham says that he will now “argue the same point in another way.”¹²⁵ Though this language permits the argument to be distinct in structure, rely on different principles, or both, it is clear that he intends to establish some conclusion similar to the one at which he arrives in the first argument. Ockham’s argument runs as follows:

When some thing really distinct from other things can in the course of nature exist without any one of them taken separately, and it does not depend essentially on any of them, then it can exist without all of them taken all together, at least by divine power. But according to them, without any given singular man, the universal thing signified by ‘man’ can really exist. Therefore, by divine power the universal thing could exist without every singular thing.¹²⁶

We can get clearer on the argument if we break out the discrete claims:

- 2.1 When some thing really distinct from other things can in the course of nature exist without any one of them taken separately, and it does not depend essentially on any of them, then it can exist without all of them taken all together, at least by divine power.
- 2.2 But according to them, without any given singular man, the universal thing signified by ‘man’ can really exist.
- 2.3 Therefore, by divine power the universal thing could exist without every singular thing.

To put Ockham’s claim somewhat abstractly, Ockham believes that if each particular one of the *f*

¹²⁵ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4, 115.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

things, taken one by one, is not required for the existence of the universal, F, then the existence of any and all *f* things whatsoever is not required for the existence of F. In other words, given a group of *f* things, if it is possible that F could exist without *f*₁, and if it is possible that F could exist without *f*₂, and so on for all *f* things, and F doesn't depend essentially on any one of the *f* things, then it is possible that F could exist even if all the *f* things cease to exist altogether.

Therefore, F could exist without the existence of any *f* things. Because he believes it is absurd that the universal, F, could exist without any individual existing *f* things, Ockham thinks that this argument demonstrates that Burley is, in fact, committed to an absurdity. We can see, then, that this argument provides the (stronger) conclusion that Ockham seemed to want from the first argument. It does not merely assert that some prior thing can exist without some posterior thing; instead, this argument suggests that any really distinct thing can exist without *all* of the things from which it is really distinct and on which it does not essentially depend. To get that conclusion, he has relied on a stronger principle of separability. It is this stronger principle that raises worries for the cogency of the argument.

Ockham's argument suggests that any really distinct thing can exist without *all* of the things from which it is really distinct and on which it is not essentially dependent. The argument suggests that if my cat is really distinct from her blackness, and is really distinct from whiteness, and so on for all the colors, and she does not depend essentially on any of them, then she can exist without all the colors conjunctively (i.e., without any color whatsoever). At first blush, it is puzzling to hear the claim that there could be an individual cat that had no particular color whatsoever (and, plausibly, is in turn non-colored); we are strongly inclined to say that every extended (and non-transparent) object has some particular color or other. In making this claim, our initial reactions is likely to be that Ockham seems to have failed to distinguish, more

generally, between (a) *this x* existing as a necessary condition for the existence of *y* and (b) *some x* thing or other existing as a necessary condition for the existence of *y*. Presumably it doesn't follow from the fact that no *specific x* is necessary for the existence of *y* that no *x* whatsoever is required for the existence of *y*.

The worry here for Ockham, according to the objection under consideration, is that he has committed some sort of quantifier shift fallacy. The following reconstructions seem to capture the apparent error.

From the claim that:

- (a) There is no particular whose existence the universal requires;

Ockham seems to suggest that:

- (b) The universal requires the existence of no particular.

More generally, it seems like Ockham endorses the following move from a' to b':

- (a') It is not the case that there is an *x* such that U requires it;
- (b') It is not the case that U requires that there is an *x*.¹²⁷

If these reconstructions are correct, then it would seem that Ockham has drawn an unlicensed inference. In view of his expertise and emphasis on logic, we should (at the very least) be puzzled by Ockham's apparent affirmation of the principle expressed in 2.1 if it commits him to inferences like these. Given Ockham's stature as a philosopher and especially as a logician, it would be uncharitable to attribute such fallacies or other errors to Ockham without further explanation. Thus it seems worthwhile to explore the background of this conditional premise in more detail.

¹²⁷ Compare this example, suggested to me by David Sanson: There is no person whose vote your victory requires. Therefore, your victory requires the vote of no person.

Did Ockham Really Endorse the Principle in 2.1?

One question to ask right away is whether Ockham, in fact, agreed with this principle. Since we can apparently suggest that it violates important rules of logic, perhaps it would be wise to consider whether or not he would have *endorsed* the principle in premise 2.1, or whether he perhaps had some different intent besides endorsement when he invoked the principle in his argument. *Prima facie*, one might be inclined to believe that Ockham did not affirm the principle, since at first glance it is rather puzzling and arguably false. Perhaps, it could be suggested, Ockham simply offered the moderate realists' own principle in an argument against them, and he himself had nothing at stake if the argument failed. The realists, on the other hand, would face a conundrum: if the principle is true, then Ockham has them in a corner; but if it is false, then so much the worse for their view. The regular invocation of this principle might merely suggest that *others* held the principle, but not Ockham. Ockham's use of it, then, would be merely pragmatic; he would not need to endorse the principle, as long as his opponents would.

However, there are at least some reasons that must be considered before we take this suggestion seriously. Marilyn Adams suggests that the principle in 2.1 would have been "taken for granted by Scotus and Ockham and would perhaps have been accepted by an adherent of the position under attack."¹²⁸ There are, in fact, several reasons that run counter to the pragmatic interpretation and in favor of Adams' suggestion. For example, several other significant medieval philosophers, including Duns Scotus and Walter Chatton, provide arguments that make nearly identical moves.¹²⁹ Scotus, for example, used this form of argument in order to establish

¹²⁸ Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," 9.

¹²⁹ Abelard, Aquinas, and Bonaventure also seem to make similar claims; however, I have focused my attention in the paper on Scotus and Chatton because their arguments seem tied directly to Ockham's own use of the principle.

the possibility of prime matter. In particular, he argued that matter could exist without being conjoined to form; in other words, if matter can exist without being conjoined with this form, or that form, and so on for all forms, then matter can exist without being conjoined with any form whatsoever.¹³⁰

Of course, Scotus's use of such a principle does not compel us to think that Ockham would have invoked it as well. In fact, some might suggest that Scotus's use of a principle might count as *prima facie* evidence that Ockham did *not* hold it. However, there is plenty of evidence in Ockham's work itself to suggest that he affirmed the principle in 2.1. First of all, a plain reading of the argument suggests that Ockham does affirm 2.1, since Ockham's language seems to suggest endorsement of the principle, and it is difficult to see how one could read the passage otherwise without great contortion. His language seems so matter-of-fact when invoking the principle, as if he (and his readers) would agree. Contrast this to his phrasing in 2.2, which he explicitly attributes to his opponents. Naturally, Ockham would reject the *conclusion* of the argument in 2.3 – since he calls the resultant view “absolutely false and absurd”. And of course, the rejection of the conclusion suggests that he should consider rejecting at least one of the premises. Of course, Ockham would reject the claim in 2.2, since it indicates a commitment to a specific sort of realism about universals, a view that Ockham is well known *not* to endorse. Indeed, his comment that 2.2 is “according to them” suggests that he would not be numbered among those who accept 2.2. But nothing appears in this text or elsewhere indicating that he would have denied premise 2.1. Indeed, his language suggests that 2.1 is unproblematic. Since the paragraph began with the claim that “I argue”, this at least counts as some evidence that Ockham held 2.1. The previous point becomes stronger if we compare the second argument to

¹³⁰ Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus*, 23-26.

the first. As with premise 2.2 of the second argument, premise 1.2 from the first argument attributes the claim to Ockham's opponents ("according to them" v. "according to you"), while 1.1 and 2.1 have no such qualifiers.

Furthermore, it is not at all clear why we should be inclined to think Ockham would *not* endorse the principle. There is nothing about 2.1 suggesting that it is a principle that only a realist about universals could endorse, which cannot be said about 2.2. As far as I can tell, there appear to be no obvious reasons for thinking that a nominalist would have greater difficulty in adopting this principle than a realist. Ockham would not have any reasons on *that* ground for denying this principle.

Of course, these reasons alone do not demonstrate that he did not also reject 2.1 along with 2.2. So we need to take a careful look at some other passages to better assess Ockham's attitude toward the claim. As we shall see, it will not be difficult to find multiple texts in which Ockham invokes the principle and apparently endorses it. One text in favor of Ockham's endorsement can be found in his discussion of a variety of fictum theory:

This is evident from the fact that one fictive entity can be destroyed while another remains, just as with acts of understanding. For a fictive entity either (i) does or (ii) does not depend essentially upon the act [of understanding of which it is the object]. If it does depend essentially upon the act, then when an act ceases to exist, the corresponding fictive entity is destroyed, and yet a fictive entity remains in another act; and, consequently, there are two singular fictive entities, just as there are two acts. If it does not depend upon that singular act, then, consequently, it does not depend essentially upon any act of the same type and, as a result, the fictive entity in question will remain in objective existence in the absence of every act.¹³¹

Here Ockham seems to adopt this argument and, hence the embedded principle, which just is the

¹³¹ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 35, 473: "Quod patet ex hoc quod unum fictum potest destrui alio manente, sicut actus; quia aut illud fictum dependet essentialiter ab actu, aut non. Si sic, tunc cessante uno actu destruitur illud fictum, et tamen manet fictum in alio actu, et per consequens sunt duo ficta singularia, sicut duo actus. Si non dependet ab actu isto singulari, nee per consequens dependet essentialiter ab aliquo actu eiusdem rationis; et ita remanebit illud fictum in esse obiectivo sine omni actu." Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 390.

principle 2.1 that we are examining. Of course, one might be inclined merely on this basis to suggest – again – that he adopted the principle for the sake of argument. This suggestion, though, is undermined by an important passage from Walter Chatton, Ockham’s contemporary and frequent sparring partner. While critiquing Ockham’s *fictum* theory, Chatton discusses a claim similar to 2.1:

For I ask about the *fictum*: Does it essentially depend for its being on this act [of intellection]? In that case, it ceases [to be] when this intellection ceases. Yet another [act of] intellection remains, and consequently [so does] such a *fictum*, corresponding to it. I prove [this] by the argument: ‘What is understood by this remaining intellection, when the earlier one has ceased, etc.’ Therefore, there are two *ficta*, just as [there are] two intellections. If it does not essentially depend on this intellection, [then] for the same reason neither [does it depend] on any other [intellection] of the same kind. Therefore, it can exist without there being any such intellection.¹³²

Chatton’s use of the principle in this context is especially interesting because, in this attack on Ockham’s own *fictum* theory, Chatton invokes the principle that Ockham himself uses.¹³³ Even if Chatton himself did not endorse this principle, he must have had good reason to expect that Ockham would endorse the principle. Otherwise, Chatton could have no expectation that the argument would in any way be convincing to Ockham.¹³⁴ So it might seem, at this point, as if

¹³² Walter Chatton, *Reportatio* I d. 3 q. 2 in Gedeon Gál, “Gualteri de Chatton et Guillelmi de Ockham Controversia de Natura Conceptus Universalis,” *Franciscan Studies* 27 (1967), 202: “quia quaero de isto ficto: aut essentialiter dependet ab isto actu in essendo, et tunc cessat intellectione ista cessante, et tamen remanet alia intellectio et per consequens huiusmodi fictum sibi correspondens. Probo per argumentum: quid intelligitur illa intellectione remanente, priori cessata, etc. Igitur duo sunt ficta sicut duae intellectiones. – Si non dependet essentialiter ab ista intellectione, eadem ratione nec ab aliqua alia eiusdem rationis. Igitur potest existere sine hoc quod aliqua talis intellectio sit.” Translated by Paul Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 125.

¹³³ I am not suggesting that Chatton borrowed the principle from Ockham in order to turn it against him, although that would make for interesting drama. Getting the chronology right here is a tricky business in which I will not engage, so I will not speculate on the connection between the uses. However, I believe that this principle was “in the air” to a sufficient degree to warrant the belief that neither would have needed to borrow it from the other.

¹³⁴ Chatton clearly has (one version of) Ockham’s *fictum* theory in view here: “On the nature of a concept, there is one opinion that a universal concept is not some intention [of the mind], but a kind of *fictum* that does not have any subjective being, [either] in the mind or outside, but only an objective and cognized being.” Walter Chatton, *Reportatio* I d. 3 q. 2 in Gál, “Gualteri de Chatton et Guillelmi de Ockham Controversia de Natura Conceptus

we have established that Ockham does endorse the principle.

However, there are other cases in which Ockham insists that the principle cannot be applied. Do these cases serve as counterexamples to the claim that Ockham endorses the principle? Do they in any way suggest that Ockham would *not* endorse the principle? For example, he argues: “If one assumes that a quantum is present to a place, then this is not valid: ‘God is able to make a quantum without this position, and without that position, and without that position, and so on for each of the singulars; therefore, he is able to make a quantum without *any* position’.”¹³⁵ Despite his apparent affirmation of the principle in other texts, Ockham here denies that this inference is valid. We might be inclined to presume that he makes this claim because he rejects the principle on which the inference relies (which is equivalent to 2.1). Otherwise, why would Ockham claim that the argument is *not* valid in this case?

To understand why Ockham would make this claim, we must examine his ontological commitments with respect to quantity and position, and understand how and what the relevant terms signify or denote. Ockham claims that ‘quantity’ and ‘position’ are connotative terms, and as such they signify in both a primary sense and a secondary sense. What terms such as ‘quantity’ and ‘position’ primarily signify are individual (extended) things; what they signify secondarily are individual quantities or positions (respectively). However, Ockham denies that quantities and positions are part of a properly conceived ontology, and so we ought not be ontologically committed to either; to wit: “in order for a piece of wood to be a quantum and to be

Universalis,” 200: “De natura conceptus est una opinio quod conceptus universalis non est aliqua intentio, sed aliquid fictum, non habens aliquod esse subiectivum in mente nec extra, sed tantum esse obiectivum et cognitum.” Translated by Paul Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 122.

¹³⁵ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 18, 393: “Sed posito quod quantum sit praesens loco, tunc non valet: Deus potest facere quantum sine illa positione, et illa, et sic de singularis; igitur sine omnibus.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 324.

known to be a quantum, the existence of nothing other than the piece of wood is required.”¹³⁶

Neither quantities nor positions are things or entities over and above the individuals that are quantified or positioned in particular ways. Since the term ‘quantity’ calls to mind something different than the term ‘position’, they are not synonymous. Similarly, ‘quantity’ and ‘position’ call to mind something different than the term for a quantified or positioned substance, such as ‘cat’; hence none of these terms are synonymous. However, if we are using the terms ‘quantity’ and ‘position’ in relation to a particular cat, then those terms do not signify any real *thing* in addition to the individual cat, regardless of how many concepts we have in mind when we invoke these terms. From the point of view of our ontological commitments, position and quantum are nothing over and above the individual entity. Indeed, for Ockham, all terms in categories other than substance and quality are connotative, and merely signify entities within the categories of substance and quality. Since both terms – quantum and position – signify the very same object, then there can be no real distinction between them. But if there is no real distinction, then the principle in 2.1 cannot be used to draw inferences about their relations, since 2.1 explicitly requires a real distinction. If only one thing is being signified (by two different terms), then quite obviously there is no possibility for separation, even by the power of God, since real distinction requires the presence of two genuinely distinct or different entities, and real distinctness is a necessary condition for separability.¹³⁷ Though the terms present us with different concepts, each signifies the very same thing. Of course, the fact that there is no real distinction between them does not imply that they are identical. Presumably, the first premise of

¹³⁶ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VI q. 16, 642-643: “ad hoc quod lignum sit quantum et cognoscatur esse quantum, nec requiritur existentia alicuius alterius rei a ligno.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 542.

¹³⁷ It is worth noting here that the presence of a real distinction does not seem to be a sufficient condition for separability, since Ockham places conditions on separability in both parts of the argument; first by way of natural priority, and second by way of essential dependence.

Ockham's argument has some warrant: "God is able to make a quantum without this position, and without that position, and without that position, and so on for each of the singulars."¹³⁸ He seems to imply that it is possible for God to make a quantum change positions, even if we cannot infer from this that God could make a quantum without any position whatsoever. Arguably, there is no necessary tie between a quantum and a position; one could change without the other. But this will only occur insofar as there is some other change, presumably in the connotation of one or the other.

Regardless of any such complications, the upshot of our consideration of the case of quantum and position is that the absence of a real distinction between them entails that 2.1 cannot be invoked in that or any similar cases. Ockham delimits the range of invocation for the principle as follows: "when terms of this [absolute] sort convey things that are wholly [i.e., really] distinct from one another, then the major premise [that is, a premise logically equivalent to 2.1] is true."¹³⁹ Real distinctness is one of the required elements embedded in the conditional, so it should be obvious once we see that the term 'position' does not signify primarily something that can be really distinct from something else that there is no space for ontological separability. But the principle does apply to cases involving entities that are, in fact, really distinct. So Ockham will find it perfectly reasonable to argue that "a human being is able to exist without whiteness and without blackness, etc.; therefore, a human being is able by God's power to exist without having any color at all,"¹⁴⁰ even if he will deny that it can be invoked in the case of the

¹³⁸ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 18, 393.

¹³⁹ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 18, 394: "Et quando tales termini important res totaliter distinctas, tunc in illis est maior vera." Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 324.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*: "homo potest esse sine albedine et nigredine etc.; igitur potest esse sine omni colore per potentiam Dei." Trans. *ibid.*

quantum, since in the former case he is discussing a substance and an accident, both of which are real entities and really distinct from each other.

This analysis, in fact, helps us make sense of Ockham's argument recounted in 2.1-2.3. Ockham rejects the conclusion in 2.3 in part because he rejects premise 2.2. Or at least he rejects the reading of 2.2 which he believes that the realist would provide for it, viz., that the universal thing is some thing that is really distinct from the singular thing. Once we notice this, we see why Ockham finds the conclusion absurd. It is not because he believes the principle in 2.1 is false. Instead, it is because the principle cannot apply in the case of universals and particulars, because there is no real distinction between universals and particulars. According to Ockham, the principle cannot apply to the case of universals because terms that purport to refer to universals do not signify anything over and above the individual things signified, which is the basis for his rejection of 2.2. The moderate realist, on the other hand, believes that universal terms signify entities that are really distinct from the particulars that instantiate the universals. All of this suggests that Ockham believes the principle in 2.1 to be true, but that – on his view – it simply does not apply to the case of universals. At the very least, we do not have any good reason to think that Ockham did not subscribe to the principle.

However, there is one final concern to consider as we evaluate Ockham's commitment to the principle in 2.1: what if he is inconsistent in his invocation or application of the principle? To see why this might be of concern, we can look at his discussions of matter and its relationship to extension. When Ockham discusses the relation of matter and extension, he is seemingly of two minds. On the one hand, he suggests in his *Reportatio* that matter can exist apart from any extension whatsoever, at least by divine power, since matter can have greater or lesser extension: "Further, whatever is not incompatible with being under greater or lesser extension, is not

incompatible with being without all extension whatsoever.”¹⁴¹ Based on the foregoing discussion, it seems reasonable to think that Ockham’s reasoning involves the principle in 2.1, and that he would run his argument as he does in 2.1-2.3:

- 2.1 When some thing really distinct from other things can in the course of nature exist without any one of them taken separately, and it does not depend essentially on any of them, then it can exist without all of them taken all together, at least by divine power.
- 2.4 It is possible for matter to exist apart from any particular extension.
- 2.5 Therefore, by divine power matter can exist apart from any extension whatsoever.

If we assume a reading of the text suggesting that Ockham’s argument went something like this, then it suggests that Ockham believes that there is a real distinction between matter and (any particular) extension. Otherwise, he would have no reason to invoke 2.1, since the relevance of that principle depends on the presence of a real distinction.

However, Ockham offers an apparently quite different sort of argument in the *Summula Philosophiae Naturalis*. In that text, in the course of developing his account of matter, Ockham claims that it is an impossibility for matter to be without extension: “It is impossible that matter be without extension, for it is not possible for matter to be unless it has part distant from part.”¹⁴² Ockham’s claims appear to be in tension with one another, and certainly raise puzzles for a coherent account of matter in his works. More significantly for the current discussion, it is unclear from this argument what motivates Ockham to deny the separability of matter from extension. Is Ockham denying that there is a real distinction between matter and extension,

¹⁴¹ Ockham, *Reportatio* IV q. 6, in *Opera Theologica*, vol. 7, eds. Rega Wood and Gedeon Gál (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1984), 79: “Praeterea, cuicumque non repugnat esse sub maiori extensione et minori, non repugnat sibi esse sine omni extensione.” (my translation)

¹⁴² Ockham, *Summula Philosophiae Naturalis* I c. 13, in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 6, ed. Stephen Brown (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1984), 191: “quia impossibile est quod sit materia sine extensione: non enim est possibile quod materia sit nisi habeat partem distantem a parte.” (my translation)

which would suggest that 2.1 does not apply in this case? Or is he suggesting that 2.1 is false? If the former, then Ockham appears to have offered inconsistent and even contradictory accounts of the relationship between matter and extension. If the latter, then it suggests a defeater for my earlier discussion of his commitment to 2.1. Any complete proposal for how to resolve the puzzles presented by these texts will, of course, require close attention to his claims about matter. My modest aim in this discussion is to suggest that Ockham remains committed to 2.1, and that these arguments about matter do not provide us with compelling reasons to think otherwise.

In her discussion of these two arguments about matter, Simona Massobrio proposes that the tension between these two arguments can be resolved by distinguishing between what is naturally necessary, and hence susceptible to God's interference, and what is logically necessary, which even God cannot contravene. Massobrio argues that "...passages [such as the one discussed above from the *Summula Philosophiae Naturalis*] in which Ockham affirms that matter is necessarily extended...[are] referring to matter in its natural state...", while passages like the one from *Reportatio* IV indicate that "matter is not necessarily extended in the sense of logical necessity, or as Ockham would put it, matter could be without extension by God's absolute power."¹⁴³ Massobrio's suggestion seems to be something like this. As matter exists in nature, with its regular causal and other interactions, it cannot exist unextended. However, these normal activities and states in the world are governed by a necessity that we often call natural necessity, but not by logical necessity, since there apparently is no *contradiction* if matter exists without any extension whatsoever (i.e., without part outside part). Since divine power can bring about anything that does not involve a contradiction, and can bring about many things that are not naturally possible, it is reasonable to think, according to this analysis, that God could bring it

¹⁴³ Simona Massobrio, "The Individuation of Matter in Ockham's Philosophy," *Franciscan Studies* 44 (1984): 200.

about that matter exist without any extension whatsoever. As we have already seen in Ockham's first argument earlier in the chapter, understanding the role of divine power should significantly affect how we understand Ockham's arguments. Although she leaves the details of her suggestion unexplored, the proposal is quite suggestive. If my elaboration of her suggestion is on the right track, she seems to have in mind something akin to what I discussed in my account of possibility and divine power in relation to Ockham's first separability argument.

If Massobrio's account is correct, then it would suggest that these texts (and particularly the *Summula* text) do not provide a reason to think that Ockham either rejects or no longer endorses 2.1. The *Summula* text, on Massobrio's reading, simply considers matter in terms of what is naturally necessary. This would be akin to the sort of claim that Ockham provides in the middle premise of his argument against the moderate realist, viz., that matter does not require any particular extension. However, he does not consider, on this reading, what import that claim has for determining what is logically possible or possible in virtue of divine power.¹⁴⁴ In other words, Ockham simply does not invoke 2.1, or anything like it, in this passage, according to Massobrio's suggestion. But the failure to offer the principle in this context should not be given any considerable weight, since Ockham may have had reasons not to invoke it in his argument that have nothing to do with whether he endorsed the principle or not.

Even if we are unmoved by Massobrio's proposal, and believe that there remains a fundamental tension within Ockham's discussion of matter, there are additional reasons to think that a resolution to that tension will not require a rejection of 2.1. In particular, we should notice that nowhere in either passage does Ockham commit himself to the presence of a real distinction

¹⁴⁴ It is worth noting that Massobrio seems to run together the notions of logical possibility and divine power, a view that I will discuss later in the chapter.

between matter and extension. Though he claims in *Reportatio* IV that matter can exist without any extension, he *never* claims that extension could exist without matter. Nor would he, since there is no distinct thing in reality that corresponds to the term (or concept) ‘extension’; Ockham would offer the same sort of analysis, in fact, that he offers for ‘quantity’. What extension signifies is matter, which for Ockham intrinsically includes (a) the distinctions between the parts of matter; and (b) that in matter part exists outside of part. The reason for the discrepancy between the texts is perhaps best explained by a change of mind with respect to the claim in (b), rather than conflicting views either about the truth of 2.1 or even whether there is a real distinction between matter and extension.¹⁴⁵ Ockham would not have invoked 2.1 for his argument in the *Reportatio*, since the argument is about a case that does not involve a real distinction. Therefore, despite the similarity between the arguments in 2.1-2.3 and in *Reportatio* IV, 2.1-2.5 cannot be the proper rendering of that argument. All of this, then, should indicate that there is no reason for us to wonder about the persistence of Ockham’s commitment to the principle in 2.1 as a result of these discussions of matter. Therefore, I suggest that we have no good reason to think that he did not wholeheartedly and continuously endorse 2.1 both in his philosophical and theological works.

Other Commentators on This Passage

Of course, the fact that we have made a strong case for thinking that Ockham endorsed the principle is not the same as understanding either the content or the metaphysical import of the principle that he endorsed. Therefore, we must still develop accounts of notions like essential dependence and divine power in order to explain when God can make such things happen and

¹⁴⁵ I do not here provide evidence for this suggestion, but intend to develop this proposal at a later date.

when God cannot. The real distinction, as we mentioned earlier, is a necessary condition for the principle in 2.1 to obtain, but it is not a sufficient condition for separability, so we need a fuller explanation of what divine power, possibility, and essential dependence are, as well as how they function in these principles, especially if we hope to resolve the apparent fallacy in Ockham's reasoning discussed earlier. Despite the fact that we better understand the contexts in which the principle was used, we have done precious little to remove our puzzlement over its strong separability claim.

One might expect that the wealth of philosophical work on Ockham in recent years would suggest that we will discover some helpful commentary on this passage, or at least on the principle in general, and illuminate our understanding of the central issues we must explore. Unfortunately, the discussions are rare. Merely a handful of commentators have discussed this and similar passages, and do not always provide much detailed insight. For example, Marilyn Adams leaves out several crucial issues in her reconstruction of Ockham's argument: "Ockham mistakenly reasons that when some real thing really distinct from other things can exist without each of them taken one by one, and can so exist by its nature, and does not essentially depend on any of them, it can exist without each of them taken in conjunction. And he concludes that universal human nature could exist without any and every particular human being."¹⁴⁶ Adams does not mention the prominent place Ockham gives to divine power in the argument. Even if one were to suggest – as Massobrio seems to do in her discussion of matter – that Ockham does not truly distinguish between divine power and logical possibility, one might still be puzzled by Adams' rendering of the argument, since she does not explain what modal commitments Ockham seems to have in this argument. Her use of "can" suggests some kind of possibility, but

¹⁴⁶ Adams, "Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century," 424.

she never specifies what sort of possibility she is indicating. And without any mention of divine power, there is no reason to assume that she has logical possibility in view. At the very least, no reader could safely infer logical possibility from her account, so her reconstruction suffers as a commentary on the argument. Further, she does not develop the notion of essential dependence which, as I shall argue below, is critical for making sense of the passage. Without any developed picture of these issues, her claim that Ockham is mistaken lacks much force.

Perhaps more puzzling is her discussion of this argument in her monumental two-volume work, *William Ockham*. She does explicitly claim that the type of possibility Ockham has in mind is logical possibility, but she does not draw the explicit connection, as Ockham does, to divine power.¹⁴⁷ Left unexplained, then, is whether or not Adams understands logical possibility and divine power to be equivalent (extensionally or otherwise) in Ockham's account. Arguably, in Ockham's argument, the interjection of divine omnipotence involves a substantive claim about power rather than possibility. It articulates a claim that such and such can happen because *God* can do it. Without a discussion of these relevant concerns, we cannot make sense of Ockham's argument. Something like this that is needed for us to begin making sense of Ockham's argument; but Adams' account of this argument does not include such a discussion.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, she suggests that the content of Ockham's claim is that "when a real thing (*res*) is really distinct from other real things and can exist without each of them taken one by one, it can exist without any and all of them taken together."¹⁴⁹ This characterization of the argument not only leaves out reference to divine omnipotence, but also fails even to *mention* essential

¹⁴⁷ Adams, *William Ockham*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ The absence of such a discussion is made all the more puzzling by the fact that she *does* suggest such ideas in her discussion of the *first* argument (see above).

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 18-19.

dependence. Though we have not yet taken up the question of what precisely essential dependence is, we should, at the very least, recognize that any rendering of the argument should not overlook elements that seem to have significant metaphysical and logical import. Certainly we cannot expect to be in a position to dismiss Ockham's argument until we have examined carefully the details that appear in the argument. Unfortunately, since Adams does not produce a thorough, proper characterization of Ockham's argument, she too swiftly dismisses it. Those elements that she does not develop, even more unfortunately, are precisely the features we must understand in order to determine whether we ought to affirm or reject the fundamental principle in 2.1.

Martin Tweedale also discusses this passage in his massive work on the disputes between Ockham and Scotus on universals. He provides a brief commentary on the cogency of the argument we are considering:

I think Ockham is correct to see it as a consequence of their view that, if the universal is distinct from each singular, then it could exist even if there were not singulars. On this realist view, individuals result from the combining of these universal things; the universal things cannot then result from the combining of the individuals, and consequently their existence will not in any way depend on having individuals.¹⁵⁰

Though Tweedale defends Ockham's conclusion as an appropriate inference from the various commitments of the moderate realist, presumably including the principle embodied in 2.1, he does not address 2.1 directly. This is unfortunate for our present interests, especially because Tweedale's discussion relies on claims about the nature of dependence and what relations of dependence obtain between particulars and universals. That is precisely what is at issue in Ockham's discussion, and what needs exploration in order to understand the import of Ockham's

¹⁵⁰ Martin Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, 767.

claims, especially if we hope to resolve the problem of the apparent fallacy to which 2.1 supposedly commits him. In particular, Tweedale suggests that the existence of universals cannot depend on the existence of particulars. That (ahem) depends on what we mean when we speak of dependence; for even if universals are (naturally) prior to particulars, one might be willing to concede that universals cannot exist without particulars. Such a view would be, for example, quite similar to Duns Scotus's views about formal distinction and common nature. Even without evaluating a view as controversial as Scotus's, though, we could recognize the plausibility of a view that involved some sort of entailment relation between universals and particulars without requiring that universals *depend* on particulars in the sense relevant to this discussion (most likely, natural priority). There are necessary connections other than dependence that could hold between universals and particulars. This might require a different account of divine power than the one offered by Ockham, but the moderate realist might be untroubled by a change that would otherwise save his view about universals and particulars. Since Tweedale does not explicitly address the notions of essential dependence and natural priority, it is difficult to know what to make of his ultimate claim that the existence of universals does not depend on having individuals. Therefore, though I ultimately agree with Tweedale's view, and believe he is correct to avoid attributing to Ockham in this passage a significant logical error, his discussion does not advance our understanding of the passage on those matters that still need discussion and explanation.

Earlier, while discussing Ockham's commitment to 2.1, I discussed a passage from Walter Chatton in which he discusses a similar principle. Paul Spade provides a wonderfully suggestive comment on the passage in Chatton that I discussed earlier:

As it stands, this [argument of Chatton's] seems a blatant fallacy: \underline{x} does not depend on \underline{y} , and \underline{x} does not depend on \underline{z} ; therefore \underline{x} does not depend on either \underline{y} or \underline{z} , in the sense that one can have \underline{x}

without having either y or z . By this kind of reasoning, I can read with both eyes shut, since I can read without my right eye open, and I can also read without my left eye open. Does the word ‘essentially’ in the text somehow save the inference here?¹⁵¹

This follows a less tendentious comment on Ockham regarding the principle in 2.1, in which Spade suggests that the plausibility of the principle is not obvious.¹⁵² In the Chatton commentary, Spade suggests that Chatton appears to commit an obvious fallacy, and suggests an example that points out its fundamental flaw. Given the role that divine power plays in this style of argument, and the ways in which that power can be understood, there may be ways to understand this that will avoid the fallacy. Perhaps, in response to Spade, it can be suggested that the members of a genus or natural grouping do not exhaust the options in any given case. In Spade’s example, a natural requirement for reading is the use of an eye. However, Chatton (and by extension Ockham) could suggest that God, via divine power, could play the causal role normally filled by the powers of the eye. Therefore, God would function as if an eye for Spade’s reader. Perhaps y and z exhaust all the *natural* possibilities, or they exhaust all the members of the species, but they do not exhaust the possibilities *absolutely*. We must turn to this point now.

Resolving the Apparent Fallacy: Essential Dependence

Recall the passage from Walter Chatton which expresses a claim similar to 2.1 during his sustained critique of Ockham’s *fictum* theory. The key section we will consider here is this:

If it does not *essentially depend* on this intellection, [then] for the same reason neither [does it depend] on any other [intellection] of the same kind. Therefore, it can exist without there being any such intellection.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 125n18.

¹⁵² Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 31n6.

¹⁵³ Walter Chatton, *Reportatio* I d. 3 q. 2 in Gedeon Gál, “Gualteri de Chatton et Guillelmi de Ockham Controversia de Natura Conceptus Universalis,” 202. Trans. Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 125.

Despite seeming somewhat dismissive of this principle, Spade does leave open the possibility that the notion of essential dependence plays a critical role in understanding the argument. This suggestion deserves attention. In other words, what needs explication here is the account of essential dependence. Without a grasp of this notion, we will be unable properly to assess the value of this argument, and especially 2.1. However, as far as my reading has taken me, Ockham does not provide a simple, straightforward account of essential dependence. We do not find in Ockham anything like we see in the first book of Duns Scotus's *De Primo Principio*, where Scotus details multiple varieties of essential dependence.¹⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, Scotus's account of essential dependence emphasizes its fundamentally causal nature as well as its connection to existential dependence. These are features we would be unsurprised to see in an account of essential dependence, and they can provide us with a beginning for our investigation of Ockham's own view. Nonetheless, though we might expect Scotus's account to give us some clues regarding the general shape of Ockham's view, the important differences between Scotus and Ockham on questions of existential dependence and causation should make us seek an account of essential dependence in Ockham's own writings. Despite the absence of a condensed discussion of essential dependence in a single text, Ockham does discuss the notion in a variety of places, and it seems reasonable to think that we can piece together his account through a careful examination of these texts.

We might be tempted to think that essential dependence is quite similar to natural priority, or perhaps even just the same notion. Scotus discusses natural priority in the section of *De Primo Principio* mentioned above, so it surely isn't a bizarre suggestion. This proposal would

¹⁵⁴ John Duns Scotus, *De Primo Principio* I, trans. and ed. with Commentary by Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 2-11.

naturally be of great help in explicating the argument, since the immediately prior argument in the text, discussed in the first part of this chapter, relies fundamentally on natural priority.¹⁵⁵ As a result, we already have significant clarity about what natural priority is. If essential dependence just is natural priority, though, then why doesn't Ockham just talk about natural priority in the present argument, i.e., explicitly use the language of priority, rather than switching to the language of essential dependence? Indeed, the second argument makes no mention of natural priority at all. Additionally, as I established at the end of my discussion of the first argument, and the beginning of my discussion of the second argument, the arguments reach dramatically different conclusions; the scope of the second argument is much wider than the first argument, and it would seem odd to think that they were relying on exactly the same principles yet reaching such different conclusions. Furthermore, if both arguments are relying on the same basic principle, then why argue the same way twice? It would seem redundant to argue by way of essential dependence what you already argued by way of natural priority if, in fact, essential dependence *just is* natural priority.

None of this means that there are no basic relations between essential dependence and natural priority, however. In fact, Ockham seems committed to the claim that the two notions are interconnected: "...if a relation is a thing distinct [from absolute things], then it depends essentially on both its foundation and its terminus, and consequently it is not prior in nature to either of them."¹⁵⁶ Thus if y depends essentially on x , then y cannot be prior in nature to x . Essential dependence of y on x , then, is a sufficient condition for y not being prior to x . This

¹⁵⁵ It is worth recalling the parallelism of the arguments in *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4 and *Summa Logicae* I, chapter 15.

¹⁵⁶ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VI q. 12, 630: "relatio, si sit alia rest, essentialiter dependet tam a fundamento quam a termino, et per consequens neutro est prior natura." Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 529.

represents at least a start toward an account of essential dependence. We can understand more about the connections developed here if we also recall the account of existential dependence developed in the previous section of the chapter:

y existentially depends on x iff either (i) x produces y or (ii) the existence or activity of x preserves y in existence.

On this proposal, existential dependence does not yet establish anything about the direction of natural priority between x and y . That is, according to this account, even if y existentially depends on x , it is still possible for y to be prior to x . This is an expected result, since the notion of natural priority relies on the notion of existential dependence as more primitive:

x is naturally prior to y iff in the ordinary course of nature (or absent the extraordinary activity of divine power), y existentially depends on x but not vice versa.

Here we develop the relationship between natural priority and existential dependence. Once again, there is no claim that existential dependence provides a direction of priority. The very fact that natural priority has to be explained in terms of y 's existential dependence on x plus x 's failing to existentially depend on y tells us that existential dependence by itself does not entail any claims about the direction of natural priority. And as we have just seen, essential dependence *does* imply certain conditions with respect to natural priority.

Now we have not only the beginnings of a connection between natural priority and essential dependence, but we have also begun developing a distinction between existential dependence and essential dependence. In the *Treatise on Quantity*, Ockham discusses the range of application for the notion of essential dependence. He claims that "if something that essentially depends on another as effect on its cause or an accident on its subject can be separated from its subject by divine power, how much moreso is God able to make that which

does not depend on another without that other.”¹⁵⁷ This passage suggests that essential dependence includes at least two kinds of cases – effects on causes, and accidents on subjects. Here essential dependence seems to extend to a similar, if not identical, range of cases as natural priority. Marilyn Adams further suggests that the following is a corollary of Ockham’s view: “When one absolute thing (*res*) can be naturally produced without each of many really distinct things taken one by one, that thing can be produced by divine power without any and all of them - especially where neither is part of the other, or the effect of the other, or an accident of the other.”¹⁵⁸ Reading this suggests an obvious parallel with the principle in 2.1. Here, however, essential dependence seems to be replaced by three restrictions on the fulfillment of the principal claim about divine power. What is the role of those items in italics? Perhaps they should be considered distinct loci of essential dependence, and, if so, she may be equating it with natural priority. More work is needed, then, to determine whether these examples genuinely involve essential dependence.

A continued look at Ockham suggests that his account of essential dependence may center on causal connections: “Further, on the basis of reason I argue, first, as follows: All things depend essentially on God; but this would not be true if God were not a cause of all of them.”¹⁵⁹ By *modus tollens*, if all things essentially depend on God, then God is the cause of all things.

One might be tempted to infer from the passage that causal connection is the only sort of

¹⁵⁷ Ockham, *Tractatus de Quantitate*, in *Opera Theologica*, vol. 10, ed. Carolus A. Grassi (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1986), 19: “si illud quod dependet essentialiter ab aliquo tamquam effectus et accidens a causa et a suo subiecto potest per divinam potentiam separari ab illo, multo fortius illud quod non dependet ab alio...potest Deus facere sine eo.” (my translation)

¹⁵⁸ Adams, *William Ockham*, 209. (emphasis added)

¹⁵⁹ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* III q. 4, 216: “Praeterea per rationem hoc probo primo sic: omnia dependent essentialiter a Deo; quod non esset verum nisi Deus esset causa illorum.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 181.

connection involving essential dependence. However, since this case involves God, we cannot infer that we have a complete account; for it may be the case that, e.g., accidents essentially depend on their subjects or (essential) parts essentially depend on their wholes. But since God cannot be a part (or essential part) of a created thing nor have parts, and cannot have accidents, these other types of cases will not arise in this context.

Fortunately, Ockham provides further evidence for the “merely” causal reading of essential dependence. In his discussion of whether every created thing is an absolute thing, he provides the following division of relations suggested to disallow separability:

(i) the one thing depends essentially on the other thing...(ii) the one thing necessarily requires the other and cannot exist without it, though not vice versa...(iii) the one thing necessarily requires the other and vice versa, so that neither can exist without the other...[corresponding to (i)] an effect depends essentially on a cause that produces and conserves it...[corresponding to (ii)] it is a contradiction for a human being to exist and yet for God not to exist...[corresponding to (iii)] following natural reason, one should say that an accident cannot exist without a subject or vice versa...¹⁶⁰

What seems significant, for our purposes, is that in (i), essential dependence involves cause and effect, and so is a fundamentally causal notion in which the cause produces and conserves; (ii) can involve something weaker like *sine qua non* causes; as can (iii), but in (iii) they are also bidirectional. Natural priority and posteriority seem to fit in (ii), while (iii) includes simultaneity of nature. From this division, then, we seem to get a distinction between essential dependence and natural priority. Therefore, cause seems to be the fundamental feature of essential dependence. Now we have a rough and ready starting point for thinking about essential

¹⁶⁰ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VI q. 15, 637: “hoc erit vel quia una res essentialiter dependet ab alia re, vel quia una res necessario exigit aliam sine qua non potest existere licet non e converso, vel quia una res necessario exigit aliam et e converso, ita quod neutra potest sine altera existere. Non propter primum, quia effectus essentialiter dependet a causa producente et conservante, et tamen effectus est res absoluta sicut causa. Nec propter secundum, quia contradictio est quod homo sit et tamen quod Deus non sit, et tamen homo est res absoluta. Nec propter tertium, quia sequendo naturalem rationem, debet dici quod accidens non potest esse sine subiecto nec e converso.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 537.

dependence. We will likely better understand essential dependence if we closely examine its further function in Ockham's arguments where he makes use of it.

In the passage from *Quodlibet* 3.4 quoted above, Ockham claims that all things other than God are essentially dependent on God. If we adopt the causal notion of essential dependence, we might then ask whether things can depend essentially on anything other than God; or perhaps more appropriately, whether they can depend essentially on anything in addition to God. At first blush, there seems to be reason to reply negatively, since Ockham also states that there cannot be two total causes of an effect.

There are two ways in which a cause is described as total: (i) In one way, a total cause is said to be that which is such that once it is posited, then even if everything else has been excluded, the effect can be produced sufficiently, and, taken in this sense, a total cause is called a sufficient cause....To the proof I reply that an effect which has two causes that are total in the first sense does not depend essentially on either of the two, since it could be sufficiently produced even if that one did not exist.¹⁶¹

Since either of the two total causes would be sufficient, the effect does not depend essentially on either one, because it could still exist with the other. However, since everything, according to Ockham, *does* depend essentially on God, and since where there are two total causes there is no essential dependence, then there could be no cases in which there are two total causes.

Therefore, nothing is essentially dependent on anything but God.

This seems like a bizarre conclusion to reach. For starters, it would seemingly render superfluous Ockham's invocation of essential dependence in his second argument. God could be the total cause of anything, and so replace any of the otherwise essential dependencies. In other

¹⁶¹ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* I q. 1, 8-9: "de quarta via dico quod causa totalis dupliciter describitur: uno modo dicitur causa totalis illud quo posito, omni alio circumscripto, potest effectus sufficienter produci; et isto modo, causa totalis dicitur causa sufficiens...Ad probationem dico quod effectus habens duas causas totales primo modo, non dependet essentialiter ab altero, quia posset sufficienter produci illo non existente." Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 10-11.

words, essential dependence would place no limits on God's power.

Fortunately, Ockham provides us with two ways of avoiding this conclusion. First, there are effects of which God is not the *total* cause, like willings. In these cases, that which is dependent is essentially dependent on all the causes that are jointly sufficient, including God and my own will. Second, and I think more significant for our purposes, Ockham's causal account of essential dependence connects it to *natural* production. On this view, something can depend essentially on things other than God, because the two total causes exclusion is only applicable when there are two *natural* essential causes.

We can begin to see hints of this latter proposal when he argues in *Quodlibet* 4.32 that

an absolute thing that is prior in nature depends less upon a posterior thing than an effect depends upon its essential cause. But God is able to produce an effect in the absence of its *natural and essential* cause.¹⁶²

At first glance, this passage might seem to suggest that having an essential cause is not enough to give us essential dependence, since God can replace any secondary cause with Himself, and do so as total cause (excluding cases like willings). However, his use of the phrase “natural and essential” suggests that the natural and essential cause of the thing *is*, in fact, both *natural* and *essential*. Apparently, God's ability to replace that cause with Himself does not affect that fact. Therefore, Ockham seems committed to the claim that having two *natural* total causes renders neither cause to be essential, but not to the claim that such is the case with two total causes *simpliciter*.

This interpretation is further bolstered by Ockham's claim that natural production, essential dependence, and essential cause are closely connected: “For it follows that if an effect

¹⁶² Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 32, 455: “res absoluta prior natura minus dependet a posteriore quam effectus a sua causa essentiali; sed Deus potest facere effectum sine causa sua naturali et essentiali.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 375. (emphasis added)

may be produced naturally, without A, then A is not essentially required for its production, and, consequently, it is not its essential cause.”¹⁶³ Essential dependence requires that an effect have a cause without which it cannot be naturally produced. So not only must A be the actual cause of the effect, but also there cannot be some other thing that can naturally produce the same effect. Significant by its absence is any invocation of divine power. All that would undermine the essential dependence of the effect on A would be the possibility that some other *natural* cause could produce the effect, not a divine cause.

The understanding of essential dependence that I am suggesting may also resolve a problem posed for Ockham and the principle in 2.1 by Calvin Normore.¹⁶⁴ Normore points out that there are only two ways in which an effect is produced: by (a) God (or the intervention of God); or via (b) its natural and essential cause. Take any effect *e*. Can *e* be produced without (a)? Yes, because it can be produced by (b). Can *e* be produced without (b)? Yes, because it can be produced by (a). However, by 2.1, we can add this: we should be able to produce *e* without (a) and without (b) conjunctively. This suggests a contradiction, because our result is that *e* both can and cannot be produced without God. Not only that, but, according to Ockham, everything is causally related to God. However, recollecting our original argument, Ockham claims that what is really distinct “can in the course of nature exist without any one of them taken separately...,”¹⁶⁵ which, again, suggests that we should only attend to natural causes in determining whether essential dependence obtains in particular cases. Since *e* would remain

¹⁶³ Ockham, *Quaestiones in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis* I q. 134, in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 6, ed. Stephen Brown (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1984), 760: “Quia sequitur: effectus potest naturaliter produci sine A, igitur non requiritur essentialiter ad eius productionem, et per consequens non est sua causa essentialis.” (my translation)

¹⁶⁴ This argument was suggested in conversation.

¹⁶⁵ Ockham, *Ordinatio* I d. 2 q. 4.

essentially dependent on its natural and essential cause, even if God could produce *e* without it, then the principle in 2.1 would not be applicable to the case suggested by Normore, and we can extricate Ockham from this worry.¹⁶⁶

Having removed the worry that there can be no natural and essential causes, we should return to the development of an account of essential dependence. In Ockham's discussion of fictum theory, which we cited earlier, he provides us with further information about the nature of essential dependence. As mentioned earlier, this account bears important similarities to natural priority, but narrows the focus to causal connections.

[O]ne fictive entity can be destroyed while another remains, just as with acts of understanding. For a fictive entity either (i) does or (ii) does not depend essentially upon the act [of understanding of which it is the object]. If it does depend essentially upon the act, then when an act ceases to exist, the corresponding fictive entity is destroyed, and yet a fictive entity remains in another act; and, consequently, there are two singular fictive entities, just as there are two acts. If it does not depend upon that singular act, then, consequently, it does not depend essentially upon any act of the same type and, as a result, the fictive entity in question will remain in objective existence in the absence of every act.¹⁶⁷

So if *y* depends essentially on *x*, then when *x* ceases to exist, *y* will be destroyed. If *y* does *not* depend essentially on *x*, then if *x* ceases to exist, *y* can continue in existence. Furthermore, if *y* exists, and does not depend essentially on *x* or *p* or *q* or any other naturally related entity, then *y* can continue to exist, even if all of *x*, *p*, *q*, etc. disappear. If it doesn't essentially depend on some one of them, then why on any other one of them, since they are all of the same kind?

Insofar as *x* does not depend essentially on any one of them, no one of them, by going out of

¹⁶⁶ It is worth noting that Spade's clear rendering of this important division between natural power and divine power recommends his translation of the central argument from the *Ordinatio* over Tweedale's translation; Martin Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, 298: "When some thing that is really distinct from some other things can exist without any of them divisively, and this is possible by its nature and it does not depend essentially on some one of them, it can exist without any of them conjunctively, and this is possible through the divine power."

¹⁶⁷ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 35, 473. Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 390.

existence, will cause x to go out of existence. In this case, although x does not depend essentially on any of its natural counterparts, x will depend essentially (for its *conservation*) on God. Since God is the only thing on which x depends, only God can conserve it or destroy it. This suggestion is bolstered by Ockham's claim that "every absolute thing that is distinct in place and subject from another absolute thing can by God's power exist when that other absolute thing is destroyed."¹⁶⁸ Even though God is not the *natural* and essential cause of everything, everything is, in fact, essentially dependent on Him.

Can We Appeal to the Possible Y's? or The Last Instantiator Question

Despite the fact that we have a much clearer picture of what essential dependence is, and hence a far stronger grasp of the meaning of the principle in 2.1, none of the foregoing discussion explicitly addresses the concern that the use of the principle just commits Ockham to some kind of formal fallacy.

I believe that it is important to head off early one possible face-saving interpretation of 2.1 that seems wrong-headed. One might think that we can read the claim in 2.1 as suggesting that y can exist apart from all the presently existing x 's, but that one can then appeal to possible x 's to demonstrate that y need not exist in some "stripped" manner. So suppose that y is hooked up to the last x in existence; one initial response might be that it seems necessary that y be connected to this x because there are no more x 's, but *only* because it is the last existing x , not because this particular x has some prior special status. The resolution being offered, on Ockham's behalf, suggests that this x is *not* necessarily tied to y ; y could be connected to some *possible* x that does not presently exist. However, this is not what Ockham means when he

¹⁶⁸ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* VI q. 6, 605. Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 506.

discusses y bearing a contingent relation to the *entire species of x 's*, that is, each and every possible and actual x : “A created power is able to conserve an absolute prior thing in the absence of a determinate individual of a given species...therefore, an infinite power is able to conserve that same prior thing in the absence of the whole species in question.”¹⁶⁹ Whatever the independent merits of this claim, it seems clear that Ockham would not accept this line of argument, so it will do us no good to appeal, on his behalf, to some further x 's.

Divine Power

With our enriched understanding of essential dependence, we can attempt a better resolution to our worry. Recall Spade's comment on the passage in Chatton:

As it stands, this [argument of Chatton's] seems a blatant fallacy: \underline{x} does not depend on \underline{y} , and \underline{x} does not depend on \underline{z} ; therefore \underline{x} does not depend on either \underline{y} or \underline{z} , in the sense that one can have \underline{x} without having either \underline{y} or \underline{z} . By this kind of reasoning, I can read with both eyes shut, since I can read without my right eye open, and I can also read without my left eye open. Does the word 'essentially' in the text somehow save the inference here?¹⁷⁰

According to Ockham, in this example, one *could* in fact read with both eyes shut. The example developed in the previous paragraph suggests that we should perhaps recognize that divine power can add at least one additional case – God. In other words, if x does not depend on y and x does not depend on z , where y and z are, say, all the members of the species that can bear the right relation to x , then x can exist without all of the members of the species taken conjunctively. This does not mean that x can exist without anything whatsoever; indeed, since everything depends on God, x can only exist if God exists. Recall that in 2.1, Ockham claims that what is

¹⁶⁹ Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem* IV q. 32, 457: “virtus creata potest conservare prius absolutum sine certo individuo alicuius speciei, sicut hanc substantiam sine isto accidente demonstrato; igitur virtus infinita potest conservare idem prius sine tota illa specie.” Trans. Freddoso and Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions*, 376.

¹⁷⁰ Spade, *History of the Problem of Universals*, 125n18.

really distinct “can in the course of nature exist without any one of” the other really distinct things. We then understand the consequent to suggest that the really distinct thing can exist without all of those really distinct things “taken all together” that *in the course of nature* it can exist without. In this way, we can secure the claim that a thing can exist without any of its natural and essential causes if it can exist *naturally* without any particular one of them, because God can serve as its essential cause. What we *cannot* say, however, is that a thing can exist *naturally* without any of its natural and essential causes if it can exist *naturally* without any particular one of them. It is precisely because of God’s ability to fill the role of cause that allows us to make the former claim but not the latter.

Since this dependence of x on God is *at least* analogous to the sort of dependence of effects on natural causes, then this account should not seem especially puzzling, especially considering Ockham’s views on divine omnipotence and causal power. In response to Spade, it can be suggested that the members of a genus or natural grouping do not exhaust the options in any given case. In Spade’s example, a natural requirement for reading is the use of an eye. However, Chatton (and by extension Ockham) could suggest that God, via divine power, could play the causal role normally filled by the powers of the eye. Therefore, God would function as if an eye for Spade’s reader. So even though y and z exhaust all the *natural* possibilities, or they exhaust all the members of the species, they do not exhaust the possibilities *absolutely*.

On this picture, God serves as a sort of proxy for one of the members of the relevant species. So even though e can exist without $c1$, $c2$ and $c3$ (where that exhausts all the natural causes), God fills the role of a natural cause, in some sense, so the inference is not invalid because it is not quite the inference it appears to be. Perhaps we can read it as enthymematic, and the hidden premise tells us something about this supposed proxy role of God, or how e can

exist without all the natural causes, but not without *anything whatsoever*. If an account like this one is plausible, then we can rescue Ockham from the charge of having committed a logical fallacy. The argument, at least on formal grounds, would then seem to be in reasonably good shape. More generally, I suggest that the argument form employed by Ockham (one that is also used by – at least – Scotus, Chatton, Bonaventure, and Aquinas as well) cannot be rejected straight off as mistaken; instead, we must consider the material account to which the argument is applied.

This account accords well with Marilyn Adams' proposal that I mentioned earlier, where she suggests the following as a corollary of Ockham's account: "When one absolute thing (*res*) can be naturally produced without each of many really distinct things taken one by one, that thing can be produced by divine power without any and all of them - especially where neither is part of the other, or the effect of the other, or an accident of the other."¹⁷¹ Adams' idea seems to be that God fills whatever role would otherwise have been filled by a natural producer, particularly when none of the conditions that she specifies obtains. God does what any natural producer naturally would do; and only one producer is required. If that producer is God, then no natural producer whatsoever is required – God is sufficient for the task.

From an examination of the different ways in which Ockham describes divine power, we can see that God's roles in exercises of divine power are multiform: (a) God can suspend a certain natural activity; for example, God can make a cause to exist without the production of its natural effect, i.e., the effect does not exist or occur at all; (b) God can stand in the role, as a proxy of sorts, or take the place of the natural occurrence, e.g., an effect is produced and/or

¹⁷¹ Adams, *William Ockham*, p. 209.

conserved by God's activity directly, rather than via the natural cause of that effect. Although there may be other modes of exercise, these two appear to cover most, if not all, cases.

Power and Possibility

Throughout this chapter, there has been considerable discussion of divine power and logical possibility. However, there has not been a detailed discussion of the relationship between those two notions. One might be left wondering whether Ockham's account ties divine power and logical possibility too tightly together. Therefore, it is worth discussing briefly the connection that Ockham seems to draw between the two.

Earlier I discussed Simona Massobrio's discussion of Ockham's differing accounts of matter. In that discussion, I quoted the following observation from Massobrio: "matter is not necessarily extended in the sense of logical necessity, or as Ockham would put it, matter could be without extension by God's absolute power."¹⁷² Her way of framing this point suggests that Ockham could (or would) replace talk of logical necessity with talk of God's absolute power, and vice versa. This seems somewhat misleading, however, for a number of reasons that I wish to surface here. Though it seems plausible to say that, according to Ockham, something is logically possible if and only if God can do it, the biconditional does not seem to capture the difference between possibility and divine power.

On the account of essential dependence that I have developed here, it does not seem correct to say that divine power would simply be Ockham's way of talking about logical possibility. Divine power provides, among other things, *one* of the possibilities, but many possibilities seem to be possible in themselves, according to the nature (or natures) of things.

¹⁷² Massobrio, "The Individuation of Matter in Ockham's Philosophy," 200.

This again suggests that Ockham is committed to Aristotelian naturalism. Perhaps more importantly, it indicates that, for Ockham, talk of what God can do cannot be substituted for talk of logical possibility.¹⁷³

However, the discussion of God's causal power ought not obscure the connection between divine power and logical possibility, since it seems to be one of the emphases of Ockham's account of divine power. As discussed earlier, Ockham claims that God cannot do anything that would yield a contradiction.¹⁷⁴ The notion of God's power, therefore, does not operate more widely than the notion of logical possibility. This is important to keep in mind, because it will help us avoid attributing to God's power operations that are not possible. For Ockham, the notion of 'the power of God' does not add anything to the *strength* of the possibility claim.

On the other hand, there does seem to be *some* kind of difference between divine power and logical possibility. Tweedale suggests that "the mention here of what can be accomplished by divine power amounts to asserting the logical possibility of whatever is in question."¹⁷⁵ This seems correct, but one must exercise caution when reading "amounts to" as suggesting an equivalence between the two. Logical possibility and divine power may be logically equivalent, but they function somewhat differently – both in reality and in Ockham's arguments. For starters, divine power is exercised by a divine agent; logical possibility is not the sort of thing that is exercised at all.

¹⁷³ For additional comments on the nature of logical possibility and divine power in Ockham, see the discussion of Ockham's first argument for separability above.

¹⁷⁴ I am not suggesting that there is no connection between possibility and causality in Ockham's account; indeed, I believe that there is, although I will not be developing this point here. I am merely suggesting that we must be sure to make explicit both aspects, even if, in the end, they are inextricably intertwined.

¹⁷⁵ Martin Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, 767.

Perhaps more significantly, many things that are logically possible are things that *only* God can do, such as separate accidents from a substance (as in transubstantiation). But arguably it is a necessary condition of God's doing this (and many other things) that it be *logically possible*. Further, many things that are logically possible can be accomplished by creatures or other entities in the world. But any account of logical possibility will lack the resources to distinguish between those activities that only God can do and those activities that other entities can do as well, unless the account already includes a distinct story about divine power. Any account of divine power, on the other hand, will be able to specify the relevant differences in these acts without direct appeal to logical possibility.

Similarly, something can be logically possible without any need for an appeal to God's power to bring it about; for example, it is logically possible, by purely natural means, for my cat to be black (especially if, in fact, my cat is black). Additionally, when Ockham uses the phrase “at least by divine power”, he is not merely saying that something is logically possible. Nor is he saying that divine power is what makes the possible possible. Instead, he is saying *of* something that is logically possible that this is the power that can make that possibility actual. Thus, even though the two notions will operate in the same way logically, they are not equivalent notions.

Let me return to my original point – the relationship between separability and real distinction. My suggestion is this: for Ockham, real distinction does not entail separability. Instead, real distinction merely points out the fact the relata of this distinction are absolute things, such that they are the kinds of things that *could each be separable from the other*, depending on other relevant metaphysical circumstances, such as the natural priority that obtains between them. Of course, given divine power, if *x* and *y* are really distinct, then they are separable; but that depends on the presence of divine power. The real distinction is merely an

enabling condition, and probably a necessary condition, for the separability of x and y ; it is not a sufficient condition. The presence of a real distinction points out that there is no logical contradiction in x and y being separated. But logical possibility and divine power, as we have seen, are two distinct matters. Per the impossible, if there were no divine power, it would not be possible for necessary accidents to be separated from their subjects; and not even God could bring it about that anything existed without God!

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