

Richard Rufus on Naming Substances

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Some names, specifically the proper names by which people are called, are considered “a mess” by at least one prominent contemporary philosopher.¹ Looking at the matter from the perspective of medieval philosophy, we might say that the reason such names are semantically ill-behaved is that the act of naming from which they derive is not one of adequate naming. Moreover, supposing that all manner of beings, including people, are

The research that led to this paper could not have been undertaken without the wonderful generosity of Professor Rega Wood, the general editor of Rufus’s works. She has provided me with transcriptions of entire short treatises by Rufus and of sections of his longer works. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to her for having graciously allowed me to benefit from an awesome amount of unpublished work. For her astute and enormously helpful comments on an earlier paper, from which this one derives, I owe her even further thanks. That paper served as the basis for a talk delivered at a session of the Tenth International Congress of Medieval Philosophy, held at Erfurt, August 25–30, 1997.

I am, moreover, deeply grateful to the editor of this journal, Professor Scott MacDonald, for having greatly enhanced the crispness of my style and thereby improved the clarity of the present paper.

1. Although I quote from a number of Rufus’s works, there are two on which this paper is primarily based, both written when Rufus was a master of Arts in Paris, before 1238. I refer to the first as the *Urmetaphysics*. The second is a two-part treatise which Professor Wood has called the *Contra Averroem*. The *Urmetaphysics* is Rufus’s first commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, only very recently discovered by Professor Wood. It is to be distinguished from his second *Metaphysics* commentary which I refer to as the *Main Metaphysics Commentary*. The *Contra Averroem* is comprised of “De ideis” and “De causa individuationis,” of which “De ideis” deserves a special mention. Discovered by Professor Timothy Noone, it was first transcribed by Noone and Wood in 1990. Recently, Professor Noone has kindly sent me a revised transcription, for which I am very grateful. This transcription is quoted here.

With the exception of “De ideis,” all quotations from Rufus are based on transcriptions made or revised by Professor Wood. Citations will indicate the relevant folio numbers of the manuscript or manuscripts on which the transcription is based. The manuscript itself, when first referred to, will be identified by the name of the city in which the library which houses it is located, the abbreviated name of the library, and its codex number.

“All in all, proper names are a mess and if it weren’t for the problem of how to get the kids to come for dinner, I’d be inclined to just junk them” (David Kaplan, “Dhat,” *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 9, ed. Peter Cole; repr. in *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*, ed. P. French et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979, pp. 383–400, p. 386).

“things,” we might let adequate naming be governed by the following principle: an agent adequately names a thing if and only if, knowing its proper nature, she bestows a name on the thing by considering that nature. Obviously, on this principle, the acts of naming from which people in our societies derive their names are not acts of adequate naming.

Still taking a medieval stance, we might grant that only a universal—a natural kind, for example—is such that its proper nature is knowable. If one grants this, one would have to conclude that only universals can be adequately named. A thirteenth-century Aristotelian, interpreting Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology as philosophers then were inclined to do, might take a position of this sort. Alternatively, we might grant that not only universals but also individuals are such that their proper nature is knowable. If one takes this line, one would have to conclude that individuals, too, can be adequately named. A Christian philosopher, believing that the proper nature of an individual is knowable since it is known by God, might take a position of this sort.

Richard Rufus was both an Aristotelian philosopher of the thirteenth century and a Christian philosopher.² He granted the principle of adequate naming. It is hardly surprising, then, that he was attracted by both the Aristotelian and Christian positions on the issue of what can be adequately named. What is surprising, however, is that he changed his mind on the subject, first supporting the purely Aristotelian viewpoint, and, shortly thereafter, the more Christian one. He thus changed his mind on the possibility of adequately naming individuals, though not on that of adequately naming universals, a possibility he had no reason to question. In this paper I examine Rufus’s views on these issues at the convergence of metaphysics, epistemology, and semantics. I discuss both his views on universals, which he consistently maintained, and on individuals, which he revised.

First, however, I need to qualify my description of Rufus’s position. For, although he admitted extra-mental universals, Rufus thought it improper to call them “universals,” preferring instead to call them “common natures.” According to him, the term “universal” properly denotes not a common nature but its idea.³ More importantly, where he discusses the

2. There are a number of articles on Richard Rufus and one book-length study: *Richard Rufus of Cornwall and the Tradition of Oxford Theology*, by Peter Raedts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). That very interesting book, which contains many excerpts from Rufus’s works, still provides a valuable introduction to Rufus’s life, works, and thought. However, it needs updating as research on Rufus has made much progress since it was written. Fortunately, that need will soon be met. Professor Wood, the person who has contributed most to recent research on Rufus, is working on a book: *Richard Rufus of Cornwall and the Origins of Scholasticism*. Eagerly awaited, that book will establish the authenticity of a number of works by Rufus recently discovered by Professor Wood (some of which are quoted here).

3. “Prout [forma] consideratur ut ens in multis . . . proprie significatur per hoc quod dico ‘commune.’ . . . Ipsa autem secundum hoc esse potest dici universale, licet minus proprie quam secundum esse quod habet in anima” (*Main Metaphysics Commentary*, bk. VII, Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q290, fol. 21rb, ed. R. Wood).

possibility of adequately naming a thing, be it a common nature or an individual, he considers only things in the category of substance. Thus, what we find in his writings are discussions of the possibility of adequately naming, not common natures or individuals in general, but those common natures that are secondary substances (genera or species in the category of substance) and those individuals that are primary substances. Finally, what I am calling “adequate naming,” he would have called simply “naming,” for he considered, in effect, that only adequate naming is, properly speaking, naming and that only a name that is the result of adequate naming, a name which has been bestowed on a thing by an agent considering the thing’s nature, is, properly speaking, a name.⁴ I do not follow Rufus’s usage here, however. Rather than packing the notion of adequate naming into the meaning of the term “name,” I prefer to speak of adequate naming.

Given these qualifications, we can state the views I propose to examine as follows. According to Rufus, it is unquestionable that we can adequately name secondary substances, but it is questionable whether we—or any intelligent being—can adequately name primary substances. On the latter issue Rufus changed his mind, first thinking it impossible that a primary substance be adequately named, but ultimately preferring the view that primary substances are adequately nameable by God, though not by us (at least in this life). This paper has two main sections. In the first, I give an account of Rufus’s views on the adequate nameability of secondary substances. In the second section, I explain, in turn, the two views he held on the adequate nameability of primary substances.

1. THE ADEQUATE NAMEABILITY OF SECONDARY SUBSTANCES

Rufus never doubted that secondary substances are adequately nameable. For he believed that we humans are, at least in principle, capable of knowing the proper nature of any secondary substance and therefore of adequately naming it. To understand why he held this belief, we need to know what, in his view, the proper natures of secondary substances are, and

4. “considerant naturam impositionis per naturam rei . . .” (*Urmetaphysics*, VII, q. 13, Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q290, fol.49rb, ed. R. Wood). Apparently, Peter Abelard already had a similar view on names: “qui vocabulum invenit, prius rei naturam consideravit ad quam demonstrandum nomen imposuit” (*Glosses on Aristotle’s Categories*, in *Peter Abailards Philosophische Schriften*, ed. B. Geyer, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, XXI-2 (Münster: Verlag der Aschenдорfschen Verlagsbuchhandlung 1921), p. 112).

on what basis he thought humans capable of knowing them. Accordingly, it is to Rufus's metaphysics of secondary substances that we must turn first.

1.1. Metaphysical Background

The conception of secondary substances—genera and species in the category of substance—to which Rufus subscribed presupposes a realist framework of a certain type. This framework can be conveniently described by relating it to a certain interpretation of the Porphyrian tree for the category of substance.⁵ The relevant interpretation of the tree rests on two main assumptions.

First, it assumes that the tree pictures how the most general substance (the genus *substance*) divides by successive dichotomies into less and less general substances until the least general secondary substances are reached. These are the ultimate species in the category of substance. Ultimate species also divide, but not into two less general secondary substances, as the species and genera above them do; rather, they divide into a multitude of individuals or primary substances. Second, it assumes that the tree also indicates those causes, as it were, which determine the division of each secondary substance (other than the ultimate species) into two less general secondary substances. It does this by representing pairs of further entities, the so-called “differentiae.” For example, the tree indicates that the differentiae *rationality* and *irrationality* determine the division of the genus *animal* into two species: *rational animal* (or *man*) and *irrational animal*. Since the tree provides no information about the causes that determine the division of an ultimate species into its many individual substances, it may be regarded as explaining the genealogy, as it were, of each ultimate species in the category of substance, but not of the individuals into which the ultimate species divide.

Conceiving of secondary substances within this framework, Rufus assumes that they are not simple entities but aggregates of matter and one or more forms. Both the matter and the forms of a given secondary substance are, of course, themselves general. The matter is more or less general, depending on whether it is a component of a more or less general secondary substance. Moreover, the forms are more or less numerous: more general substances have fewer component forms, less general substances have more. Thus, every secondary substance (except ultimate species) divides into two further secondary substances, each of which differs from it by having a less general matter and by having one more form. The second-

5. Partial representations of the Porphyrian tree in the category of substance are found in many early printed editions of medieval commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*. Any representation of the tree is, of course, necessarily partial, since we do not have knowledge of all the genera and species—let alone all the individuals—in the category of substance.

dary substance *body*, for example, divides into *animate body* (or *animal*) and *inanimate body*. *Animal* differs from *body* by having a less general matter and one more form, *animality*, in addition to the forms of substantiality and corporality which it shares with the substance *body*.⁶

Every secondary substance (other than the most general one, the genus *substance*) thus arises from a more general secondary substance. The metaphysical process by which this occurs has as its cause one of the two opposite differentiae that together divide the more general substance.⁷ Rufus holds that each differentia acts on the more general secondary substance in the following way. It “contracts” the form proper to the more general substance so that a less general form ensues.⁸ This new form in turn causes a new substance to arise. It does this by “perfecting” the matter of the more general substance “more completely” than its own form was capable of doing, that is, by making it more particular.⁹ This more particular matter is the matter of the new substance which has the contracted form as its proper form. The new substance shares all the forms belonging to the more general substance.¹⁰ But it has in addition its own proper form. For example, the genus *animal* has animality as its proper form (and shares the forms of the higher genus *corporal substance*). It is divided into *man* and *irrational animal* by the differentiae *rationality* and *irrationality*. Rationality contracts the form of animality into that of humanity, which in turn renders more particular the matter of the genus *animal*. In this way, the ultimate species *man* emerges, which has a more particular matter than the genus *animal* and a proper form, that of humanity. It follows, then, that as Rufus conceives them, secondary substances each have their own proper matter and their own proper form.

6. “Item, nonne substantia materiae primae omnium formarum primo recipit eam quae generis generalissimi . . . ? Ipsa [substantia materiae] ergo sub sola forma generis generalissimi, circumscriptis aliis specialioribus formis, ipsa, inquam, sive illud aggregatum, nec species est nec individuum. Immo super illud aggregatum adduntur formae per ordinem . . . , quarum quaelibet substantiam dictae materiae plus et plus signat, contrahit, appropriat” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q. 312, fol. 85va, ed. R. Wood).

7. “differentiae contrariae species differentes constituunt . . .” (*Lectura Parisiensis in libros Sententiarum* II, d.3, a.1 [“De materia angelorum”], Vat. Lat. 12993, fol. 145va, ed. R. Wood).

8. I infer that this was Rufus’s view. For Rufus (in the *Contra Averroem*) compares what he calls an “added virtue,” which is supposed to contract a maximally specific form into an individual form, with a differentia. But the comparison is pointless unless a differentia is that which contracts a more general form into a more specific one (see the text quoted in n. 41 below).

9. “Quaedam [forma] completius et quaedam minus complete materiam perficit . . .” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 85va).

10. “differentiae contrariae species differentes constituunt, in quibus tamen salvatur et manet eadem forma generis univoca.” (*Lectura Parisiensis* . . . II, d.3, a.1 [“De materia angelorum”] fol. 145va).

1.2. Knowing and Naming

It further follows that one can identify the proper nature of a secondary substance both with its proper matter and with its proper form. It would seem, then, that a secondary substance is adequately named by an agent, provided that the agent, knowing either its proper matter or its proper form, has bestowed a name on the substance by considering either the one or the other. That is indeed what Rufus acknowledges, quickly adding, however, that the first alternative is, in fact, unavailable.¹¹ For he claims (agreeing here with Aristotle) that matter cannot be known, at least not in itself.¹² That leaves only the second alternative open, so that we will have to say that a secondary substance is adequately named by an agent provided that agent knows its proper form and bestows a name on the substance by considering that form. That, too, is what Rufus claims: “because its form is the principle of intelligibility of a thing, a name is bestowed on a thing in virtue of its form.”¹³

Despite his talking about “things” here, Rufus probably intends to refer to those things that are secondary substances. For he draws as a consequence the further claim that a name names a form primarily and the aggregate of which that form is the proper form secondarily.¹⁴ Moreover, when he illustrates this second claim, he does so by mentioning names of secondary substances.¹⁵ This suggests that in the first claim he meant to refer to secondary substances as well.

Hence, we may reformulate the principle of adequate naming so that it applies to secondary substances as Rufus conceives them: a secondary substance is adequately named by an agent if and only if that agent has bestowed a name on the substance by considering its proper form. Since every secondary substance has a proper form, it follows that every secondary substance fulfills its part of the condition for it to be adequately named. If it can be shown that there are agents capable, at least in principle,

11. “si materia per se esset intelligibilis, per se esset nominabilis, et tunc posset adeo vere nomen imponi a materia, sicut nunc imponitur a forma” (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 13, fol. 49rb).

12. “materia non est intelligibilis nisi per accidens, ut habetur in primo *Physicorum*, sicut privatio et tenebra . . .” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], q.1, Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q312, fol. 81va, Prague, Archiv Prazskeho hradu - Kap. Kn., M 80, fol. 33ra, ed. T. Noone).

13. “cum forma sit principium intelligendi rem, propterea a forma imponitur nomen . . .” (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q.13, fol. 49rb).

14. “nomen non significat nisi principaliter formam, secundario aggregatum” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q.1, E [for ‘Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q. 312’], fol. 84va, P [for ‘Prague, Archiv Prazskeho hradu - Kap. Kn., M 80’], fol. 36rb).

15. “Hoc nomen ‘caelum’ vel ‘homo’ re vera primo et principaliter significat formam, secundario aggregatum ex forma communi et materia communi” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 85vb).

of knowing the proper form of any given secondary substance, it will be established that every secondary substance is adequately nameable.

Now, according to Rufus, we humans are agents capable of the required knowledge. For what is it to know the proper form of a secondary substance? It is to be able to provide a metaphysical account of that form. But that is precisely what we do, Rufus thinks, whenever we provide a definition of a secondary substance. For although it is a secondary substance (species or intermediate genus) which is said to be defined, the account provided by the definition is a metaphysical account, not exactly of the secondary substance itself, but of its proper form.¹⁶ For the definition makes no mention of matter, which is one of the metaphysical constituents of every secondary substance.¹⁷ For example, the definition of the secondary substance *man* as “rational animal” does not provide an account of that substance as being the aggregate of matter and form which it is; rather it provides an account of its proper form (humanity) as deriving from the proper form of the genus *animal* (animality) by having been contracted by the differentia *rationality*.

Apart from the most general substance, the genus *substance*, which is undefinable, every secondary substance is definable and, at least in principle, definable by us. We are, therefore, at least in principle, capable of knowing the proper form of any subordinate secondary substance. But, if it also holds, as Rufus seems to assume that it does, that we can know the proper form of any subordinate secondary substance only by knowing the definition of that substance, it follows that we must know the form of the genus *substance*. If we did not, we could not define any subordinate secondary substance. For, to define a given subordinate secondary substance, we need to know the proper form of the more general substance to which it is immediately subordinate, and that requirement repeats itself for all the other ever more general substances to which it is subordinate until the requirement is reached that the form of the most general substance, the genus *substance*, be known. It must be the case, therefore, that this form is not only knowable, but known by us. Consequently, the proper form of every secondary substance,

16. Species and intermediate genera in the category of substance are linked with their definitions in such a way that Rufus’s favorite way of referring to them is by the phrase: “that of which there is a definition (illud cuius est definitio)” (see *Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], q.6, E fol. 82rb, P fol. 34ra; and *Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 85va).

17. This feature of definitions is explicitly recognized by the author of an anonymous commentary on Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, discovered by Peter Raedts in Assisi, Bib. Com., Ms.138. Although the author of this commentary may not be Rufus (Professor Wood describes this as a doubtful work), he holds views similar to those of Rufus. As he explains: “though ‘animal’ indicates a composite of matter and form, its definition, ‘animated sensible substance’, indicates only a form (Animal enim dicit compositum ex materia et forma. Sed substantia animata sensibilis [quae est definitio secundum speciem factam] solum dicit formam . . .)” (fol. 250rb, ed. R. Wood).

including that of the most general one, is either known or, at least in principle, knowable by us. We are, therefore, agents capable, at least in principle, of adequately naming any secondary substance. It follows that every secondary substance is adequately nameable.

Let us now turn to an issue which, in Rufus's eyes, is much more controversial, that of the adequate nameability of individuals or primary substances.

2. THE ADEQUATE NAMEABILITY OF PRIMARY SUBSTANCES

As I have said, Rufus held two different views on the adequate nameability of individuals or primary substances. We shall consider them in turn.

2.1. Rufus's First Position

Rufus's first position on the adequate nameability of primary substances depends on the metaphysical account of them to which he then subscribed. Accordingly, let us see in what that account—his first metaphysical account of individuals or primary substances—consisted.

2.1.1. Metaphysical background The text that contains Rufus's first metaphysical account of individuals or primary substances is a very early treatise—I call it the *Urmetaphysics*—which predates his *Main Metaphysics Commentary*.¹⁸ In *Urmetaphysics*, Rufus accepts a view which he attributes to Aristotle, as interpreted by Averroes, according to which an individual has no form over and above those possessed by the ultimate species to which it is subordinate. An individual does not, therefore, have a proper form.¹⁹ What it has in addition is its matter.²⁰ That matter, however, is not the highly particularized but still common matter of the ultimate species; rather, it is “signate” matter, that is, fully individualized matter.²¹

18. The *Urmetaphysics* is not the only source of information on Rufus's first theory of individual substances. In the *Contra Averroem*, written a few years later, he describes the theory, or some aspect of it, on several occasions, though he does so then in order to refute it. His *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, where he subscribes to a closely related theory, is also helpful. On the *Urmetaphysics* and the *Contra Averroem*, see n. 1.

19. “individuum non habet formam propriam . . .” (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 13, fol. 49rb).

20. “Si autem Aristoteles putaverit quod illud additum super formam speciei nihil aliud est quam ipsa substantia materiae primae . . .” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q. 1, E fol. 84vb, P fol. 36va).

21. “Dicet forte quod additum re vera non est substantia materiae simpliciter sed sic signata” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 85va).

The multiple individuation of an ultimate species, by which that species is divided into a multitude of individuals, requires, therefore, that the matter of the species be itself multiply individuated first. But how is the multiple individuation of the matter of a given ultimate species brought about? Rufus suggests that it is caused, as it were, by special "virtues," which somehow supplement the matter of the species, that matter becoming many matters, each signate, by being "under" those virtues.²² Each matter which arises in this way from the common matter of a given ultimate species is capable of receiving all the forms of that species, its proper form as well as its shared forms, thus yielding an individual. For example, a given matter which arises from the common matter of the species *man* yields an individual human being by receiving the forms of substantiality, of corporality, of animality, and finally of humanity.

Each of the forms of a given ultimate species, when received in signate matter so as to yield an individual, is, however, necessarily "individuated" in the process.²³ Since the forms of a given ultimate species are received in many matters, yielding many individuals, each one is also "multiplied."²⁴ This implies, Rufus tells us, that a specific or generic form has two modes of being. According to one mode of being, it is multipliable, though not actually multiplied; according to the other, it is actually multiplied.²⁵ Insofar as a form has the first mode of being, it is common or universal.²⁶ Insofar as it has the second mode of being, it is, in each of its occurrences, singular. A form has the first mode of being of itself,²⁷ but it has the second only insofar as it is received in many matters. Attempting to make this intuitively intelligible, Rufus uses the analogy of light which in its source is one, and is multiplied in each part of the adjoining air. This is thought to imply that light, of itself, is one and that, to be multiplied, it must be received in the many parts of a medium. Similarly, he suggests, a form, of itself, is one and general and, to be

22. "principium efficiens individuationis est ipsa virtus existens in materia et haec materia <corr. ex: virtus> signata est quodammodo secundum quod est sub virtute tali . . ." (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 11, fol. 49ra).

23. "Nota etiam quod omnis forma quae nata est esse in materia habet individuari si communitatem habeat et etiam tam forma generis supremi quam infimi . . ." (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 15, fol. 49rb).

24. "requiritur . . . quod forma nata sit in diversis numerari et multiplicari . . ." (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 11, fol. 49ra).

25. "Forma enim duplex habet esse: unum esse scilicet secundum quod est multiplicabilis, et aliud esse secundum quod actu multiplicata est" (*Sententia cum quaestionibus super Physicam Aristotelis*, liber II, pars 5, Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q. 312, fol. 4vb, ed. R. Wood).

26. The text quoted in the preceding note continues: "Si primo modo consideratur forma, ei debetur communitas . . .".

27. The same text further continues: "de se enim est forma multiplicabilis . . .".

multiplied and individuated, it must be received in many matters, each of which is signate matter.²⁸

Clearly, on this theory, the proper nature of an individual consists solely in its matter. For the matter of an individual is proper to it, but none of its forms are. Though all its forms are individuated forms, it has exactly the same number of forms as does the ultimate species to which it is subordinate. To have a proper form, it would need to have one additional form.

2.1.2. Knowing and naming Recall that, although the proper nature of a secondary substance can be identified both with its matter and with its proper form, an agent cannot bestow a name on the substance by considering its matter, because, according to Rufus, matter as such is unknowable.²⁹ It follows, as we have seen, that for a secondary substance to be adequately named by an agent, the agent has to bestow on it a name by considering its proper form. But the proper nature of individuals or primary substances, as Rufus conceived of them in the *Urmetaphysics*, consists solely in their matter since they have no proper form. It follows that their proper nature is unknowable and that, consequently, they cannot be adequately named.³⁰

Nonetheless, we can, of course, refer to individuals, as Rufus notes. Given the underlying conception of individuals, it is appropriate to do so by using a general term, naming the species to which the individual is subordinate, together with a demonstrative pronoun, designating the form of the species insofar as that form is made to be spatio-temporally located by being received in the individual's matter.³¹

28. "Intelligamus lumen candelae esse in vacuo sicut punctum. Tunc sic: haec lux non multiplicat se extra se, sed si poneretur haec lux in plano diaphano, . . . faceret se extra se et faceret diversas luces numero in diversis partibus aeris . . . comparatur ergo lux-multiplicitas formae universalis, partes aeris recipientis lucem comparentur materiae, luces receptae comparentur formae individuatae et multiplicatae per materiam" (*Sententia cum quaestionibus super Physicam Aristotelis*, liber II, pars 5, fol. 4vb).

29. This is Rufus's view in the *Urmetaphysics*: "si materia per se esset intelligibilis . . . Sed non est sic, sed omne quod est per suam formam intelligitur . . . et non per materiam" (*Urmetaphysics* VII q. 13, fol. 49rb). In the *Contra Averroem*, however, he admits that matter, "quantum est de se," is intelligible (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], q.5, E fol. 82ra, P. fol. 33vb and *ad* q.4 &5, E fol. 84vb, P fol. 36vb).

30. "cum individuum perficitur per materiam, et materia nomen non habet, ideo individuum nomen proprie non habet" (*Urmetaphysics*, VII q.13, fol. 49rb).

31. "Si autem Aristoteles putaverit quod illud additum super formam speciei nihil aliud est quam ipsa substantia materiae primae quae, ut praedictum est, nomine significabilis non est, quid remanet nisi quod, ut ipse Aristoteles ponat, individuum nomen habere non posse, sed solum significari oratione composita ex nomine speciei et pronomine quo pronomine . . ." (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], *ad* q.1, E fol. 84vb, P. fol. 36va). The idea that a specific form, by being received in signate matter, is spatio-temporally located (and thereby capable of being pointed to by the user of a demonstrative pronoun) is contained in the anonymous commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* referred to in n. 17 above. As its author, who subscribed to the same metaphysical account of individuals that Rufus first subscribed to, says: "materia facit formam esse hic et nunc" (fol. 250va).

2.2. Rufus's Second Position

When he wrote the *Contra Averroem*, just a few years after writing the *Ur-metaphysics*,³² Rufus had already abandoned the conception of primary substances to which he initially subscribed, maintaining instead a very different metaphysical account. This new account called in turn for a new response to the question whether primary substances can be adequately named. Let us start, then, by looking at Rufus's second account of primary substances.

2.2.1. Metaphysical background On that second account, Rufus no longer believes that the only thing that an individual has in addition to the forms of the ultimate species to which it is subordinate is signate matter.³³ He now believes that it has two things in addition: signate matter and a form, which, because it is proper to the individual, is called an "individual form." And, although he still thinks that certain added "virtues" make the matter of a given ultimate species become many matters, each signate, he no longer thinks that these virtues are added to the matter itself. Rather, they are, he now thinks, virtues added to the proper form of the ultimate species. And each added virtue acts first on that specific form, "contracting" it, as it were, so that a new form, an individual form, arises. In the process, however, the added virtue also acts on the matter of the ultimate species, making it more particular to the extent of rendering it signate.³⁴ In this way an individual arises that has both an individual form and signate matter, the form being the "perfection" of the matter.³⁵

As on the earlier account, the individual has, of course, other forms as well, namely all the forms of the ultimate species from which it originates. And again, as on the earlier account, by existing in its matter, which is signate matter, those forms are no longer common, but individuated.³⁶ On the earlier account, however, the individual does not have a proper form; on the later account it does.

32. See n. 1.

33. "Secundum igitur hoc patet quod ultimum additum post formam speciei specialissimae non est materiae substantia. Nec potest dici, ut prius visum est, quod sit substantia materiae in ultimatae suae signata. Hoc enim est quod ego modo quaero: quid eam signavit in ultimatae suae signationis, scilicet postquam eam signavit forma speciei specialissimae?" (*Contra Averroem* II ["De causa individuationis"], fol. 85va).

34. "Talis igitur potentia addita ipsam formam speciei specialissimae communem contrahit, et sic, in contrahendo formam, signat et materiam quae fuit alteram pars compositi sive aggregati cuius est definitio in ultimatae signationis" (*Contra Averroem* II ["De causa individuationis"], fol. 85va).

35. "Igitur potentiae diversae, additae super formam speciei specialissimae, per quas fiunt in ipsa forma speciei specialissimae diversarum materiarum in sua ultimatae signatarum diversae perfectiones, diversa individua efficiunt" (*Contra Averroem* II ["De causa individuationis"], fol. 85va).

36. "natura communis . . . prout est in materia extra intellectum . . . est singulare . . ." (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], q.6, E fol. 82va, P fol. 34rb).

One is tempted to draw an analogy between the way in which the many virtues, added to the proper form of a given ultimate species, determine the division of that species into individuals, and the way in which opposite differentiae determine the division of a genus into two species. There is indeed an analogy there to be drawn. Nevertheless, there is also a difference which, as we shall see in the next section, is of momentous importance: whereas differentiae always come in pairs, always determining the division of a genus into two opposite species, the virtues, added to the form of an ultimate species, are very many in number, determining the division of the species into a multitude of individuals. Rufus does not rule out that there may even be infinitely many virtues added to a given ultimate species, determining the division of the species into infinitely many individuals, though he thinks it unlikely that there are infinitely many individuals.³⁷ In any case, being a great many and not just two, the added virtues are simply diverse from each other, not opposites as are the differentiae which determine the division of a genus.³⁸ So there is an analogy, but also a difference between differentiae and added virtues.

However that may be, on this second conception of individuals or primary substances, a primary substance, like a secondary substance, has both its proper matter and its proper form. Let us see what the consequences are for the possibility of adequately naming primary substances.

2.2.2. Knowing and naming On the preceding conception of primary substances, it is impossible to adequately name a primary substance, since its proper nature consisted solely in its matter and matter as such is unknowable. But, on this conception, the proper nature of a primary substance can be identified both with its matter and with its proper form. Now, the form of a thing is eminently knowable, since its form is, according to Rufus, the principle of a thing's intelligibility.³⁹ The condition required on the part of a thing for it to be adequately nameable is thus fulfilled by a primary substance, as Rufus now conceives of it, since it has a proper nature that is knowable.⁴⁰

It does not follow, however, that primary substances are adequately nameable. For, though they each have their own proper form which, as far as it is concerned, is knowable, it might be the case that no agent exists who is capable of knowing it, in which case they would still fail to be adequately

37. "Quaero igitur an infinita numero individua possint esse sub una specie specialissima in rerum natura extra intellectum . . . Quod si infinita sicut videntur velle philosophi . . . Et si tu non sic ordinasti; sed forte decentius, scilicet quod sint numero certo individua determinata . . ." (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va, P fol. 36rb–36va).

38. "Dictae vero virtutes vel differentiae sic non sunt neque sibi contraria, licet diversae" (*Contra Averroem* II ["De causa individuationis"], fol. 86ra).

39 "cum forma sit principium intelligendi rem . . ." (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q. 13, fol. 49rb).

40. "Ipsa [individua] tamen se ipsis quantum est de se nomine significari, si addita super formam speciei, ipsa individua constituentia, formae sint, non video quid obstet" (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q.1, E fol. 84vb, P fol. 36va).

nameable. As a matter of fact, Rufus believes, the knowledge of the proper form of a primary substance is something of which we humans are incapable. Why should that be?

It is obvious enough that, acquainted as we are with a number of individuals, nevertheless, their proper nature, and thus their proper form, if that be what their proper nature is, escapes us. Yet the fact needs explanation, and the explanation Rufus provides is, I think, quite an extraordinary one. He argues as follows. If we knew individual forms, we would know them in a way analogous to that in which we know specific forms. But, it will be recalled, we know a specific form, according to Rufus, by knowing the definition of the species of which it is the proper form. For example, we know the form *humanity* by knowing the definition of *man*, which is “rational animal.” For that definition tells us that the species *man*, or rather its proper form *humanity*, arises from the genus *animal* through the contraction by the differentia *rationality* of its proper form *animality*. So, if we know that definition, we have a metaphysical account of the form *humanity*, and to know the form *humanity* is to have such an account. Assuming that knowledge of individual forms is similar to knowledge of specific forms, Rufus infers that we could know an individual form only by having a metaphysical account of it, which we could have only by knowing the definition of the individual whose proper form it is.

But are individuals definable? In a loose sense, they are. For there are items that fill the roles for individuals that a genus and a differentia fill in the definition of a species. The ultimate species, under which a given individual is subsumed, fills the role of the genus, and the relevant virtue, added to the most specific form, by which that form has been contracted so as to yield an individual form and thereby an individual, fills the role of the differentia.⁴¹ Thus, a definition, or at least an account analogous to a definition, a “quasi-definition,” we might say, can be provided for any individual substance, given the way Rufus now conceives them.⁴² But are the virtues that determine the division of a given ultimate species knowable by us? Rufus thinks not. His reason is that there are simply too many of them,

41. “Et quid manifestius ex dictis sequi videtur quam quod individua definitionem habere possunt. Accepta enim forma speciei, accepta etiam virtute vel potentia quae ei addita Socratem constituit, plenaria videtur Socratis esse definitio: forma speciei tamquam genus, dicta virtus vel potentia tamquam differentia. Et ita de aliis individuis, quare omnino eodem modo videtur individuus esse definitio sicut et speciei” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 86ra).

42. Conceding that a definition, properly speaking, is always by a genus and a differentia, and that true differentiae come in pairs of opposites, Rufus grants that there can be no definition, properly speaking, of an individual. As he writes: “Dicimus enim proprie definitionem ex vera differentia essentiali et ex vero genere—differentia, dico, habente aliam sibi contrariam id condividentem” (*Contra Averroem* II [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 86ra). Nevertheless, an account analogous to a definition, a “quasi-definition,” as we shall say, or a “declaration,” as he says, can be given of an individual in terms its ultimate species and of its contracting “virtue” (“Aut forte erit ipsius individuus aliqua declaratio, nec tamen definitio”).

since, as we have seen, they are so numerous that, as far as anyone can tell, there might be infinitely many. But the human intellect is not capable of distinctly grasping an infinity of things, or even a large multitude of them.⁴³

It might be objected that, from the fact that we cannot know all the virtues which together determine the division of a given ultimate species, it does not follow that we cannot know any of them. But Rufus thinks that it does.⁴⁴ For it is essential to each of the virtues added to the form of a given ultimate species that, together with the others, it should determine the division of that species in the same way as it is essential to each differentia in a pair of opposite differentiae that, together with its opposite, it should determine the division of a given genus. In the case of differentiae, it follows that no differentia can be adequately known unless the opposite differentia which, together with it, determines the division of a genus, is also known. Similarly, Rufus believes, in the case of virtues added to the form of an ultimate species, it follows that none of these virtues can be adequately known unless all the others which, together with it, determine the division of the ultimate species, are also known.⁴⁵ Since it is impossible for us to know them all, it is, then, impossible for us to know any.⁴⁶

In this way, Rufus believes he has established that none of the virtues added to a given ultimate species can be known by us. But if that is so, although individuals are definable or quasi-definable, it follows that their definition is not available to us. For every such definition (or quasi-definition) mentions, in the role of the genus, an ultimate species and, in the role of the differentia, one of the virtues added to the form of that species. And we would need to know both the ultimate species and the virtue for there to be mention of them in a definition available to us. But, if the definition (or quasi-definition) of an individual is not available to us, we also do not know its proper form, because we lack a metaphysical account of it.

43. “sed a nostro intellectu non sunt scita infinita . . . Et si tu forte non sic ordinasti, sed forte decentius, scilicet quod sint numero certo individua determinata, idem apud nos relinquitur quod prius. In tanta enim multitudine sunt quod nec numerum illum, nec per consequens causas distinguentes, efficientes illa singularia novimus” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va, P fol. 36rb–36va).

44. “Cum inquam, sit sic, scilicet quod non possint sciri vel intelligi propria constituenta hoc individuum [i.e. additum super formam speciei efficiens hoc individuum cum hac materia] quin et sint scita propria constituenta alia individua omnia . . .” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va, P fol. 36rb).

45. “Nonne doces hic respondere quod quaecumque prima divisione a se ipsis dividuntur, necesse est, cognito uno, et omnia alia cognosci. Cognito enim uno membro unius divisionis, cognoscuntur et alia membra . . . Exemplum patet in divisione animalis per rationale et irrationale . . . De divisione vero speciei specialissimae ita est quod omnia, sive sint finita sive infinita, immediate contra se prima divisione proveniunt. Et ideo in his indubitanter videtur quod intellecto uno addito unum individuum constituente, intelligantur et omnia alia addita” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va–84vb, P fol. 36va).

46. The text quoted in the preceding note continues: “Quod, quia nobis in hoc statu non est [possibile] . . .”

Such is the complex argument by which Rufus establishes that we humans cannot know an individual's proper form. But, since we cannot know its proper matter either, it follows that we cannot know an individual's proper nature. And from that it follows that we cannot adequately name an individual.⁴⁷

From the fact that individuals cannot be adequately named by us, it does not follow that they cannot be adequately named at all, however. For there may be other agents who are capable of knowing the proper forms of individuals or primary substances, and thus capable of adequately naming them. Indeed, Rufus is convinced that there necessarily exists at least one such agent, namely God. For, as a Christian, he believes not only in God's necessary existence but also that he is necessarily omniscient.⁴⁸ There is, then, nothing He cannot know. Moreover, in the particular case of the proper forms of individuals, the argument given to prove that we humans cannot know them does not apply to God. For even if we are incapable of knowing an infinity of things, God, who is himself infinite and thus commensurate with the infinite, is not.⁴⁹ There is, then, no possible doubt that God can, indeed does, know each individual and, for each individual, its proper form. Consequently, if He so wills, He can adequately name any and every individual.⁵⁰ It follows that individuals, or primary substances, are adequately nameable.

Rufus further suggests that there may be agents other than God capable of knowing the proper form of an individual and, consequently, of adequately naming the individual, and that even we may be capable of this, though not in this life. For Rufus holds that any existing entity whatsoever, even a proper constituent of a primary substance, in particular its proper form, is, of itself, capable of being known by any intellect, including ours.⁵¹

47. "relinquitur quod nullius individui constituentia a nobis scita sint; quare nec a nobis nomine significabilia; . . . remanet ut eis [individuis] nomina nequeamus imponere" (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va–84vb, P fol. 36rb–36va).

48. On the philosophically interesting thirteenth-century theological debate on whether there are many divine ideas, a debate fueled by the belief that the God revealed in the Scriptures is an omniscient God, who therefore knows a great multitude of things, both universal and individual, see Rega Wood: "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus and Odo Rigaldus," *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 7–46.

49. "A te autem cui infinita sunt finita . . ." (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va, P fol. 36rb).

50. "A te autem cui infinita sunt finita non video quare, si tibi placet, non sint nomine significabilia" (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q. 1, E fol. 84va, P fol. 36rb).

51. "omne ens et natura essentialiter est intelligibile ab intellectu primo, simpliciter autem et quantum est de se, ab intellectu causato" (*Contra Averroem* I ["De ideis"], ad q. 1, E fol. 84rb, P fol. 36rb). "Immo erit universaliter omnis creatura intelligibilis . . . nam et eius principia omnia, sive communia sive propria, vere et simpliciter sunt scibilia et intelligibilia" (*Speculum animae*, q. 4, Erfurt, Wiss. Allg., Q312, fol. 109va, Assisi, Bib. Com., Ms. 138, fol. 283va, ed., R. Wood).

Consequently, he suggests, if things exist that we are not capable of knowing, it is because of some deficiency from which our intellect suffers.⁵² And he further suggests that this deficiency may be linked to “our present state.”⁵³

From the fact that we are incapable, at least in this life, of knowing their proper forms, it does not follow that we do not, in this life, know any individuals. For a thing can be known, even if its proper nature cannot. And we do know individuals in this life, namely by some of their accidental properties.⁵⁴ We can, of course, use this knowledge to bestow a name on an individual thing, although we shall not be thereby adequately naming the thing. Rufus says that in such a case the name is not properly a name of the thing, a “*nomen rei*,” but is bestowed on the thing accidentally as it were.⁵⁵ He terms it a “*nomen vocis*,” a phrase normally used in a quite different sense. The so-called proper names, by which people are called, exemplify “*nomina vocis*” in this sense.⁵⁶ Since they do not adequately name their objects, they are, as Rufus might say, anything but “proper.”⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

We have here, I suggest, an instance of an extraordinary development, occurring within just a few years in the writings of this thirteenth-century author. It consists of two phases. In the first, an Aristotelian theory—as contained in texts which, for the most part, had only recently become available in Latin translation—is first painstakingly explicated and reconstructed.⁵⁸ This phase is illustrated in Rufus’s *Urmetaphysics* where he provides the basis for the claim, which he finds in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, that individuals cannot be (adequately) named.⁵⁹ The next phase consists of

52. “omnis creatura vere intelligibilis, et ab intellectu primo et ab intellectu creato, nisi sit defectus a parte nostri intellectus.” (*Speculum animae*, q.4, fol. 283va).

53. See the quotation in n. 46.

54. “quia formae individuales substantiales latent nos, ideo eas per accidentia intelligimus et significamus . . .” (*Lectura Parisiensis* . . . II d.3 a.2 q.2 [“De causa individuationis”], fol. 146va).

55. “a casu,” as Rufus says. See n. 56 below.

56. “iste vocatur Sortes vel Plato . . . talia sunt nomina vocis et non rei; non enim considerant naturam impositionis per naturam rei, sed a casu . . .” (*Urmetaphysics* VII, q.13, fol. 49rb).

57. See the introduction to this essay.

58. Here I understand “Aristotelian theory” not in the strict sense of a theory contained in the writings of Aristotle, but in the wider sense of a theory contained (or thought to be contained) in the writings of Aristotle and/or in writings by other authors purporting to complete or comment on Aristotle’s doctrines, including Porphyry and Arab commentators of Aristotle, notably Avicenna and Averroes.

59. “Quid remanet nisi, ut ipse Aristoteles ponat, individuum nomen habere non posse . . .” (*Contra Averroem* I [“De ideis”], ad q.1, E fol. 84vb, P fol. 36va). The

modifying the reconstructed Aristotelian doctrine so that it accomodates the Christian faith with its dogma of God's omniscience. This phase is illustrated in the *Contra Averroem*, where Rufus modifies the Aristotelian doctrine on the (adequate) naming of individuals. The result is a doctrine according to which individuals are adequately nameable by God, though not by us, at least not in this life. In the new doctrine, much of the Aristotelian doctrine is retained, but a partly theological content is now given to a doctrine which was, originally, purely philosophical. The new doctrine is a striking example of "Christian Aristotelianism."

Aristotelian text which Rufus has in mind is *Metaphysics* VII 1035 b2. In the translation of Michael Scot, the text reads: "particularia enim non habent proprium nomen." Note, as a curiosity, the fact that Roger Bacon, in "De signis," violently attacked those who, misled, he says, by a defective translation, had attributed that doctrine, entirely wrong-headed in his opinion, to Aristotle ("An unedited part of Bacon's 'Opus Maius', 'De signis'," ed. K. Fredborg et al. *Traditio*, XXXIV (1978): 75-136, §§ 23-24). Although Rufus is not named here, is this another instance of Bacon's attacks on a thinker he intensely disliked?

