

Analogy and Formal Distinction: On the Logical Basis of Wyclif's Metaphysics

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John Wyclif (born near Richmond, Yorkshire, before 1330—died Lutterworth, Leicestershire, 31 Dec. 1384) was one of the most important and authoritative thinkers of the late Middle Ages. Not only did he lead a movement of opposition to the medieval Church and to some of its dogmas and institutions, thus becoming a forerunner of the Reformation (since influences of his main theological and ecclesiological doctrines can clearly be traced in Jan Hus and others right through Luther and Calvin), but he was also the most prominent English philosopher of the second half of the fourteenth century. His logical and metaphysical theories are, at the same time, the final result of the preceding realistic tradition of thought and the starting-point of the new forms of realism propounded at the end of the Middle Ages.¹ Many authors active during the last decades of the fourteenth and/or the first decades of the fifteenth centuries, like the English Robert Alyngton (d. 1398), William Penbygull (d. 1420), William Milverley, Roger Whelpdale (d. 1423), and John Tarteys,²

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1. Wyclif did not espouse the cause of realism in his youth, but only later. Indeed, at the beginning of his studies, he sympathized with nominalistic views—cf. S. H. Thomson, “The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif’s Theology,” *Journal of Religion* 11 (1931): 89; J. A. Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 144–145; G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), 2:501. This sort of conversion can explain the extreme rigour of his doctrine and the hint of fanaticism which sometimes can be perceived in his writings.

2. For information on their lives and works see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957–1959), *sub vocibus*. All of them studied and taught in Oxford: Alyngton at Queen’s College, Penbygull at Exeter College, Whelpdale at Balliol and Queen’s Colleges, and Tarteys at Balliol College. *Excerpta* from Alyngton’s main work, a commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*, in A. D. Conti, “Linguaggio e realtà nel commento alle *Categorie* di Robert Alyngton,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 4 (1993): 242–306; *excerpta* from Milverley’s *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, Whelpdale’s *Tractatus de universalibus*, and Tarteys’s *Problema correspondens libello Porphyrii in Johannes Sharpe, Quaestio super universalibus*, ed. A. D. Conti (Firenze, 1990), appendices II, III, IV, pp. 159–197. Penbygull’s *De universalibus* has been edited in A. D. Conti, “Teoria degli universali e teoria della predicazione nel trattato *De universalibus* di William Penbygull: discussione e difesa della posizione di Wyclif,” *Medioevo* 8 (1982): 178–203.

the German Johannes Sharpe (d. after 1415),³ and the Italian Paul of Venice (Udine 1369–Padua 1429; one of the main logicians of the Middle Ages), were influenced by his logical apparatus and metaphysical formulations.⁴

Prior to Mueller's critical edition of Wyclif's *Tractatus de universalibus* (sixth treatise of the first book of the *Summa de ente*)⁵ medieval scholars and historians of ideas had generally neglected Wyclif's philosophical system, focusing instead on his theology and/or on his political views.⁶ Wyclif's contemporaries, on the contrary, were much more excited by his metaphysical

3. On Sharpe's life, works, and thought see L. A. Kennedy, "The *De anima* of John Sharpe," *Franciscan Studies* 29 (1969): 249–270; Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, pp. 211–38, and 323–36. Although German, Sharpe spent about twenty years in Oxford (from the early 1380s to the first years of the fifteenth century), as a student and a teacher of that university.

4. On Paul of Venice's life, works, and logico-metaphysical thought see A. D. Conti, *Esistenza e verità. Forme e strutture del reale in Paolo Veneto e nel pensiero filosofico del tardo medioevo*, (Roma, 1996).

5. See J. Wyclif, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ed. I. J. Mueller (Oxford, 1985)—all the translations of this work are taken from J. Wyclif, *On Universals*, trans. into English by A. Kenny (Oxford, 1985). Other works by Wyclif to which I refer in this paper are the following: *De ente praedicamentali* (fifth treatise of the *Summa de ente*), ed. R. Beer (London, 1891); *Purgans errores circa veritates in communi, Purgans errores circa universalibus in communi, De intellectione Dei* (third and fourth treatises of the first book of the *Summa de ente*, and first treatise of the second book respectively), ed. M. H. Dziewicki in *Johannis Wyclif De ente librorum duorum excerpta* (London, 1909), pp. 1–112; *De ente in communi, De ente primo in communi* (first and second treatises of the first book of the *Summa de ente*), in *Johannis Wyclif Summa de ente, libri primi tractatus primus et secundus*, ed. S. H. Thomson (Oxford, 1930); *De materia et forma*, in *Johannis Wyclif Miscellanea philosophica*, ed. M. H. Dziewicki, 2 vols. (London, 1902–1905), 1: 163–242; *Tractatus de logica*, ed. M. H. Dziewicki, 3 vols. (London 1893–1899). The *Summa de ente* was written by Wyclif over a period between approximately 1365 and 1374; it was not conceived and executed at one time, and so Wyclif arranged its thirteen treatises as a *Summa* in two books only later. The first book (seven treatises) deals with being, while the second one (six treatises) with God, considered according to His nature and actions. On the philological problems concerning this work (authorship, date of composition, internal structure and so on) see Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*, pp. 115–40; W. R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wycliff* (Toronto, 1983), pp. 14–35; and Mueller's introduction to his critical edition of the *De universalibus*, pp. xix–xxv.

6. Cf. G. V. Lechler, *Johannes von Wyclif und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation* (Leipzig, 1873); R. L. Poole *Wyclif and the Movements for Reform* (London, 1889); J. Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England*, 4 vols. (London, 1908); J. Loserth, *Hus und Wyclif* (Münich, 1925) 2d ed.; H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1926); K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Non-Conformity* (London, 1952); Robson, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*; L. J. Daly, *The Political Theory of John Wyclif* (Chicago, 1962); J. Stacey, *John Wyclif and Reform* (London, 1964); Leff, *Heresy*, pp. 494–558; W. Farr, *Wyclif as Legal Reformer* (Leiden, 1974); the papers by J. I. Catto, G. R. Evans, and A. Hudson in *The Bible in the Medieval World*, ed. K. Walsh and D. Wood (Oxford, 1985), pp. 269–315; and finally, the papers by M. Wilks, D. Luscombe, H. Phillips, G. R. Evans, Th. Renna, A. K. McHardy, K. Walsh, C. von Nolcken, and G. Fitch Lytle in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks (Oxford, 1987), pp. 135–64, 233–80, 361–68, 397–418, 429–44, and 465–79.

novelties.⁷ Only in the last few years have interesting studies appeared which are dedicated almost totally to the analysis of some of the main features of Wyclif's philosophy.⁸ He revised Duns Scotus's notion of formal distinction, and developed a form of intensional logic where the main relation between beings is exactly that one of formal distinction, intended as the measure of the coincidence of the metaphysical components of two *res*. Consequently, starting from the definition of being as what can be signified by a complex expression, Wyclif built up a metaphysics of essences (culminating in an ontological and epistemological primacy of universals over any other kind of beings), by which the "realisms" of the late Middle Ages were to be inspired.

Despite the revival of interest in Wyclif, many aspects of his ontological doctrines still remain vague. In this paper I would like to take a step toward clarifying the most conspicuous legacy he left to the subsequent generations: the logical machinery drawn up in order to solve the chief metaphysical problems inherited from the scholastic tradition, together with the ontological context in which the machinery itself was set. Since the cornerstone of Wyclif's philosophy is his definition of being as *significabile per complexum*, in the first section of my paper I shall describe Wyclif's notions of being and truth in their mutual relationship, trying to explain the novelty of his conception. The second section will be dedicated to Wyclif's theory of analogy, which is the logical

7. Cf. Robson, *Wyclif*, p. 118. For further information on Wyclif's philosophical influence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries see Robson, *Wyclif*, pp. 10, 118, 142–43, and 218–46; Conti, "Teoria degli universali e teoria della predicazione nel trattato *De universalibus* di William Penbygull," pp. 137–66; A. Hudson, "Wycliffism in Oxford 1381–1411," in *Wyclif in his Times*, ed. A. Kenny (Oxford, 1986), pp. 67–84; M. Keen, "The Influence of Wyclif," in *Wyclif in his Times*, pp. 127–45; Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalibus*, pp. 295–336, *passim*; E. J. Ashworth and P. V. Spade, "Logic in Late Medieval Oxford," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1992), 2:50,2:55–56, and 2:61–62; Conti, "Linguaggio e realtà nel commento alle *Categorie* di Robert Alyngton," pp. 179–241 *passim*; A. De Libera, "Questions de réalisme. Sur deux arguments antiockhamistes de John Sharpe," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 97 (1992): 83–110.

8. Cf. N. W. Gilbert, "Ockham, Wyclif and the 'via moderna'," in *Antiqui und Moderni: Traditionsbewußtsein und Fortschrittsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. A. Zimmermann *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 9 (Berlin 1974), pp. 85–125; P. V. Spade, in J. Wyclif, *On Universals*, pp. vii–xlviii; A. Kenny, *Wyclif*, (Oxford, 1985), pp. 1–30; Kenny, "The Realism of the *De Universalibus*," in *Wyclif in his Times*, pp. 17–29; Kenny, "Realism and Determinism in the early Wyclif," V. Herold, "Wyclifs Polemik gegen Ockhams Auffassung der platonischen Ideen und ihr Nachklang in der tschechischen hussitischen Philosophie," G. Leff, "The Place of Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology," in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, pp. 165–77, 185–215, 217–32; A. D. Conti, "Logica intensionale e metafisica dell'essenza in John Wyclif," *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, 99 (1993): 159–219. Among earlier studies the following should be mentioned: M. H. Dziewicki, "An Essay on Wyclif's Philosophical System," in *Johannis Wyclif Miscellanea Philosophica*, 1:v–xxvii; L. Baudry, "A propos de Guillaume d'Ockham et de Wiclef," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen-âge* 14 (1939):231–51; Robson, *Wyclif*, pp. 141–70.

counterpart of his doctrine of being. In the third and fourth sections I shall discuss the metaphysical setting of Wyclif's logical machinery, focussing on the twin problems of the composition of being and essence, and of the relation between universals and individuals, as his formal distinction was chiefly needed to give an effective tool for the solution of these issues. Finally, the fifth section will deal with Wyclif's formal distinction in its historical development and conceptual ramifications.

I. BEING AND TRUTH

A.

The point of departure of Wyclif's metaphysics is the notion of being (*ens*), as it occupies the central place in his ontology. After Duns Scotus, the real issue was the relationship between being and, on the other side, God and creatures, as Scotus's theory of the univocity of the concept of being was an absolute novelty, full of important consequences for the development of later medieval philosophy.⁹

Wyclif takes many aspects from Scotus' explanation, but he (1) stresses the ontological implications of the Franciscan master's doctrine; (2) uses a little more "traditional" conceptual machinery; and (3) reverses the relationship between *ens* and *verum*. In fact, the general principle which leads him in his description of the inner structure of the reality is that of the homology of philosophical language and the world, according to which our thought spontaneously models itself on reality, so that the contents and articulations of our ideas are fully objective.

Not only does Wyclif, like Scotus, claim that the notion of being is the most general one, a notion entailed by all others—the main object of our intellect—he¹⁰ also states that being is an extra-mental reality predicated of everything (God and creatures, substances and accidents, universal and individual essences) according

9. Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 3, ed. Vaticana, 3:81–103; ed. 8, p. 1, q. 3, ed. Vaticana, 4:171–229. On Scotus's theory of transcendentals see A. B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (Washington D.C., 1946); L. Honnefelder, *Ens in quantum ens. Der Begriff des Seienden als solchen als Gegenstand der Metaphysik nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus* (1979; Münster, 1989); D. C. Langston, "Scotus and Ockham on the Univocal Concept of Being," *Franciscan Studies* 39 (1979), pp. 105–29; S. P. Marrone, "The Notion of Univocity in Duns Scotus's Early Works," *Franciscan Studies* 43 (1983): 347–95; S. D. Dumont, "The Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Fourteenth Century: John Duns Scotus and William of Alnwick," *Mediaeval Studies* 49 (1987): 1–75; O. Boulnois, "Analogie et univocité selon Duns Scot: la double destruction," *Les Études philosophiques* (1989): 347–69.

10. Cf. *De ente in communi*, chap. 1, pp. 1–3: "In primis supponatur ens esse. Hoc enim nec potest probari nec ignorari ab aliquo cognitivo. Ideo necesse est illud primo supponere, cum ens esse in communi sit primo et maxime notum quoad distinctam noticiam elicita a quolibet taliter cognitivo. . . . Impossibile est cognitivum quicquam taliter

to different degrees, since God *is* in the proper sense of the term and any other entity is (something real) only insofar as it shares the being of God.¹¹ The constitutive property of such realities is the capacity of being the object of a complex act of signifying (*omne ens est primarie signabile per complexum*).¹² As a consequence, Wyclif extends the set of referents of the term 'ens' to include in addition to the categorical beings (*entia praedicamentalia*): (1) the things existing only *in potentia* in their causes; (2) collections and groups of things, like villages, towns, cities, lands, and religious orders; (3) states of affairs, both atomic and molecular; (4) past and future states of affairs (*praeteritiones and futurationes*), not seen as *res* that have been real and will be real, but regarded as real in the present as past and future truths; (5) the (molecular) states of affairs which are signified by negative true sentences; (6) hypothetical and tautological truths; and (7) such *res* as death, sin, and the false (*falsitas*) itself.¹³

cognoscere vel scire, quod idem est, nisi sciat ad minimum illud esse, cum cognitio et sciencia, si res est, sit prima possibilis, set eo ipso quod scit de aliquo ipsum esse, habet noticiam transcendentis. . . . Ista enim convertuntur, ens et quod est, ut patet primo *Phisicorum*. Patet igitur, quod claudit contradiccionem quamquam actualiter vel habitualiter cognoscere quicquam esse, nisi cognoscat proporcionaliter ens esse. . . . Cum ergo communissimum possibile sit transcendens, sequitur, quod impossibile est ante ipsum noticia elicita aliquod inferius distincte cognoscere. Confirmatur per hoc quod unumquodque se habet ad cognosci sicut se habet ad esse ex secundo *Metaphisice*, sed ens transcendens est primum existens possibile. Ergo et primum cognoscibile. Si enim aliquod ens movet ad sui noticiam, tunc transcendens noscitur in illo. . . . Ideo indubie eadem sunt principia essendi et cognoscendi. . . . Tanta igitur est communitas entis, quod nullus intellectus potest ferri super non ens. Cum igitur intellectus sit communissima virtus possibilis, sequitur quod ens, ejus objectum primum, sit communissimum cognoscibile potens esse"; *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 1, pp. 2–3; *De intellectione Dei*, chap. 5, pp. 97–98.

11. Cf. *De ente in communi*, chap. 2, p. 29: "Prioritatem enim nature, sicut et essentialis maioritas perfectionis dicit maioritatem entitatis sic, quod proporcionaliter ut aliquod est reliquo perfeccius est ipsum magis ens, ita, quod summe ens est Deus, et gradatim alia, ut sunt ipso plus aut minus participancia—Deus enim, ut copiosius vel minus copiose communicat bonitatem suam creaturis, quibus illabitur, facit eas proporcionabiliter magis et minus entes. Ipse enim est metrum aliis, ut sint, et ut tante sint." See also: chap. 1, pp. 1–2; *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 1, p. 13; chap. 4, p. 30; *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, p. 89; chap. 7, p. 130; chap. 12, p. 279; *De intellectione Dei*, chap. 5, pp. 98–100; *De materia et forma*, chap. 6, p. 213.

12. Cf. *De ente in communi*, chap. 3, p. 36: "Ex istis palam sequitur advertenti quod omne ens est primarie ens signabile per complexum verum et econtra, et per consequens communius quam est ens non est possibile quicquam esse. Prima pars patet ex hoc quod omne ens esse est primarie signabile per complexum. Set omne ens est ens esse juxta proximo dicta, igitur illa pars vera. Non enim esset ens verum, nisi esset signabile per complexum verum, set omne ens est verum, ut prius patet ex dictis, igitur et cetera. Et ex istis elicitur quam amplum sit ens, quia tam amplum sicut est primarie signabile per complexum. Voco autem signabile quod habet aptitudinem ut significetur, ut est omne ens, et patet quod omne ens est primarie signabile per complexum, quia omnis veritas est sic signabilis: omne ens est veritas, igitur et cetera." Cf. *De ente primo in communi*, chap. 1, p. 70.

13. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 1, pp. 2 and 5; *Purgans errores circa veritates in communi*, chap. 1, pp. 1–2; chap. 3, pp. 10–11.

This choice implies a revolution in the standard medieval theory of transcendentals, since Wyclif actually replaces *ens* with *verum*. According to the common belief, among the transcendentals (*ens, res, unum, aliquid, verum, bonum*) being was the primitive notion that all the others stemmed from by adding a specific connotation in relation to something else, or some new determination. So *verum* was nothing but the *ens* itself considered in relation to an intellect, no matter whether divine or human. In Wyclif's view, on the contrary, being is no more the main transcendental and its notion is not the first and simplest, but there is something more basic to which being can be brought back: the *veritas* (or *verum*). According to the English philosopher only what can be signified by a complex expression is a being, and whatever is the proper object of an act of signifying is a *veritas*. Truth is therefore the true name of being itself:

Some truths are *per se* in a category and others are not. It is of the latter that philosophers are talking when they call them "notional entities." It is no objection that one can have different thoughts of the same thing under different aspects. Suppose I call to mind that Peter is an animal, so big, white, a father, a begetter, tired, lying today in bed, rich—when I do all this I am thinking of the ten categories, but in a complex manner as truths in my thought. At other times I think of the same ten categories in a non-complex manner. But these things are not altered because of the change in my thought; they are the context of those aspects from which the changes between complex and non-complex thought take their rise. All this is something that cannot apply to God.¹⁴

In the Middle Ages there were three predominant approaches to the problem of truth: ontological (proper to authors like St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and Grosseteste), epistemological (proper to authors like St. Thomas and Giles of Rome), and linguistical (proper to nominalistic thinkers like Ockham and Buridan). According to the first theory, truth is a thing's being in accordance with the idea in the mind of God. According to the second, the true and the false are properly not in things, but are about things, as the truth is the result of an act of judgement of the intellect which states the combinations or separations found in things themselves. According to the linguistical approach, defining truth is identical with indicating the rules for establishing the truth of propositions, since only propositions are the bearers of truth-value. Wyclif's position derives from that of Grosseteste, which he combines with his notion of being as *significabile per*

14. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, p. 139 (Kenny's trans. pp. 54–55): "Nam aliqua veritas est per se in genere et aliqua non. Et de illa loquuntur philosophi vocantes illam 'ens rationis'. Nec obest de eadem re secundum rationem disparem habere varium intellectum, ut concipiendo Petrum esse animal, quantum, album, patrem generantem, fatigatum in lecto hodie iacentem, divitem, intelligo decem genera sed complexe ut sunt veritates apud considerationem meam. Et eadem decem praedicamenta alias intelligo incomplexe. Nec variantur res illae propter variationem intellectus mei, sed circumstant illas rationes ex quibus capitur variatio intellectus complexi et incomplexi, qui non potest Deo competere."

complexum.¹⁵ As a consequence, everything which is is a truth, and every truth is not something simple, but complex. Absolute simpleness is unknown within Wyclif's world.

From the semantic point of view this means the collapsing of the fundamental distinction of the common Aristotelian theory of meaning, that between simple signs (like nouns) and compound signs (like propositions).¹⁶ From the ontological point of view this entails the uniqueness in type of the *significata* themselves of every class of categorematic expressions.

A proposition, broadly speaking, is a being which signifies in a complex manner. Therefore everything which is can be called a proposition, since everything which is signifies in a complex manner that it is 'something real'.¹⁷

Within Wyclif's world it is the same (kind of) object which both concrete terms and propositions refer to, as the individual substances have to be regarded as (atomic) states of affairs. According to him, from the metaphysical point of view a singular man (*iste homo*) is nothing but a real proposition (*propositio realis*), where the actual existence in time as an individual (*ista persona*) plays the role of the subject, the common nature, that is human nature (*natura humana*), plays the role of the predicate, and the singular essence (*essencia istius hominis*), that is what by means of which this individual is a man, plays the role of the copula.¹⁸

B.

Despite appearances, Wyclif's opinion on this subject is not just a new formulation of the theory of the *complexe significabile*.¹⁹ According to the supporters of the

15. On Grosseteste's theory of truth see S. P. Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste: New Ideas of Truth in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 135–292.

16. Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, chap. 2, 1a 16–19.

17. *Logica*, chap. 5, p. 14: "Propositio large loquendo est *ens complexe significans*; et sic, quia omne quod est significat *complexe se esse*, omne quod est satis bene potest dici *propositio*."

18. Cf. *Logica*, chap. 5, p. 14: "Propositio realis est, ut *iste homo, iste lapis* etc. quia sicut in alia propositione est subiectum et predicatum et copula, sic in *isto homine* est dare istam personam, que est pars subiecta speciei humane, que est tamquam subiectum; et est dare similiter naturam humanam, que essentialiter inest isti homini tamquam predicatum, et realiter predicatur de isto homine. Et est dare essenciam istius hominis, que est realis copula copulans istum hominem cum sua natura. Et sicut in propositione artificiali predicatum dicitur de subiecto, sic in ista propositione reali iste homo est essentialiter et realiter natura humana."

19. On the medieval theory of the *complexe significabile* see H. Elie, *Le complexe significabile* (Paris, 1936); J. Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1972), pp. 148–68; G. Nuchelmans, *Theories of the Proposition* (Amsterdam, 1973), pp. 177–280; F. Bottin, *La scienza degli occamisti* (Rimini, 1982), pp. 157–95.

complexe significabile theory, the same *res* which are signified by simple concrete terms are signified by complex expressions (or propositions).²⁰ In Wyclif's thought, on the contrary, there are no simple things in the world which correspond to simple concrete terms, but simple concrete terms designate real propositions, that is (atomic) states of affairs.

Wyclif derives this notion of *real proposition* from Walter Burley (1275–1347), who had spoken of *propositiones in re* in his *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias* and in his last commentary on the *Ars Vetus*.²¹ Nevertheless, his view is sensibly different from that of the *Doctor Planus et Perspicuus*. According to Burley the *propositiones in re* are the *significata* of statements, just as individuals (both substantial ones and accidental ones) are the *significata* of discrete terms and universal forms the *significata* of common abstract terms. In fact, Burley's world consists of macro-objects, really existing outside the mind, each made up by a primary substance and a host of substantial and accidental forms existing in it and by it. Primary substances, substantial and accidental forms are simple natures, belonging to ten different types of being, or categories. So the macro-object (for example, Socrates or Coriscus) is not a primary substance (as it does not contain the whole being of the macro-object), but an ordered congeries of categorical items. Within the macro-object Burley distinguishes two different definite aspects of it: the aggregates and the *propositiones in re* (or states of affairs). The former are what is signified by common accidental terms such as '*album*', and the latter what is signified by ordinary philosophical sentences such as '*Sortes est albus*'. An aggregate is nothing but the union of one of the countless accidental forms of a macro-object with its primary substance; and a real proposition is the union of two forms of a macro-object (one of which must be substantial) with and by means of the primary substance.²²

Wyclif's real proposition is everything which is, as everything save God is

20. In this article I use the terms 'proposition', 'sentence', and 'statement' as if they were synonymous terms, without distinguishing between what is expressed by a declarative sentence when employed to make a statement and the declarative sentence itself.

21. See Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias* (A.D. 1301), in S. F. Brown, "Walter Burley's *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*," *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): pp. 248–52; *Expositio super Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, Prol. and chap. *De priori*, and *Expositio super librum Perihermeneias Aristotelis*, Prol. in *Expositio super Artem Veterem Porphyrii et Aristotelis* (A.D. 1337) (Venetiis, 1509), fol. 17vb–18va, 47va, 48vb, 66ra–b. On Walter Burley's life and works, see A. Uña Juárez, *La filosofía del siglo XIV. Contexto cultural de Walter Burley* (Madrid, 1978); on his logico-metaphysical theories see A. D. Conti, "Ontology in Walter Burley's last Commentary on the *Ars Vetus*," *Franciscan Studies* 50 (1990): 121–76.

22. This is trivially true not only for propositions *in re* such as *hominem esse animal*—where the two forms connected are those of humanity and animality, and what unites them is each individual substance which instantiates both of them—but also for propositions *in re* such as *Sortem esse hominem*. In this case the two forms involved are the *forma perficiens materiam* of Socrates (that is, his soul) and the correlated *forma declarans quidditatem* (that is, the species *homo*). These two forms are really distinct from each other, but connected together in Socrates himself.

compound (at least of *potentia* and *actus*),²³ and therefore can be conceived of and signified both in a complex (*complexe*) and in a non-complex manner (*incomplexe*).²⁴ When one conceives of a thing in a complex manner one thinks of that thing considered according to its metaphysical structure, and so according to its many levels of being and kinds of essence.²⁵ From this point of view, even the abstract forms, like *humanitas*, are states of affairs, because of their own inner organization and make up (for example, *humanitas* is equal to the “sum” of *animalitas* and *rationalitas*). As a consequence, one can refer to the same entity by means of various types of term: abstract nouns (like ‘*humanitas*’), concrete nouns (like ‘*homo*’), infinitive expressions (like ‘*hominem esse*’), and complex expressions (like ‘*humanitas communis*’, ‘*homo in communi*’, and ‘*species hominis*’), which therefore are synonymous.

Every universal is a form, a truth, or state of things capable of being signified by a complex, just as being a man is a common nature in which all men, in virtue of their species, resemble each other, and correspondingly with other things. That is why professional philosophers have called universals by abstract names, like ‘humanity’ ‘equinity’ and so on for other species. . . . So someone who wants to be made acquainted with the quiddity of universals has to think confusedly and abstractly, by genus and species, of the same thing as he first thought of by means of a complex whose subject is the specific or generic term; thus the species of man is the same as there being a man, the genus of animal is the same thing as being an animal. And each of these is common to its suppositis.²⁶

Wyclif’s metaphysical world, like his physical world, consists of “atomic” objects, that is single essences belonging to the ten different types or categories.²⁷ These metaphysical “atoms” however are not simple, but composite, because they are reducible to something else, belonging to a different rank of reality, and unable to exist by itself: being and *quidditas*, *potentia* and *actus*, matter and form, abstract genera, species and differences. For that reason, everything which one can speak about, or think of, is both a *res* and an atomic state of affairs, while every true

23. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 5, pp. 38–39.

24. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, pp. 55–56; chap. 3, pp. 70, 74, and 84; chap. 6, pp. 118–19.

25. On this topic see below the section on being and essence.

26. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 3, pp. 70 and 74 (Kenny’s trans. pp. 19 and 21): “Omne universale est forma, veritas vel dispositio significabile per complexum, ut esse hominem est natura communis in qua omnes homines specificè conveniunt, et correspondenter de aliis. Unde periti philosophantes vocaverunt universalialia nominibus abstractis, ut ‘humanitas’, ‘equinitas’, et ita de aliis speciebus. . . . Volens igitur manuduci in notitiam de quidditate universalium debet intelligere confuse et abstracte idem per genus et speciem quod intelligit primo per complexum, cuius subiectum est terminus specificus vel terminus generis, ut idem est species hominis et hominem esse, idem genus animalis et esse animal. Et utrumque illorum est commune suis suppositis.”

27. Cf. *Continuatio logicae*, tr. 3, chap. 9, pp. 60–63, and 80. On Wyclif’s atomism see Kenny, *Wyclif*, pp. 4–5, and 62.

sentence expresses a molecular state of affairs, that is the union (if the sentence is affirmative) or the separation (if the sentence is negative) of two (or more) atomic objects.

II. ANALOGY

A.

If being is a reality, it is then clear that it is impossible to affirm its univocity. The *Doctor Subtilis* thought of being as simply a concept, therefore he could describe it as univocal in a broad sense (one name—one concept—many natures). Wyclif, on the contrary, is convinced that the *ens in communi* is an extra-mental reality, so he works out his theory at a different level in relation to Scotus: no more at the intensional level (the *ratio* connected with the univocal sign, or *univocum univocans*), but at the extensional one (the *res* signified by the mental sign, considered as shared by different entities according to different degrees). For that reason, he cannot utilize Aristotelian univocation, which hides these differences in sharing. He prefers to use one of the traditional notions of analogy,²⁸ since the being of God is the measure of the being of the other things (“*Ipse enim est metrum aliis, ut sint, et ut tante sint*”), which are drawn up in a scale with the separate substances at top and matter at bottom.²⁹ Therefore he qualifies being as a *genus ambiguum*,³⁰ borrowing an expression already used by Grosseteste in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*.³¹

28. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 3, p. 25: “Constat namque ex predictis, quod esse generativum est analogum, et constabit, quod nec ens in sua maxima communitate, nec accidens est genus logicum, ‘scilicet natura positiva multis speciebus univoce communicata,’ cuius potissima causa est analogia.” On analogy in Middle Ages, see: C. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo san Tommaso d’Aquino* 2d ed. (Torino, 1950); H. Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World. An Investigation of its Background and Interpretation of its Use by Thomas of Aquino* (Uppsala, 1953); R. M. McNerny, *The Logic of Analogy. An Interpretation of St Thomas* (The Hague, 1961); B. Montagnes, *La doctrine de l’analogie de l’être d’après Saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Louvain-Paris, 1963); R. M. McNerny, *Studies in Analogy* (The Hague, 1968); E. J. Ashworth, “Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): pp. 39–67; EAD., “Equivocation and Analogy in Fourteenth Century Logic: Ockham, Burley and Buridan,” in *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi: Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. B. Mojsisich and O. Pluta (Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 23–43; EAD., “Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth Century Logic: Aquinas in Context,” *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 94–135; EAD., “Analogy, Univocation, and Equivocation in Some Early Fourteenth Century Authors,” in *Aristotle in Britain during the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1996), pp. 233–47.

29. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 3, p. 29.

30. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, p. 25.

31. Cf. Robertus Grosseteste, *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, I, chap. 5, ed. P. Rossi (Firenze, 1981), pp. 118–19.

Wyclif's denying the univocity of being³² does not mean, however, that the analogy of being implies an ordered multiplicity of meanings, as in Thomas Aquinas³³ or in Thomas Sutton.³⁴ Since Wyclif hypostatizes the notion of being and considers equivocity, analogy, and univocity as real relations between things, and not as semantical relations between terms and things,³⁵ his analogy is partially equivalent to the standard Aristotelian univocity. In fact, according to the common interpretation of the opening passage of the *Categories*,³⁶ equivocal terms are correlated with more than one concept and refer to a multiplicity of things sharing different natures, whereas univocal terms are correlated with only one concept and refer to a multiplicity of things sharing one and the same nature. Within Wyclif's system, what differentiates analogy from univocity is the way by which a certain nature (or property) is shared by a set of things: the *analogia* share it *secundum magis et minus* (or *secundum prius et posterius*), the *univoca* share it all in the same manner and at the same degree of "intensity." This is the true sense of his distinction between *genera ambigua* (such as *ens* and *accidens*) and *genera logica* (such as *substantia*).³⁷

Wyclif admits three main types of equivocity: by chance (*a casu*), analogical (which is similar to the standard deliberate equivocity),³⁸ and generic—only the generic one compatible with the univocity proper to the *genera logica*. Equivocals by chance are those things to which it happens that they have the same name, but with different meanings and/or reasons for imposition. Those things are analogical

32. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 3, p. 27.

33. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, a. 5, a. 2.

34. Cf. Thomas Sutton, *Quaestiones ordinariae*, q. 32 and q. 33, ed. J. Schneider (München, 1977), pp. 882, 917–18, and 924.

35. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 2, p. 15: "Ideo certum est, quod descriptio Aristotelis de equivocis, univocis et denominativis consonat rebus extra, que dicuntur equivocata secundum istas rationes et consequenter nominibus rerum, ut dictum est de universalitate, . . . Certum est, quod est dare res ad extra, quarum alicue equivoce, alicue univoce et alicue denominative competunt subiectis; et ille supponuntur esse equivocata, univoca et denominativa, et consequenter ratione illorum signa dicuntur similitudine equivocata et univoca."

36. Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, chap. 1, 1a 1–12.

37. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 3, p. 27, and chap. 4, pp. 30 and 32.

38. The division of the equivocals into *aequivoca a casu* and *aequivoca a consilio* is due to the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle. It was introduced into the Latin world by Boethius (see his commentary on the *Categories*, chap. *De aequivocis*, in *P. L.*, vol. 64, col. 166B–C). The semantical structure of the two groups of equivocals is the same (one name, many concepts, many natures), but in the case of the deliberate equivocals concepts (and therefore natures) are related to each other, so there is some (good) reason for the homonymy. In the late Middle Ages a new kind of deliberate equivocity was worked out, much more similar to Aristotelian univocity than to the standard Neoplatonic deliberate equivocity, and substantially identical to analogy by priority and posteriority (*per prius et posterius*), as it was based on the following semantical structure: one name, one concept, one nature, but shared according to different ways. See Ashworth, "Analogy, Univocation, and Equivocation in Some Early Fourteenth Century Authors," pp. 233–47, esp. pp. 236–42.

which have the same name and are subordinated to a single concept, but according to different ways. Analogical things therefore share the nature signified by that name according to various degrees of intensity. For this reason they differ from generic equivocals, which share the same generic nature in the same way, but have distinct specific natures.³⁹ Wyclif appears to depend here on Burley's last commentary on the *Physics*, where the *Doctor Planus et Perspicuus* affirms that the term 'being' is at the same time univocal and equivocal. It is univocal broadly speaking as a single concept is associated with it; it is equivocal, but not most strictly, because the categorical beings "share" the concept in different ways: directly substances and secondarily accidents.⁴⁰ Unlike Burley, Wyclif hypostatizes the notion of being, and does not seem to allow a distinction between deliberate equivocality using two concepts and the kind of equivocality which involves only a concept. On the other hand, he keeps the same explanatory scheme, since he also confines the Aristotelian definition of equivocality to chance equivocality and considers the other forms of equivocality as equivalent to the Aristotelian univocity.

According to this account, the *ens in communi* is the basic component of the metaphysical structure of each reality, which possess it in accordance with its own nature, value, and position in the hierarchy of created beings.

B.

Unfortunately Wyclif's theory is weak in an important point: he does not clarify the relation between the *ens in communi* and God. On the one hand, being is a creature, the first of all the creatures,⁴¹ on the other hand, God should share it, as (1) being is the most common reality, predicated of all, and (2) according to Wyclif to-be-predicated-of something means to-be-shared-by it.⁴² As a consequence, a creature would in some way be superior to God.

39. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 2, pp. 16–17, 18–19, and 21: "Tercio notandum, quod tres sunt gradus equivocacionis et univocacionis, et per consequens equivocum et univocum contingit in eodem analogo suis gradibus convenire. Quoddam enim est equivocum sine analogia conveniencia equivocatorum in illo equivoco, ut casualiter vocatur unus homo propria nominacione Felix, et alius, quia beatus, dicitur felix; nec est aliqua analogia vel commune proprie intencionis conveniens illis, secundum quod uterque dicitur felix, et taliter sepe contingit in nominibus propriis. . . . In secundo gradu equivocatorum sunt analogia, sive secundum esse, sive secundum operacionem vel aliam proprietatem accidentalem, ut ens contingit analogice substancie et accidenti, cum substancia sit per se ens; et accidens est ens, quia substancie formaliter inheret, et talis analogia est inter Deum et quodcumque causatum, inter ydeam et ydeatum, et breviter inter quodcumque ens intelligibile et actuale causatum extra Deum est talis analogia secundum operacionem proporcionalem. . . . In tercio gradu sunt omnia genera, ut innuit Aristoteles VII *Physicorum* 31°, ubi dicit genus esse tacenter equivocum."

40. Cf. Burley, *Expositio in libros octo Physicorum*, I, tr. 2, chap. 1 (Venetiis, 1501), fols. 12vb–13ra.

41. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 5, appendix prior, p. 44; *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 6, p. 122.

42. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 17.

A few years after Wyclif's death, two authors influenced by his philosophical thought, William Penbygull and Johannes Sharpe, tried to solve this aporia. Penbygull,⁴³ whose metaphysical system is closer to that of Wyclif, denies that the property of being more general implies natural priority. According to him being is a more general reality than God, and so superior to Him, but in spite of this fact God is clearly naturally prior and infinitely more perfect than it.

Sharpe,⁴⁴ distinguishes between *communicatio* (that is, generality) and *participatio* (that is, ontological participation). He considers the latter simply as a sub-case of the former, since according to him a reality *x* is shared (that is, participated) by a reality *y* iff: (a) *x* is more general than *y*, and (b) *x* is the cause of *y*. Therefore, being would be more general than God, but its reality is not shared by Him, as the *ens in communi* is not the cause of God.

III. BEING AND ESSENCE

A.

Among the many kinds of *entia* that Wyclif lists the most important set is that consisting of categorical beings. They are characterized by the double fact of having a nature, and of being the constitutive elements of finite corporeal beings (or atomic states of affairs).⁴⁵

Because of the complexity of their metaphysical structure finite corporeal beings have a four-fold level of reality (*esse*).⁴⁶ The first one is the eternal mental being (*esse ideale*) that every creature has in God, as an object of His mind. The second one is the potential being that everything has in its causes, both universal (genus, species) and particular. It is closely connected with the nature of the individual substance on which the finite corporeal being is founded, and is independent of its actual existence. It is called '*esse essentiae*' or '*esse in genere*'. The third one is just the actual existence in time as an earthly *res*.⁴⁷ The fourth one is the accidental being (*modus essendi accidentalis substantiae*) caused in a substance by the inhering in it of its appropriate accidental forms.

43. Cf. Penbygull, *De universalibus*, in Conti, "Teoria degli universali e analisi della predicazione," pp. 200–1.

44. Cf. Johannes Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalialia*, pp. 11 and 106–10.

45. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 1, pp. 1–6.

46. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, pp. 126–28. In the *De intellectione Dei*, chap. 5, pp. 101–2 on the contrary, Wyclif speaks of a three-fold level of reality, as in this work he equates *esse existere* with *esse accidentale*—on this topic, see G. Leff, *Heresy*, pp. 502–3.

47. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, p. 127: "Tertio habet creatura esse existere individuum, secundum quod esse incipit et corrumpitur pro suo tempore. Et solum illud esse acceptant moderni doctores. . . . Aliud enim est esse et aliud existere."

As the first level of being just mentioned has no distinct reality from God, since it is *realiter* God himself, the main level of being proper of a *res* is the second one, the *esse essentiae*, which causes a thing to be what it is.

The categorical items conceived of as instances of a certain kind of being are called by Wyclif '*essentiae*'. An essence therefore is a being which has a well defined nature, even if the name 'essence' does not make this nature known:

I therefore assume that the name 'essence' is a common name which signifies a nature as determined by a substantial or accidental quality whatsoever. . . . But "the name 'essence'" does not say *what* a thing is; it only says that a thing *is*—which is the first inquiry about a thing, according to the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*.⁴⁸

So '*essentia*' is a term less general than '*ens*', but more general than '*quidditas*', since (1) every essence is a being, and not every being is an essence, and (2) every quiddity is an essence, and not every essence is a quiddity, as individual things are essences, but they are not quiddities.

In his *Tractatus de universalibus*⁴⁹ Wyclif, speaking of the items of the category of substance, distinguishes between singular essence and universal essence (*essentia quidditativa speciei vel generis*). The *essentia singularis* is the form which in union with the matter brings the substantial composite about. The universal essence is the type that the former instantiates; it is present in the *substantia singularis* as a constitutive part of its nature, and it discloses the inner metaphysical structure of the substantial composite.⁵⁰

B.

In view of his position on the problem of being, Wyclif maintains no real distinction between essence and being.⁵¹ Since being is a *genus ambiguum*, it is the stuff that the ten categories modulate according to their own nature, so that everything is immediately something which is.⁵² The essences of creatures do not precede

48. *De materia et forma*, chap. 4, pp. 185–86: "Suppono igitur quod nomen *essencie* sit commune ad significandum naturam, quacunque qualitate substantiali vel accidentali qualificatam. . . . Non autem dicit, *quid* res est, sed solum dicit quod *est*; que est prima questio de re, ex secundo *Posteriorum*." Cf. also *De ente primo in communi*, chap. 3, pp. 88–89; *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 5, p. 43; *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, pp. 128–29.

49. See *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 6, pp. 116–24, *passim*.

50. It is evident that Wyclif is (re)formulating here the distinction between *forma partis* and *forma totius* which goes back to Albert the Great.

51. On the problema of the distinction between essence and being in Wyclif, see A. Kenny, *Wyclif*, pp. 21–22; A. D. Conti, "Essenza ed essere nel pensiero della tarda scolastica," *Medioevo* 15 (1989): pp. 244–51; Conti, "Logica intensionale", pp. 171–81.

52. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 4, p. 30; *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, p. 130.

their beings, not even causally, as every thing is (identical with) its essence. The being of a thing is brought into existence by God at the same instant as its essence, since essence without being and being without essence would be self-contradictory states of affairs.⁵³ In fact, essence without being would imply that an individual could be something of a given type without being real in any way, and being without essence would imply that there could be the existence of a thing without the thing itself.

As a consequence, the *pars destruens* of his theory on being and essence is a strong refutation of the twin opinions of St. Thomas and Giles of Rome. Although Wyclif does not name either the Dominican master or the Augustinian one, it is nevertheless clear from the context that their conceptions are the object of his criticisms.

St. Thomas⁵⁴ had postulated a real composition of essence and *esse* in creatures, in order to account for the dependence of the world upon God at a merely philosophical level. He thought that because the essence of a creature receives its being from God, essence and being are distinct from each other, but related one to the other just as potency (essence) and act (being). Giles pursued the same line of thought, as he admitted a distinction between essence and being as between *res* and *res*.⁵⁵

Wyclif objects to Aquinas that his theory is selfcontradictory.⁵⁶ In fact, if

53. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 6, pp. 122–23: “Patet quod essentiae creaturarum non praecedunt causaliter sua esse, etsi loquamur de esse intelligibili rerum quod est essentia divina; patet quod etiam ipsae res sunt eadem essentia. Et sic est aequaevitas essentiae cuiuscumque rei et sui esse. . . . Videtur quod esse eorum ex aequo ponitur cum sua essentia, cum Deus non potest ponere essentiam, nisi ponat ipsam esse, cum ille sit necessario primus actus naturae divinae, quae est purum esse cuius participatione omne aliud habet esse. Ex istis videtur quod omne esse est essentia et econtra. . . . Confirmatur sic: omne ens est esse. Omnis essentia est ens. Igitur omnis essentia est esse. Minor patet ex hoc quod multa habent esse quae non habent formaliter essentias, ut patet de privationibus et peccatis ac de aliis veritatibus extra genus. Ideo, ens est superius essentia.”

54. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, chap. 4, ed. M. D. Roland-Gosselin (Paris 1948), pp. 34–35; *In I Sent.*, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3; d. 19, q. 2, a. 2; *In II Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 1; *Summa contra Gentiles* I, chap. 22, and II, chaps. 52 and 54; *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3, a. 4; q. 8, a. 1; q. 50, a. 2; q. 75, a. 5; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, book IV, *lectio* 2, ed. R. Spiazzi (Taurini-Romae 1950), nn.549–53 and 558.

55. Cf. Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de esse et essentia*, th. 16, and th. 19, in E. Hocedez, *Aegidii Romani Theoremata de esse et essentia* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 101, 127, 134; *Quaestiones de esse et essentia* (Venetiis, 1503), q. 9, fol. 20vb; q. 11, fol. 24vb; q. 12, fols. 27rb–29ra.

56. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 6, pp. 121–22: “Cum esse sit actus essentiae, patet quod nullo modo praecedit sed potius sequitur suam essentiam cuius est proprium esse, sicut dicunt loquentes in ista materia. Sit igitur A creata essentia et B eius esse formaliter consequens, sed posterius origine vel natura. Et patet quod Deus scit A esse pro illo gradu prioritatis super B, quia aliter non foret verum quod A est prius B. Ex quo sequitur quod A habet esse pro illo gradu prioritatis. Quaero igitur: Utrum illud esse sit B vel esse prius B? Si B, sequitur oppositum dati. Si esse prius B, tunc B est esse accidentale adveniens *enti* in actu. Consequens iterum contra datum, quia supponitur quod B sit esse substantiale primum quod habet A post esse intelligibile aeternum.”

being is the act peculiar to essence, being is logically posterior to essence. Therefore, given a created essence A and its own act of existing B, since A is logically prior to B, A should have acquired being prior to B's having affected A. We can consider this new being of A we have found, and wonder whether it is identical with B or not. If it is, then B is not posterior to A—a result which is in contradiction with the necessary consequence of our assumption. If it is distinct from B, it is prior to B; and then B is accidental in relation to A—an outcome which is in contradiction with our assumption.

As far as Giles's formulation of the theory is concerned, Wyclif observes that if a creature (*homo*) and its being (*hominem esse*) are really distinct as thing and thing, then (1) they differ as two individual substances, and so they are mutually independent, or (2) one of them is naturally prior to the other, and so one entails the other (without being entailed). Both consequences are false, because they contradict the truth that an essence and its being reciprocally imply each other, like a thing and the fact that it is real.⁵⁷ The essence of a *res* is therefore really (*realiter*) identical with its being.

C.

Because of the complexity of the metaphysical composition of the finite corporeal being, such an affirmation is insufficient for answering the question concerning the relationship between essence and being. As every creature has two different kinds of essence and four levels of being, the identity between essence and being cannot be complete; consequently Wyclif speaks of a formal difference (*distinctio* or *differentia formalis*)—that he calls also 'difference of reason' (*distinctio ra-*

57. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 6. pp. 120–21: "Si homo et hominem esse simpliciter distinguuntur, tunc vel sunt omnino distincta ut duo supposita separata, sicut Petrus et Paulus, vel aliter se habent in quodam ordine naturali. Et per consequens vel sunt aequae primo natura, vel unum prius et reliquum posterius. Primo modo non potest poni, cum tunc essent impertinentia et neutrum sequens ad reliquum. Quod est notorie falsum, cum formaliter mutuo se inferunt. Si secundo modo, tunc oportet quod hominem esse, quod sit A, sit prius quam homo, quod sit B, vel econtra, cum impossibile sit duo poni in eodem gradu numero ordinis naturae . . . Sed non potest poni quod A sit posterius B, quia tunc A esset accidentale homini, et, per consequens, praesupponeret hominem. Et cum nihil praesupponit hominem, nisi quod praesupponit eum in existentia, sequitur quod A praesupponeret hominem in existentia. Consequens falsum, cum A sit simpliciter hominem existere. Igitur, non praesupponit hominem existere. Nec requirit ad hoc quod ipsum sit hominem esse cum sit hominem esse, nec econtra homo praesupponit hominem esse, quia nec quoad consequentiam nec quoad causam. Non quoad consequentiam cum mutuo formaliter se inferunt, nec quoad causam quia tunc ex hoc quod est ita quod homo est, homo est. Et sic foret reciprocatio causarum in eadem linea naturae in infinitum, quod est impossibile, cum in mutuo se inferentibus illud quod est simplicius est causaliter prius. Et per consequens prius foret homo quam hominem esse si distinguuntur. Quod notum est esse falsum, cum hominem esse nec potest poni passio hominis nec aliquod novem generum accidentis."

tionis)—between essence and being in creatures. In fact, from the extensional point of view, being and essence of creatures are equipollent, as every being is an essence and *vice versa*; but, from the intensional point of view, there is a formal difference, since the being of a thing presupposes its essence and not *vice versa*.⁵⁸

More precisely, he holds that (1) the *esse ideale* is formally distinct from the singular essence; (2) the actual existence is formally distinct from the universal essence; and (3) the singular essence is formally distinct from the actual existence.

Every creature has many kinds of being, at least one of which is distinct from essence. Take a given Peter: it is certain that his ideal being is distinct from his particular essence. And again his particular existence, which is the being of existence and being thus and so, is distinct from his quidditative essence in species or genus. And so with other cases. . . . It is clear that Aristotle spoke truly when he said that the existence of a particular is distinct from its essence or quiddity; I myself think that this is true even of the angels. But the difficult point is whether the particular essence and its existence are distinct. The Solemn Doctor seems to say that they are, just as light and shining are distinct from each other. . . . And this opinion seems to have greater plausibility when you take essence not as it is often taken, for the quiddity of things, but for essential being preceding the quiddity of a thing. . . . In such cases therefore there is a mental distinction.⁵⁹

The reasons for the first two distinctions are evident; however, the last one is problematic, if one takes into account the real identity of being and essence. The key to the solution of this problem lies in the fact that Wyclif establishes a close connection between singular essence and essential being,⁶⁰ on the one hand, and a real identity between universal and individual (that is, between universal essence

58. Cf. *De materia et forma*, chap. 4, pp. 184–185: “In qualibet autem creatura est distincio, saltem racionis, inter esse et essenciam, . . . Ideo dicunt quod essencia, ens et *esse* differunt secundum racionem, sicut lux, lucens et lucere. Quidquid autem sit de hoc exemplo et sensu concedendum de esse et essencia, videtur mihi quod omne *esse* sit essencia, et econtra; distingwuntur tamen secundum racionem in creaturis, cum *esse* habitum per formam aut racionem specialem alicuius generis presupponit essenciam, et non econtra; cum *esse* contracte dicit huiusmodi racionem. Exemplum est de specie et individuo, que distingwuntur secundum racionem incommunicabilitatis, tamen omnis species est individuum, et econtra.”

59. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, pp. 128–30 (Kenny’s trans. pp. 49–50): “Quaelibet creatura habet multa esse quorum aliquod et essentia distinguuntur; ut notato Petro certum est quod esse suum ideale distinguitur a sua essentia singulari. Et iterum essentia singularis, quae est esse existere et sic esse, distinguitur a sua essentia quidditativa speciei vel generis. Et ita de aliis. . . . Et patet quod Aristoteles verum dicit quod esse existere singularis et sua essentia vel quidditas distinguuntur—quod ego credo esse verum de angelis. Sed difficultas est utrum essentia singularis et suum existere distinguuntur. Et videtur Doctorem Solemnem dicere quod sic, . . . Et ista sententia videtur habere maiorem colorem intelligendo essentiam non pro quidditate rei ut saepe sumitur, sed pro esse essentiali praecedente quidditatem rei. . . . Est igitur in talibus distinctio rationis.”

60. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 7, p. 131.

and singular essence), on the other hand. The *esse essenziale* is the level of being which matches singular essence, while the actual existence is in a certain way accidental to the *essentia singularis*, as the latter is nothing else but the *essentia quidditativa speciei* considered as informing matter.

D.

Wyclif's view can be summarized in three main theses, which were taken up by some fifteenth century authors: (1) the extension of the range of the notion of being; (2) the sharp distinction between being and existence, as the former is the universal condition of every kind of reality and the latter the mode of being peculiar to individual substances; (3) the assimilation of the distinction between essence and being to the distinction between universal and singular.⁶¹ This last point is linked to the core of Wyclif's metaphysics, that is his theory of universals, and it cannot be properly understood without knowing his position on this topic, which therefore needs to be investigated thoroughly now.

IV. UNIVERSALS, INDIVIDUALS, AND PREDICATION

A.

The English master presents his opinion⁶² as intermediate between those of St. Thomas (and Giles of Rome) and Walter Burley.

Thus, some say that every substance is particular, and is universal only by being apprehended universally; just as an artifact is called human, on the basis of a humanity outside itself, and a thing seen, or understood, or otherwise described on the basis of something outside itself. And this opinion is attributed to St. Thomas, Giles and many others. The second way says that the universal is not any of its particulars since it is contrasted with a particular because it is common, or shared, or predicable, and is prior by nature and imperceptible by senses and different in many other ways. . . . And this opinion seems to have been held by Master Walter Burleigh and many others. . . . I, for my part, take a middle way, reconciling the extremes; I agree

61. Cf. for instance Paul of Venice, *Summa philosophiae naturalis*, pars vi, cap. 1, ed. (Venetiis, 1503), fol. 92vb–93va. On this subject see Conti, *Esistenza e verità*, pp. 165–78.

62. On Wyclif's theory of universals see P. V. Spade, intro. in John Wyclif, *On Universals*, pp. xviii–xx; A. Kenny, *Wyclif*, pp. 7–17; A. D. Conti, "Logica intensionale," pp. 181–89; A. De Libera, *La querelle des universaux* (Paris, 1996), pp. 407–11, whose analyses substantially coincide with what I have said in my "Studio storico-critico," in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, pp. 298–305.

with the first opinion that every universal is particular, and *vice versa* though the two are formally distinct from each other.⁶³

Like Giles,⁶⁴ whom he quotes by name, Wyclif recognizes three main kinds of universals: (1) *ante rem*, or ideal universals, that is the ideas in God, archetypes of all that there is; (2) *in re*, or formal universals, that is the common natures shared by individual things; and (3) *post rem*, or intentional universals, that is mental signs by which we refer to the universals *in re*.⁶⁵ The ideas in God are the causes of the formal universals, and the formal universals are the causes of the intentional universals.⁶⁶ On the other hand, just like Burley, Wyclif holds that formal universals exist *in actu* outside our minds; and not *in potentia*, as “moderate” realists thought—even if, unlike the *Doctor Planus et Perspicuus*, he maintains that they are really identical with their own individuals.⁶⁷

In addition to this partition of universals, standard in the Middle Ages, Wyclif introduces another one, which was very successful among his followers, based on the different functions that universal essences perform.⁶⁸ He divides universal into: (1) universals by causality (*causatione*); (2) universals by community (*communicatione*); and (3) universals by representation (*repraesentatione*).⁶⁹ Anything which can bring about several effects is a universal by causality; any essence shared by many things at once is a universal by community; and any sign of the

63. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, pp. 86–87 (Kenny's trans. pp. 27–28): “Ut aliqui dicunt quod omissis substantia est singularis et, ut universaliter apprehenditur, est universalis, sicut opus dicitur humanum et res visa, intellecta vel aliter extrinsece denominata ab humanitate, visione et intellectione extra opus. Et ista sententia imponitur Sancto Thomae, Aegidio et multis aliis. Secunda via dicit quod universale non est aliquod suorum singularium, cum communicabilitate, participatione vel praedicabilitate, prioritatem naturae, insensibilitatem et quotlibet aliis differentiis distinguatur ex opposito a singulari. . . . Et illius opinionis videtur fuisse Magister Burleigh et multi alii. . . . Ego autem per medium incedo concordando extrema, et concedo cum prima opinione quod omne universale est singulare et econtra, licet distinguantur formaliter ab invicem.” On Burley's theory of universals in its historical developments from the traditional approach of the commentary on the *De anima* to the extreme theses of his last works, see Conti, “Ontology in Walter Burley's Last Commentary on the *Ars Vetus*,” pp. 136–45.

64. Cf. Giles of Rome, *Super librum I Sententiarum*, d 19, p. 2, q. 1 (Venetiis, 1521), fol. 110va.

65. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 69.

66. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 65.

67. Cf. *De ente in communi*, chap. 5, p. 58.

68. Cf. for instance J. Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, pp. 49–50; W. Penbygull, *De universalibus*, p. 178; William Milverley, *Compendium de quinque universalibus*, ms. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 103, fol. 32v (transcription in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, Appendix ii, p. 159); and Roger Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ms. London, British Library, Harley 2178, fols. 100vb–101ra (transcription in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalia*, Appendix iv, p. 189)—but each of these authors speak of universals *praedicatione* instead of *communicatione*.

69. Cf. *De logica*, p. 8; *De ente in communi*, chap. 4, pp. 54–55, where he speaks of universals *signacione* instead of *repraesentatione*; and *Tractatus de universalibus*, ch. 1, pp. 15–16.

universals *communicatio* is a universal by representation.⁷⁰ The first two kinds of universals are such in a strict sense, whereas the universals of the third kind are universals in an equivocal sense, only in so far as they refer to the “real” universals:

There are three kinds of universal in general. The first is universal by causality, in the way that the most universal cause is God, and after him created universal things in accordance with the order in which they take their origin from God. The second is universal by community, a thing, for instance, shared by many suppositis, such as human nature and other general and specific natures. The third is universal by representation, like the signs for the universals already mentioned, which are called universals by analogy in the way in which a picture of a man is by analogy called a man.⁷¹

Since this division is based on the different functions a universal essence can accomplish, its principles are not mutually exclusive; *one and the same universal* can be placed into two (or more) branches of the classification at the same time—as in the case of God, who, according to Wyclif, can be considered a universal by causality and by representation.⁷² Moreover, it is clear that: (1) the universals *ante rem* and *post rem* of the first division are universals by representation; (2) the universals *in re* are universals by community; (3) all the genera and species belonging to the ten categories, which are universals by community, are universals by causality too, as they are causes of their own individuals.⁷³ This last statement sheds light on the problem of the ontological status of the formal universals and their relations with the individuals.

70. I assume that the universals by representation are universals, only *qua* signs for the universals by community (and not even by causality) as this is clearly stated in *De ente in communi*, chap. 4, p. 55. I therefore do not agree with Spade (intro. in Wyclif, *On Universals*, p. xviii, and n. 22), who thinks of this “restriction” as arbitrary and pointless. On the contrary, within Wyclif’s theory of language, this restriction is necessary in order to distinguish between discrete and common terms. For the English philosopher, only those terms which *signify* a common essence are common signs, as terms are divided according to the objects they signify—logic being closely connected with ontology (cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 56). It is however a fact that the group of the universals by causality is a sub-set of the universals by community.

71. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, pp. 15–16 (Kenny’s trans. p. 1): “Triplex est maneries universalium in genere. Primum est universale causatione, ut Deus est causa universalissima et post eum res universales creatae secundum ordinem, quo originantur a Deo. Secundum est universale communicatione, ut puta res communicata multis suppositis, ut natura humana et aliae naturae generales et specificae. Tertium est universale repraesentatione, ut signa priorum universalium quae aequivoce dicuntur universalia, sicut homo pictus aequivoce dicitur homo.”

72. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 16.

73. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 16: “Species etiam et genera sunt objecta intellectus, causantia nedum scientiam, sed omnes creaturas singulares.”

B.

According to Wyclif, who depends on Avicenna,⁷⁴ the formal universals are common natures, or *veritates*, in virtue of which the individuals that share them are exactly what they are—just as the human species is the truth or form by which every man formally is a man.⁷⁵ *Qua* natures, they are prior, and so “indifferent” to any division into universals and individuals. Universality (*universalitas* or *communicabilitas*) is as it were their inseparable property (*quasi passio*) and not a constitutive mark of the nature itself.⁷⁶

As a consequence, the formal universals can be conceived of in two different manners: as first intentions, or as second intentions. In the first case, they are natures of a certain kind and are identical with their own individuals (for example, *homo* is the same thing as Socrates). In the second case, they are properly universals (that is something that can exist in many things and can be shared by them), and distinct from their own individuals—considered *qua* individuals—because of the opposite constitutive principles: *communicabilitas* for universals and *incommunicabilitas* for individuals. As a consequence, universals are really (*realiter*) identical-to, but formally (*formaliter*) distinct from their individuals.⁷⁷ In fact, universals are formal causes in relation to their own individuals, and individuals material causes in relation to their universals, since individuals are *partes subiectivae* of the universals.⁷⁸

Thus three different kinds of entities can be qualified as formal universals: (1) the common natures instantiated by individuals—which are things of first intention; (2) the form itself of universality which belongs to a certain common nature when seen in its relation to the individuals—which is a thing of second intention; (3) the thinkability proper to the common nature, by which it is a possible object of our mind:

In an analogous manner ‘universal’, interpreted formally, says three things: first the nature, which is a thing of first intention, secondly the possibility of being common to, or being predicated of many suppositis, which is a thing of second intention; and thirdly the thinkability which is proper to the intellect, since a universal thing is uniquely thinkable in so far as it is non-sensible by a bodily sense.⁷⁹

74. Cf. Avicenna, *Logica* (Venetiis, 1508), fol. 12va; *Liber de philosophia prima*, tr. 5, chap. 1, ed. S. Van Riet 2 vols. (Louvain-Leiden, 1977–1980), pp. 228–29.

75. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 3, p. 84; and chap. 8, pp. 180–81.

76. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 12, p. 276.

77. Cf. *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 5, *appendix posterior*, p. 46; *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, chap. 4, pp. 37–38; and *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, pp. 62–63; chap. 4, pp. 86–87; chap. 10, pp. 208–13. See also *De logica*, chap. 2, pp. 8–10, where Wyclif explains how the five Porphyrian *praedicabilia* derive from the *communicabilitas*.

78. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 10, p. 211.

79. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 64 (Kenny’s trans. pp. 15–16): “Correspondenter ‘universale’, formaliter intellectum, dicit tria: primo naturam quae est res primae

C.

Wyclif accepts the traditional realistic account of the relationship between universals and individuals, and improves it by defining more accurately its logical structure. The formulation he adopts—*universals and individuals are really the same, but formally distinct*—is only another way of saying that universals and individuals are the same identical things if conceived as first intentions, and differ from each other if conceived as second intentions—a thesis already found in Albert the Great's works.⁸⁰ According to Wyclif, universals and individuals are *realiter* the same, but *formaliter* distinct since they share the same empirical reality—that of individuals—but considered as universals and individuals they have opposite constituent principles: *communicabilitas* and *incommunicabilitas* respectively.

On the logical side, this means that not all that is predicated of individuals can be directly (*formaliter*) predicated of universals and *vice versa*. Wyclif thought that a universal of the category of substance could directly receive only the predications of substantial forms more common than itself (that is, those forms which are put on a higher level in the *linea praedicamentalis*).⁸¹ On the other hand, the accidental forms inhering in substantial individuals could be predicated of the substantial form itself that those individuals instantiate only indirectly (*essentialiter*), through and in virtue of the individuals of that substantial form.⁸² So Wyclif's description of the logical structure of the relationship between universals and individuals also demanded a redefinition of predication. In fact, it was necessary to introduce a new kind of predication, unknown to Aristotle, to cover the cases of indirect inherence of an accidental form in a substantial universal, admitted by the theory.⁸³ Therefore Wyclif distinguished three main types of predication, that he conceived as a real relation which holds between metaphysical entities.⁸⁴

intentionis, secundo communicabilitatem vel praedicationem de multis suppositis, quae est res secundae intentionis, et tertio intelligibilitatem propriam intellectus cum res universalis sit appropriate intelligibilis sic quod insensibilis a sensu corporeo." This analysis of the referents of the term '*universale*' is similar to that of Scotus (cf. Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones super universalia Porphyrii*, q. 3, in *Opera omnia*, vol. I, ed. L. Wadding [Lugduni, 1639], pp. 89–90). The only remarkable difference concerns the third sense of the term. In fact, according to the *Doctor Subtilis*, 'universal' interpreted formally says the three following things: (1) common natures; (2) properties of second intention, like being-a-genus, being-a-species, and so on; and (3) the entities which are made up by the union of a common nature with one of these properties of second intention.

80. Cf. Albert the Great, *Liber de praedicabilibus*, tr. 2, chap. 3, 5, and 8, in *Opera omnia*, vol. I (Lugduni, 1651) pp. 15–16, 20, and 24.

81. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 11, p. 239.

82. Cf. *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, chap. 3, p. 35; and *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 11, p. 244.

83. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 37: "Aristoteles autem non admisit praedicationem nisi formalem, vel per se vel per accidens. Ideo conceditur quod Aristoteles ignoravit dictam praedicationem 'Deus est homo'."

84. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, pp. 35–36. On Wyclif's theory of predication see Spade, intro., pp. xxxi–xli; Conti, "Logica intensionale," pp. 210–18.

In the *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi* they are the following: formal predication (*praedicatio formalis*), essential predication (*praedicatio secundum essentiam*), and causal predication (*praedicatio secundum causam*).⁸⁵ In the *Tractatus de universalibus* causal predication has been replaced by habitual predication (*praedicatio secundum habitudinem*)—a kind of predication that Wyclif had already recognized in the *Purgans errores circa universalialia*, but whose position within the main division of the types of predication was not clear.⁸⁶ In the *Tractatus*, formal predication, essential predication, and habitual predication are described as three non-mutually exclusive ways of predicating, each more general than the preceding one (or ones).⁸⁷

One speaks of causal predication when the form designated by the predicate-term is not present in the entity signified by the subject-term, but it is something caused by that entity.⁸⁸ No instances of this kind of predication are given by Wyclif. In the works of two of his Oxonian followers, William Penbygull⁸⁹ and Roger Whelpdale,⁹⁰ however, one finds this example: “*Dies est latio solis super terram*”—and nothing prevents us from assuming it as appropriate for Wyclif as well.

Praedicatio formalis, *praedicatio secundum essentiam*, and *praedicatio secundum habitudinem* are defined almost in the same way in the *Purgans errores circa universalialia* and in the *Tractatus de universalibus*. Formal predication is that predication in which the form designated by the predicate-term is directly present in the entity signified by the subject-term. This happens whenever an item in the categorical line is predicated of something inferior, or an accident of its subject of inherence. In fact, in both of them, the subject-term and the predicate-term refer to the same reality in virtue of the form connotated by the predicate-term itself.

Formal predication is predication in which there is predicated something which formally inheres in a subject. By ‘formally inhering in’ I mean something which identically applies to the subject in respect of the notion by which it is, as ‘a divine person is God’ ‘man is an animal’ and ‘Peter is musical’, and in general whenever a superior is primarily and *per se* predicated of its inferior, or an accident of its subject.⁹¹

85. Cf. *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, chap. 2, in S. H. Thomson, “A ‘Lost’ Chapter of Wyclif’s *Summa de ente*,” *Speculum* 4 (1929): 342. As a matter of fact, the ms. Cambridge, Trinity College, B.16.2, used by Dziewicki for his edition of the work, lacks the second chapter and the first section of the third chapter. S. H. Thomson integrated the text on the basis of the ms. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 4307.

86. Cf. *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, chap. 3, p. 34.

87. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, pp. 35–36. “*Istae tres maneries praedicandi non distinguuntur ex opposito, cum utraque posteriorum sit priori amplior.*”

88. Cf. *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, chap. 2, Thomson, “A ‘Lost’ Chapter,” p. 343: “*Predicacio vero secundum causam est quando predicatum non formaliter vel ydentice est subiectum sed causatur essencialiter ab illo.*”

89. Cf. Penbygull, *De universalibus*, 188.

90. Cf. Whelpdale, *Tractatus de universalibus*, ms. London, Britis Library, Harley 2178, f. 101vb—transcribed in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalialia*, Appendix iv, p. 190.

91. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, pp. 28–29 (Kenny’s trans. p. 4): “*Est autem praedicatio formalis praedicatio qua praedicatur formaliter inexistenti subiecto. Et voco*

To speak of predication *secundum essentiam* it is sufficient that the same empirical reality is both the real subject and predicate, even though the formal principle connotated by the predicate-term differs from that connotated by the subject-term. ‘God is man’ and ‘The universal is particular’ are instances of predication *secundum essentiam*. In fact, the same empirical reality (or essence) which is a universal is also an individual, but the forms connotated by the subject-term and by the predicate-term are different:

Essential predication is predication in which the same essence is the subject and predicate, even though the notion of the predicate differs from the notion of the subject, as in ‘God is man’, ‘Fire is water’, ‘The universal is particular.’⁹²

Finally, one speaks of predication *secundum habitudinem* when the form connotated by the predicate-term does not inhere, directly or indirectly, in the essence designated by the subject, but simply implies a relation to it, so that the same predicate may be at different times truly or falsely spoken of its subject, without there being any change in the subject itself. According to Wyclif, one uses such a kind of predication mainly when one wants to express theological truths such as: that God is known and loved by many creatures, and brings about, as efficient, exemplar, and final cause, many good effects.⁹³

It is evident that habitual predication does not require any kind of identity between the entity signified by the subject-term and the entity signified by the predicate-term; however, formal predication and essential predication do. So the ontological presuppositions of the most general type of predication, implied by the other types, are completely different from those of the other two.

This fact explains why the subsequent generations of Oxford logicians tried to improve Wyclif’s theory of predication by excluding predication *secundum habitudinem* and redefining the other two kinds of predication in a slightly different way. According to Alyngton, Sharpe, Penbygull, Milverley, Whelpdale,

‘formaliter inexistere’ illud quod identice convenit subiecto secundum rationem qua est, ut ‘Persona divina est Deus’, ‘Homo est animal’ et ‘Petrus est musicus’, et breviter quandoque per se primo superius praedicatur de suo inferiori, vel accidens de suo subiecto.” See also, *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, chap. 2, in Thomson, “A ‘Lost’ Chapter,” p. 342.

92. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 30 (Kenny’s trans. p. 4): “Praedicatio vero secundum essentiam est praedicatio in qua eadem essentia est subiectum et praedicatum, licet alia sit ratio praedicati quam sit ratio subiecti, ut hic: ‘Deus est homo’, ‘Ignis est aqua’, ‘Universale est singulare’.” See also, *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, chap. 2, in Thomson, “A ‘Lost’ Chapter,” pp. 342–43.

93. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 1, p. 34: “Tertia est praedicatio secundum habitudinem ex qua secundum genus adveniente subiecto non oportet ipsum ut sic esse proprie mobile, ut contingit rem intelligi, amari, varie causare et acquirere sibi ubicationem, quandalitatem et quotlibet relationes rationis, sine hoc quod ipsum ut sic moveatur vel sit mobile.” See also, *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, chap. 3, p. 34.

and Tarteys, predication is divided only into formal and *secundum essentiam*. Predication *secundum essentiam* shows a partial identity between subject and predicate, which share some, but not all, metaphysical component parts, and does not require that the form connotated by the predicate-term is directly present in the essence denoted by the subject-term. Formal predication, on the contrary, requires such a direct presence. If the form connotated by the predicate-term is intrinsic to the nature of the subject, then the predication is *formalis essentialis*, while if it is extrinsic, the predication is *formalis accidentalis*. '*Homo est animal*' is an instance of formal essential predication; '*Sortes est albus*' is an instance of formal accidental predication. Unlike Wyclif, who applied predication *secundum essentiam* to second intentions, these later philosophers thought that it held also when applied to first intentions. So they affirmed that it was possible to predicate of the universal-man (*homo in communi*) the property of being white, if at least one of its individuals was white. However they made sure to use as a predicate-term a substantival adjective in its neuter form, because only in this way can it appear that the form connotated by the predicate-term is not directly present in the subject, but it is indirectly attributed to it, through its individuals. Therefore they acknowledged the proposition '*homo in communi est album*' as a true one, if at least one of the existing men was white. According to them the *praedicatio formalis essentialis* and the *praedicatio formalis accidentalis* would correspond to Aristotle's essential and accidental predication. But, as a matter of fact, they agreed with Wyclif in regarding predication *secundum essentiam* as more general than formal predication. As a consequence, in their theories the formal predication is a particular type of essential predication. This means that they implicitly recognized a single ontological pattern, founded on a partial identity, as the basis of every kind of predicational statement. But in this way, the *praedicatio formalis essentialis* and the *praedicatio formalis accidentalis* are very different from their Aristotelian models, as they express degrees in identity as well as the predication *secundum essentiam*.⁹⁴

The final result of Wyclif's "revolution" is therefore a fully developed system of intensional logic, which his followers added to (or, better, allowed to overlap with) the standard extensional system, inherited from Aristotle. As a result: (1) the copula of the propositions which they deal with cannot be extensionally interpreted, as it does not mean that a given object is a member of a certain set, nor that a given set is included in another, but it means degrees in identity; and (2) individuals and universals, considered as metaphysical compounds, appear to be hypostatisations of intensions, since individuals come from the *species specialissimae* by means of *rationes suppositales* just as species come from superior genera by means of the *differentiae specificae*. Only in virtue of renouncing an extensional approach to the matter were Wyclif and his followers able to give a logically satisfactory solution of the problem of the relationship between universals and

94. On this subject see Conti, "Il trattato *De universalibus* di William Penbygull," pp. 145–64; Conti, "Studio storico-critico," in Sharpe, *Quaestio super universalialia*, pp. 309–17, and 323; Conti, "Linguaggio e realta," pp. 199–208.

individuals, which had always been the most difficult issue for medieval forms of Realism.

V. THE FORMAL DISTINCTION

A.

The principle which inspires Wyclif's philosophy is that of the analytic correspondence between the logical connections in discourse and the framework of reality. He was firmly convinced that thought is spontaneously modelled on reality itself, so that it reproduces reality in all its elements, levels, and inner relations. Therefore, the best way of understanding the world lay for Wyclif in an accurate investigation of mental notions and conceptual schemes, as they show the structure of reality. The tool that he utilised in building up his system was the formal distinction, a "family" of identity-concepts (more precisely: partial-identity-concepts, since no essence is totally identical with another) that he drew from Duns Scotus's two-fold notion of formal distinction. In fact, the *Doctor Subtilis* gave two different definitions of formal distinction. He describes it in the *Lectura*⁹⁵ and in the *Ordinatio*⁹⁶ as a symmetrical relation between two entities which cannot exist separately:

—two entities x and y are formally distinct iff (a) both of them are constitutive elements of the same reality, but (b) neither of them can exist by itself, and (c) neither as part of the definition of the other—;⁹⁷

but in the *Reportata Parisiensia*⁹⁸ he defines it as an a-symmetrical relation between a whole reality and one of its constitutive elements:

95. Cf. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* I, d. 2, p. 2, q. 1–4, ed. Vaticana, 16: 216.

96. Cf. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, p. 2, q. 1–4, ed. Vaticana, 2: 356–57; *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 6, ed. Vaticana, 7: 483–84.

97. Cf. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* I, d. 2, p. 2, q. 1–4, ed. Vaticana, 16: 216: "Multiplex est unitas in rebus. Primo est unitas aggregations, post quam est unitas unius per accidens, ut 'hominis albi', post quam est unitas compositi, post quam est unitas simpliciter. Et in unitate simplici secundum rem adhuc potest esse differentia formalis: sicut unitas generis et differentiae, licet sit secundum rem in re simplici, tamen non sunt formaliter idem, quia idem formaliter sunt quae sic se habent quod in definitione unius cadit alterum; nunc autem si genus et differentia definirentur, in definitione unius non caderet aliud. Sic etiam si definiretur deitas, in eius definitione non caderet paternitas. Igitur post unitatem realem est unitas formalis, qua aliqua sunt idem formaliter et non solum realiter. Licet igitur aliqua sint idem realiter, tamen possunt differre secundum suas rationes formales, fundatas et ortas in re, et non per operationem intellectus."

98. Cf. Duns Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia* I, d. 33, qq. 2–3, and d. 34, q. 1, ed. Wadding (1639), 11: 186–89, and 190.

—the entity x is not formally identical with another entity y iff (a) y is not part of the definition of x , but (b) x and y are one and the same thing in reality.⁹⁹

Scotus uses the formal distinction in order to illustrate (1) how the genus and the specific difference, and the specific nature and the individual difference are linked together, and (2) the relations which hold between the divine nature and its three Persons, and between the human soul and its faculties.¹⁰⁰

B.

Wyclif explains the notion of *distinctio* (or *differentia*) *formalis* in the *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi* (fourth treatise of the first book of the *Summa de ente*) and in the later *Tractatus de universalibus*. The two versions differ from each other in some important points, and are both unsatisfactory, as Wyclif's definitions of the different types of distinction are rather ambiguous. He writes in the *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*:

It must be noted that difference, or distinction, can be taken in six senses, and consequently identity too. (i) Some things differ because of their supposits. And this in two ways: (i.a) so that they are different singular essences, like two men; or (i.b) so that they are the same singular essence, like the three divine Persons, or three things of the same soul (that is, memory, reason, and will). (ii) Some things differ by nature; and this in two ways: or (ii.a) so that they are the same singular supposit, like matter and its substantial form, and human nature and divine nature in Christ; or (ii.b) so that they are totally separable from each other, like form and alien matter. (iii) Some things differ in species, . . . like man and donkey. (iv) Some things differ because of the inhering genus, or highest genus, like spirit and body, substance and quality. (v) Some things differ more than in genus, like categorical beings and extra-categorical truths. (vi) And finally some things differ because of a notional difference only. It happens when they are the same in essence, without any real distinction, but one differs formally (that is, by means of a form) from

99. Cf. Duns Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia* I, d. 33, p. 186: "Dicuntur autem aliqua non habere identitatem formalem, quando unum non est de per se, et primo intellecto alterius, ut definitio, vel partes definitionis de intellectu definiti; sed quando neutra includitur in formali ratione alterius, licet tamen sint eadem realiter."

100. On Scotus' formal distinction see: M. J. Grajewski, *The Formal Distinction of Duns Scotus* (Washington D.C., 1994); R. G. Wengert, "The Development of the Doctrine of the Formal Distinction in the *Lectura prima* of John Duns Scotus," *The Monist* 49 (1965); 571–87; A. B. Wolter, "The Formal Distinction" in *John Duns Scotus 1265–1965*, ed. J. K. Ryan and B. M. Bonansea (Washington D.C., 1965), pp. 45–60; M. McCord Adams, "Ockham on Identity and Distinction," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 25–43; A. B. Wolter, *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, ed. M. McCord Adams (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990), pp. 27–48.

the other, like more common and less common. All these differences can be reduced to these two: real difference and notional difference.¹⁰¹

According to this text, there are two main kinds of difference, *seemingly* the same as those recognized by the moderate realists of the end of the thirteenth century: the real difference (the cases i–v) and the difference *secundum rationem*—or formal difference, as Wyclif will call it later on (the last case). But things are distinct in the first way when: (1) each one can exist without the other (cases i, ii.b, iii–v); or (2) being complementary, have got dissimilar natures (the case ii.a).¹⁰² Things are formally distinct from each other when: (1) they are one and the same essence in reality; but (2) their own formal principles are not the same—as it happens to a nature and its instantiations (that is, its *supposita*). Therefore, Wyclif’s *differentia secundum rem* and *differentia secundum rationem* are not the same as the traditional ones. Wyclif’s real difference, in addition to the Aristotelian numerical, specific, generic, and *plus-quam* generic differences,¹⁰³ also covers the Scotistic formal distinction as defined in the *Lectura* and in the

101. *Purgans errores circa universalia in communi*, chap. 4, p. 38: “Notandum quod sextupliciter potest accipi differentia vel distinctio aliorum, sicut et idemptitas. <i> Aliqua enim distinguuntur suppositis, et hoc dupliciter: <i.a> vel sic, quod sint diverse essencie singulares, ut duo homines; <i.b> vel sic, quod sint eadem essencia singularis, ut persone divine, et tres res eiusdem anime. <ii> Aliqua autem distinguuntur secundum naturam, et hoc dupliciter: <ii.a> vel sic, quod sint idem suppositum singulare, ut generaliter materia et sua forma substancialis, et natura humana, ac natura divina in Cristo; <ii.b> vel sic, quod sint omnino separabiles, ut forma et materia aliena. <iii> Aliqua vero distinguuntur specie, . . . ut homo et asinus. <iv> Aliqua autem distinguuntur genere intrinseco vel generalissimo, ut spiritus et corpus, substancia et qualitas. <v> Aliqua autem plus quam genere: ut ens predicabile, et veritas extra genus. <vi> Set postremo distinguuntur aliqua solum secundum rationem, quando sunt idem essentialiter sine distincione reali, unum tamen non est formaliter reliquum, ut communius et suum per se inferius. Possunt autem omnes iste difference reduci ad differentiam secundum rem, et differentiam secundum rationem.”

102. On the relationship between matter and form—the only two “things” which differ from each other in the sense ii.a—see *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 5, p. 43: “Tercio patet, quod una et eadem essencia est materia, forma et unio illarum. Materia enim non est nisi essencia absoluta posse existere vel informari, et forma non est nisi eandem essenciam actualiter existere vel informari, et unio istorum non est nisi eandem essenciam esse unum ex hoc, quod formaliter est id, quod est ad eius potenciam, et totum hoc est illa essencia. Ex quo patet, quod quelibet essencia est perpetua; quia non posset desinere esse, nisi per anichilacionem, sed nichil potest anichilari, ut hic supponitur; ergo etc. Secundo patet, quod accidit essencia, quod sit ignis, aer vel aliud corpus quodcumque, ymo quod sit continuum vel discretum. Nam materia prima non corrumpitur propter generaciones huiusmodi formarum; sed manet sub qualibet, contrariis formis sub diversis temporibus; ergo et essencia, que est illa materia, cum materia dicit ultra essenciam relacionem ad formam in communi. Tercio patet, quod quelibet essencia est terna, quia quelibet talis est tres res, quarum quelibet est eiusdem communis essencia, scilicet potencia, actus et unio eorum etc.”

103. According to the common view, the *plus-quam*-generic difference was the difference which held between the *res* of the sub-lunar world and the heavenly ones, as the former were conceived of as corruptible and the latter as uncorruptible. In Wyclif’s view, this difference held between the categorical beings and the non-categorical ones, as the former have a distinctive nature and the latter do not.

Ordinatio—considering that the second sense of the *differentia secundum supposita* (the case i.b) is a reformulation of the first kind of Scotus's formal distinction, where the first two requisites have been so modified: two (or more) entities differ *secundum supposita* iff they (a) are the same single essence but (b) can be regarded as independent realities. As far as the difference *secundum rationem* is concerned, it is evident that it does not mean real identity and conceptual distinction, as it was commonly maintained, but it is a sort of transcription of the Scotistic formal distinction as defined in the *Reportata Parisiensis*.¹⁰⁴ In the *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, Wyclif was therefore trying to incorporate the novelties of the Scotistic approach to the problem of identity and distinction into the traditional Aristotelian framework.

Six years later, in the *Tractatus de universalibus* Wyclif was to modify his attitude, adopting the opposite point of view, as he attempted to include the Aristotelian theory within a Scotistic context.¹⁰⁵ According to the *De universalibus* there are three main types of difference (or distinction): real-and-essential; real-but-not-essential; and formal (*formaliter vel secundum rationem*).¹⁰⁶ Wyclif does not define the real-and-essential difference, but identifies it through a rough account of its three sub-types. The things which differ really-and-essentially are those things which differ from each other or (a) in genus, like man and quantity, or (b) in species, like man and donkey, or (c) in number, like two human beings.¹⁰⁷

The real-but-not-essential difference is more subtle than the first one, since it holds between things which are the same single essence, and really differ from each other nevertheless—like memory, reason, and will, which are one and the same soul, and the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, who are the one and same God.¹⁰⁸

The third main type of distinction is the formal one. It is described as the difference by which things differ from each other even though they are constitutive elements of the same single essence or supposit:

104. Cf. for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 28, a. 3; q. 30, a. 2; Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* X, q. 7, ed. R. Macken (Leiden, 1981), p. 165; Walter Burley, *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*, q. 4, p. 273.

105. Assuming that the *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi* was written in 1367–1368 (cf. W. R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclif*, p. 20) and the *Tractatus* in 1373–1374 (cf. Mueller's intro. to his critical ed. pp. xxii–xxx).

106. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, pp. 90–92.

107. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, pp. 90–91. "Notandum primo quod 'diversitas' vel 'distinctio' multipliciter intelligitur, . . . Aliqua enim differunt secundum genus, quae est maxima differentia rerum per se in genere, ut homo et quantitas, alia in specie, ut homo et asinus, et alia in numero, ut Petrus et Paulus. Et quaelibet talis est differentia essentialis."

108. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, p. 91: "Secundo differunt aliqua differentia subtiliori, licet sint eadem essentia singularis. Ut tres res spiritus creati, scilicet memoria, ratio et voluntas, distinguuntur realiter, licet sint eadem substantia, sicut spiritus increatus est tres res, quarum quaelibet est idem spiritus. Ista autem differentia est realis, licet non essentialis vel substantialis."

The third difference is the formal difference, or notional difference, by which things may differ even though they are all alike within the same single essence or supposit.¹⁰⁹

According to Wyclif, this is the case for: (1) the concrete accidents inhering in the same substance, as they coincide in the same particular subject, but differ from each other because of their own natures; (2) the matter and substantial form of the same individual substance; (3) what is more common in relation to what is less common, like (a) the divine nature and the three Persons, (b) the world and this world, and (c) among the categorical items belonging to the same category, a superior item and one of its inferiors.¹¹⁰

This account of the various types of difference is more detailed than the preceding one, but not more clear: what is the difference between the definition of the real-but-not-essential difference and that one of the *differentia formalis*? What feature do all the kinds of formal distinction “agree” in? In any case, some points are obvious: (1) the real-and-essential difference matches the traditional real difference; (2) the real-but-not-essential difference and the first sub-type of the formal difference (that is the distinction which holds between two—or more—concrete accidents of the same singular substance) are two slightly different versions of the Scotistic formal distinction as defined in the *Lectura* and in the *Ordinatio*; (3) the third sub-type of the formal difference is a reformulation of the Scotistic formal distinction as described in the *Reportata Parisiensia*.

In relation to the analysis proposed in the *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*, the main apparent dissimilarities are the following: (1) There are three general kinds of differences instead of two, since the second case of the *differentia secundum supposita* of the *Purgans errores* has become the real-but-not-essential difference of the *De universalibus*—as the examples employed show; (2) Notwithstanding the presence of the qualification of ‘real’, the real-but-not-essential difference is closer to the formal difference than the second case of

109. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, p. 91 (Kenny’s trans. p. 29): “Tertia est differentia formalis vel secundum rationem, qua res differunt, licet conveniant in eadem singulari essentia vel supposito.”

110. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 4, pp. 91–92: “Differentia formalis vel secundum rationem capit multiplicem divisionem, ut aliqua differunt secundum formam accidentalem, licet conveniant in subiecto. Ut quantitas, qualitas, relatio et cetera genera convenientia in eodem subiecto singulari, sunt omnia idem subiecto singulari, licet in suis naturis differant in genere. . . . Secundo differunt aliqua formaliter vel secundum rationem quando sunt idem suppositum sed naturae incompletae quantumcumque dispaes, ut materia et forma substantialis. . . . Tertio modo differunt aliqua secundum rationem communioris et minus commune. Et sic ponunt quidam distinctionem rationis inter naturam divinam et personam, cum natura sit communicabilis multis personis, non sic autem persona. Secundo sic distinguitur mundus simpliciter ab isto mundo, cum species mundi creditur de Dei potentia posse plurificari etsi non simul vel successive. . . . Tertio sic distinguitur universale superius et suum inferius; secundum rationem amplioris communicabilitatis. Et sic differt genus a sua specie et generaliter omne superius a suo inferiori”.

the *differentia secundum supposita*. In fact, in the *Tractatus de universalibus* the term 'essence' has the technical meaning of *real entity with a given nature*, and so it is equivalent to '*res*'. Consequently, (in the translation) 'real' is the qualifier of 'not essential', and not vice versa; and (3) The first case of *differentia secundum naturam* (a sub-type of real difference in the *Purgans errores circa universalialia in communi*) is seen as a sub-type of formal distinction.

C.

If the foregoing account is correct, Wyclif's last formulation of the difference-theory and his theory of universals and predication are linked together, and rest upon a sort of componential analysis, where things substitute for lexemes and ontological properties for semantic features. In such a world, difference (or partial identity) is the unique kind of transcendental relation holding among world objects, as in virtue of its metaphysical composition everything is at the same time partially identical-to and different-from any other. When the objects at issue are categorical items and among what differentiates them there is the *esse existere individuum*, the objects differ *essentialiter*. If the objects share the same *esse existere individuum* and what differentiates them is (at least) one of their *concrete* metaphysical components (or features), then the objects differ *realiter*, whereas, if what differentiates them is one of their *abstract* metaphysical components, then they differ *formaliter*.

Formal distinction is therefore the tool by means of which the dialectic one-many internal to the world objects is regulated. It explains why one and the same thing is at the same time an atomic state of affairs, and how many different beings can constitute just one thing.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Late medieval Nominalists drew a sharp distinction between things as they exist in the extra-mental world and the various forms by means of which we think of and talk about them. While the world consists only of two kinds of individuals—substances and qualities—the concepts by which they are grasped and analysed are universal and of ten different types. Nor do the relations through which we connect our notions in a proposition closely correspond to the real links which join individuals in a state of affairs. Thus, our conceptual forms do not coincide with the elements and structures of reality, and our knowledge does not reproduce its objects, but merely *regards* them.

Wyclif maintained that such an approach to philosophical questions was misleading and deleterious. Many times in his works he expressed the deepest

hostility to such a tendency.¹¹¹ He thought that only on the ground of a close isomorphism between language and world could the signifying power of terms and statements, the possibility of definitions, and finally the validity and universality of our knowledge be explained and ensured. So the nucleus of his metaphysics lies in his trust in the scheme *object-label* as *the* general interpretative key of every logico-epistemological problem. Wyclif firmly believed that language was an ordered collection of signs, each referring to one of the constitutive elements of reality, and that true (linguistic) propositions were like pictures of their inner structures or/and mutual relationships. From this point of view, universals are conceived of as those real essences common to many individual things which are necessary conditions for our language to be significant. Wyclif thought that, by associating common terms with such universal realities, the fact could be accounted for that each common term can stand for many things at once and can label all of them in the same way.

This conviction explains the main characteristic of his philosophical style, to which all his contributions can be traced back: a strong “propensity” towards hypostatisation. Wyclif methodically replaces logical and epistemological rules with ontological criteria and references—as shown by his theory of being. Not only does he consider *ens in communi* a reality, he also: (1) equates being with truth, so stating the metaphysical complexity of every created being;¹¹² (2) conceives of second intentions as real determinations joined to the modes of being of the extra-mental things;¹¹³ and (3) thinks of logic as turning on structural forms, independent of both their semantical contents and mental acts by which they are grasped.¹¹⁴ It is through these forms that the network connecting the basic constituents of the world (individuals and universals, substances and accidents, concrete properties, like being-white, and abstract forms, like whiteness) is disclosed to us. His peculiar version of analogy and his theory of distinction are logically

111. Cf. for instance *De ente praedicamentali*, chap. 6, p. 50; chap. 8, pp. 76–78; *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, pp. 65 and 68; chap. 15, pp. 359–371, *passim*.

112. Cf. for instance *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, pp. 55–56: “Redeundo igitur conceditur res universales vere significare seipsas dum sunt obiecta intellectus, et vere praedicantur et subiciuntur. Intelligunturque nunc complexe et nunc incomplexe, et, ut sic, sunt veritates complexa vel incomplexa. Sicut enim intellectus comprehendit Deum et componit—secundum esse intelligibile—unam rem cum alia, sic et complectitur vel incomplexetur apprehensum. Et, ut sic, dicitur res extra complexum vel incomplexum et secundarie signum eius. Actus autem complectendi vel simplicis apprehensionis vocatur nunc complexio vel incomplexio, et nunc complexus vel incomplexus.”

113. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 67: “Dico igitur quod species vel genus, de quo loquitur Aristoteles, est intentio praedicabilis de multis in quid. Sed non intelligamus per ‘intentionem’ conceptum animae humanae vel similitudinem ab ea fictam, sed effectum creabilem quem principaliter intendit natura.” See also, p. 68.

114. Cf. *Tractatus de universalibus*, chap. 2, p. 56: “Et sic Aristoteles mirabili subtilitate complectitur in logica tam notitiam signorum quam notitiam signatorum. Cum enim logica sit medium inter grammaticam et metaphysicam, oportet ipsam participare conditionibus utriusque, tractando principaliter de rebus, cum sit medium ad metaphysicam, et secundarie de signis, cum sit finis grammaticae.”

necessary requirements of this philosophical approach. It would be impossible to find out any kind of unity in the multiplicity of beings without them. They are two absolute novelties in late medieval philosophy, and certainly the most important contributions of Wyclif to the thought of his times together with his analysis of predication.

Still, Wyclif's system, so rigorous in its general design, contains—as we have seen—unclear and aporetic points that Alyngton, Sharpe, Penbygull, and other Oxonian logicians later attempted to remove. Although an influential thinker, Wyclif pointed to the strategy Realists of the end of the Middle Ages were to adopt rather than fully developing it.

