Nominalism and Realism

By the early fifteenth century there were fierce debates - sometimes leading to bloodshed - over what was to be the curriculum in various universities and (not unrelated) how Aristotle’s work - which formed the backbone of every university curriculum, was to be understood. These disputes are often phrased as between a *via moderna* and a *via antiqui*. Sometimes they are phrased in other ways - for example as involving “a threefold way”. When they are so phrased one of the ways is typically described as that of the Nominales or Nominalistae.

Roll call of Nominales

- In 1673 Obadiah Walker, soon to be Master of University College Oxford, published his *“Aristotis rationis Maxima ex parte Nominalium”* in which he both claimed Nominalism for Oxford and provided us with a list of those he thought to be its founding fathers and luminaries. The list is headed by the Venerable Inceptor, William Ockham, followed by Gabriel Biel, Gregory of Rimini, John Major, Pierre D’Ailly, John Gerson, Martinus de Magistris, Johannes Celaya, Hieronymus de Hangesto, Johannes Rawlinus, Jacobus Almain, George and Peter of Brussels, Albert of Saxony, Johannes Dullert, William of Rubeone, John Buridan, Marsilius of Inghen, Adam Godham (i.e. Wodeham) Robert Holcot, Thomas Bricot, Gasper Lax, Gervaus Waim, Gaspar (sic) of Heytesbury, Antonio Voronel, Henry of Altenstaig, and Johannes Salabert.

Wegestreit

- Rodrigo Ariaga is listed but with the note that while he includes himself among the Nominales. Obadiah is not convinced of his doctrinal sincerity Walker writes: "Nominalium vero disciplina maxime propinatur non tantum Oxonie nata et nutrita, sed quia subtilitate et perspiciuitate reliquis omnes longissime superare videtur" (Preface)
Royal Edict Louis XI  Paris 1474

- "It has seemed to us that the doctrine of Aristotle and his commentator Averroes, of Albertus Magnus, of St. Thomas Aquinas, Aegidius Romanus, Alexander of Hales, Scotus, Bonaventura, and other realists ought to be taught in the faculties of arts and theology as more useful than that of the new doctors, Ockham, Gregory of Rimini, Buridan, Pierre d’Ailly, Marsilius (d’Inghen), Adam Domp, Albert of Saxony and other nominalists." [Thorndike Records p. 355]

Four “persecutions of Nominalists’

- Among the nominalists the first to be condemned is said to have been William Ockham, whom John XXII persecuted, first because the said William Ockham took opposite sides from the pope on the heresy of the souls of the blest.

The fourth persecution in 1473

- The third cause comes from a heresy concocted at the university of Louvain. For a certain teacher at Louvain composed a treatise in which he denied certitude and divine prescience concerning contingents, asserting that propositions concerning the contingent future, even contained in the Bible and set forth by Christ, were not true.

• At that time God so provided for the faith of his church that, while the university of Bohemia was following the Parisian usage, he raised up such catholic doctors as Pierre d’Ailly, Jean Gerson, and many other most learned nominalists, who, assembling at the Council of Constance, to which were cited the heretics, notably Jerome (of Prag) and John (Hus), defended the faith of Christ and in a forty days’ public disputation so overcame and confounded the said heretics that they admitted that they had been conquered by the arguments of Pierre d’Ailly.
.., those who are called nominalists objected and opposed this strongly, fearing no peril for the defense of the faith, and they prevented the faculty of theology from approving the said treatise. Those who are called realists took this very hard and to the number of twenty-four subscribed to the said treatise and approved it.

Moreover, the author of this treatise was cited before the apostolic see being accused by master Henry de Zomeren, a doctor of Paris among the nominalists most learned, and having set out for Rome to defend himself, alleged his reasons, causes and motives, and produced in his justification the signatures of the twenty-four doctors of Paris, namely, Petrus de Vaucello, Rolandus le Cousich, Johannes Boucart, Guillelmuus de Castrofort, Guillelmuus Boville, Petrus Caros, Johannes Cossart, etc.

The last person on Walker's list, Joannes Salabert, the author of a Philosophia Nominalium Vindicata published in Paris in 1651. Salabert himself gives a list of nominalist heroes which is very close to that we din in Walker. He also takes two steps which we do not find Walker repeating. One is historical - he points us to Avenarius' (1477-1534) conjecture that the nominalists were originally a school from the late 11th or 12th century which included Roscelin and Abelard among its proponents/

The other is philosophical: Salabert claims that the chief bone of contention between nominalists and realists is over the nature of predication and, in particular over whether it is things or terms which are subjects or predicates in propositions.

Euvrie's letter to Gerson

For there have been three sects that by the fame of their celebrated names have come down to us in present times. The first they call the sect of the formalizers, which they hold to be derived from Plato, through Augustine. Another, that of the nominalists, shifts the differences among nearly all things to human concepts. The first author of this sect is unknown, I gather, because there has been such an intermission of time, but they ascribe to Epicurus both its origin and its development. The third sect mediates between the above two. Begun by Aristotle, it has been propounded with careful and continual labor up to our age by Alexander, Philoponus, al-Farabi, Themistius, Avicenna, Averroes, Boethius, Albert, St. Thomas, and other Peripatetics. How then should a young man choose among such a variety of doctrines? (Kaluza, Les Querelles p. 17 tr. pasnau in MT ??)
• So we see that Nominalism and its counterpart Realism are actors' categories already by the beginning of the 15th century. It is this fact which encourages me to think that they may be useful categories as well.

A bit more history

If you look to Walker and the 1494 texts you see no one identified as a Nominalist or Realist before the 14th century but of course the names are from the 12th century and Aventinus, Denis the Carthusian and others explicitly link them.

Godfrey of St. Victor Fons Philosphiae tr. Synan

On Modern Philosophers
And First, On the Nominalists and the Realists

Nominalists' friends join these (they themselves admirins!)
Friends 'at name,' but not 'in thought'— such the bonds they're knitting;
Others they call 'realists' closer yet are sitting,
What is real their name supplies— here is how it's fusing:

If to 'guiles,' realius, (terms deriving lumely),
We should trace realium, (realists, of namely),
We must all their slips remit, though they reason vainly—
Clash with Mind is normal for those who think insane.
Differences between the Realists and the Moderns

There follow positions and assertions of rational and natural philosophy [i.e. logic and physics] in which the assertions of the moderns differ the most and contradict the teaching of the Realists. Let there be noted first what was said by Jean Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, in his treatise on the examination of Doctors: "First and chiefly it should be considered whether their teaching is in conformity with holy Scripture, in itself and in the form of tradition." For which he gives the reason that "holy Scripture is transmitted to us as a sufficient and infallible rule for the governance of the whole ecclesiastical body and its members until the end of the age. It is therefore itself an art, rule, and model, such that if any other teaching does not conform itself to it, it should straightway be regarded either as to be rejected or heretical or else as suspect or useless for religion."

Whence a gloss on "Moses and Elias appeared speaking with Jesus" in the Transfiguration says "every revelation is suspect which is not confirmed by the law and the prophets together with the gospel, which three are signified by Moses and Elias and Christ; otherwise the delusions of demons or the fantasies of one's own head would be regarded as revelations." From which it is clearly manifest that by however much any teaching of each of the sciences is more conformed to the teaching of the faith and the holy Scripture which the Catholic Church professes, by so much is it more perfect and to be approved. Hence it is that the teaching of Aristotle is preferred to the assertions of other philosophers, for which reason too it is permitted to be taught in all universities, and the teaching of his commentator Averroes and how (?) the teaching of Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Alexander of Hales, Scotus, Bonaventure, Richard [of Middleton], Peter de Tarantasio [= Pope Innocent V], Peter de Pallude and other realist Doctors is held to be as conformable as possible to Aristotle's assertions, where it can be done with no damage to the faith; and therefore [the teaching of these Doctors] is always found to be sound, solid, healthy [or beneficial for salvation] and safe. Whence the aforesaid Doctors in their writings very often make use of authorities [i.e. authoritative passages] of Aristotle as natural arguments for forming and showing, at least dialectically, even the conclusions of faith, showing that even those things which we hold by faith are not impossible; as is evident from Blessed Thomas in the Summa against the Pagans [Gentiles, which includes Muslims although not Jews or Christians], where he disputes against the pagans by means of the authorities of philosophy and of the pagans.

But the doctrine of certain innovators [renovatores], who are called Nominalists, such as William Ockham, Buridan, Peter of Ailly, Marsilius [of Inghen], Adam [Wodeham], Dorp, Albert of Saxony and other Nominalists in many places altogether contradicts Aristotle's assertions, and especially in the principles of logic, such as [puta] in the first treatise of Peter of Spain ['s Summulae Logicales], which corresponds to Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias [= De Interpretatione]. And, firstly, when they posit about the proposition, that truth is not distinguished from the proposition; and whether a proposition is defined as a first or second intention; and, secondly, about the quantity [e.g. universal, particular] of a proposition, when

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1Reading the text in Ehrle's footnote, rather than the (as Ehrle says) unintelligible text that he prints.
they posit a mixed quantity against the intention of Aristotle and of the Realist Doctors who write [commentaries or questions] on him.

Again, about the matter of propositions, about conversions and especially about the species of oppositions, where they do not maintain the text of Aristotle at all, or else twist it to another meaning. Again, about compounded and divided modals, where they have a mode of speaking altogether contrary to Aristotle and to the teaching of the Realists. Again, about the treatises on suppositions, restrictions, ampliations and appellations the Realists and the Nominalists or Moderns are most of all at variance. For the Nominalists posit different suppositions of restricted and amplified terms. Again, they posit other divisions and especially other suppositions which the Realists do not assume, but which they rather reject as superfluous, and without positing which everything in logic can be preserved.

Their second main disagreement with the teaching of the Realists is about the matter of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, which is also called the Book of the Five Predicables, the knowledge of which [predicables] is most useful for divisions, definitions and demonstrations as well as for the knowledge of Aristotle's categories and for every science; which book of Porphyry most of the Nominalists skip. And even if they do accept the teaching of this book, nonetheless they attribute its assertions chiefly to terms, positing that terms\(^2\) are universals and true predicables, leaving out the second intentions, which intentions these predicables formally represent, and having forgotten also the real things [res] which are subjects of these second intentions\(^3\) --although no one has ever truly known what a universal predicabale is without the knowledge of these second intentions.

In this same book of Porphyry, in the chapter on species, the Nominalists diverge most of all from the position of the Realists in the setting-up of the tree of Porphyry, where they posit being as a genus, against the intention of Aristotle, Porphyry, Proclus, Boethius, and all the Realist Doctors. Again, in that they posit an eleventh category, which they call the category of the sign, which Aristotle has nowhere mentioned. And this is clear in his book of *Categories* and in the seventh book of his *Metaphysics*, where he divides being outside the soul into the ten categories. Likewise there is no small divergence between them in the chapter on accident and in the chapter on the meanings of "differentia," where they entirely disagree in expounding the texts, the Realists referring Porphyry's assertions to the real things [res] themselves inasmuch as they are conceived, whereas the Moderns apply them to the verbal expressions [voces] themselves.

Their third main divergence from the teaching of Aristotle and of the Realist Doctors is about Aristotle's book of *Categories*. And first, as has been said, by their positing eleven categories, and in that they posit being as a genus, against the intention of Aristotle and all the Peripatetics. Secondly about the properties of substance; thirdly about quantity and its species; again about the species of quality, where the Nominalists name several species which Aristotle did not posit. Again, about the category of relation, where the Moderns posit that it does not exist outside the soul or really distinct from its foundation, whereas the others hold, with Aristotle, the opposite, [namely] that it is a real being. And it should be noted that unless someone rightly understands this category, at least `when he speaks about the distinction of the divine Persons [he will be] like

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\(^2\)Reading terminos for species.

\(^3\)I.e., on the realist view, to-be-subject, to-be-predicate, to-be-universal, to-be-a-species etc. are second intentions, but it is res (rather than written, spoken or mental terms) which are the subjects of these second intentions; it is a res that is a universal, but it becomes a universal only through some action of the mind.
a blind man speaking about colors, at least fundamentally and according to theological teaching.\footnote{I am not sure I understand this phrase. Perhaps it should be taken with "rightly understands this category": "rightly understands this category, at least the basics about it which are important for theology."}

We will be silent about the matter of actions and passions and the other six categories and the postpredicaments,\footnote{The postpredicaments are the things treated in Categories 10-15: the kinds of opposition, priority and posteriority and simultaneity, motion, and having.} in which they but rarely enter into the same path. In the books of the new logic\footnote{The books of the Organon other than the Isagoge, Categories, and De Interpretatione.} and especially in the books of Prior and Posterior Analytics, in which they pass right through the texts of Aristotle and follow him in only a few passages.

Their fourth main divergence from the teaching of the Realists is in the physical [books, or their subject-matters]. They posit, with regard to the first book of the Physics, that the whole does not signify \textit{non dicat} an entity really distinct from the parts; again that quantity is not really distinct from substance; again whether matter is a being in actuality; again in the third book of the Physics\footnote{Reading tertio for secundo (it could also be the fifth book, but that would disrupt the apparent sequence).} that motion is not distinguished from the moved thing, and again about the rest of motion.\footnote{I.e. about rest, which is a privation of motion (whether it is distinguished from the resting thing?).} Again, in the fourth book of the Physics\footnote{Reading quarto for secundo (the sixth might also be possible, but seems less likely).} about the division of time and whether time is something apart from the soul. Again, in the sixth book\footnote{Reading sexto for secundo.} that motion and magnitude are composed of indivisibles.

The fifth main point on which the Moderns have contrary opinions is in many passages of the books On Generation and Corruption and especially about the subject of this book, and also about the principles of other books of philosophy, where the custom is to ask whether the science is about complexes or non-complexes, about terms or real things \textit{[res]}. And because most of them do not posit real universals, they are therefore compelled to say that a science is about universal terms or concepts; which however cannot be maintained, since in this way we would have no science, since there is neither demonstration nor definition of singulars, as is evident … \textit{[lacuna]} … which is against Aristotle in many passages and against all the Peripatetics.

Again, on \[the assertion\] that when a thing \textit{[res]} is corrupted, the knowledge \textit{[scientia]} of it is retained; and whether corruption is something natural. Again, that generation is the same as alteration and growth. Again, that in substantial corruption from the side of substantial forms there is not resolution as far as prime matter.

The sixth main point where the Moderns diverge from the teaching of Aristotle and the Realists is in the book On the Soul in many conclusions, and first about the way of investigating the essence \textit{[quod quid est]} of the soul--whether the soul is a substance and belongs to the genus of substance. Again, about this authority [i.e. authoritative text] of Aristotle, "the universal animal either is nothing or is posterior to its singulars," where the Realists and the Moderns have very different opinions \[on the assertions\] that the universal is posterior to its singulars, and whether the universal is something in the nature of things.

Again, on whether substance can be known by way of accidents, and how nonetheless the principles of being and of knowing are the same. Again, about the Philosopher's saying that the dialectician defines by the form alone, where the Realists and the Moderns understand in quite different ways; and whether the parts of the definition are forms or something else. About the second book of On the Soul whether the thing known is in the knower according to its real existence \textit{[esse reale]}, \[and\] whether \[it is present in the knower\] through itself or only through
its likeness. Again, whether something [belonging] to the substantial form preexists in the matter before the generation of the suppositum. Again, about the first definition of the soul, where it is said that the soul is the act of an organic body etc., where the nominalists say that a finger is human [homo est] and that any part of the whole human being is human, which is against the truth of Aristotle and of all the Peripatetics. Again, whether the composition out of actuality and potentiality, out of matter and form, out of body and soul, out of existence and essence, and out of nature and suppositum, \(^{11}\) are the same, where there is a great divergence between the Realists and the Moderns or Nominalists. Again, about whether the vegetative [soul] in a human being is distinct from the sensitive and intellective [souls]. Again, about whether there are several substantial forms in the same suppositum. Again, that the powers of the soul are not really distinct from the soul, as the Moderns maintain against the teaching of St. Augustine, Thomas, Albert, Giles and many Realist Doctors; from which there follows another absurdity, that the powers of the soul are substances and not accidents. Again there follows this absurdity according to Aristotle, \(^{12}\) that powers are not means between activity and substance. Again, on whether the powers of the soul are distinguished in accordance with their acts and objects. Again, whether a species is produced by natural generation, since the author of the Liber de Causis says that nature intends the species; and what that concept is, whether a concept or a real nature. Again about whether a sense is a passive power [in?] sensing itself, and whether it is necessary to posit an "agent sense," since the senses cannot be changed by sensible things by their [the sensibles?] own power. \(^{13}\) Again, about the objects of the senses, and especially about the object of vision--what is its object, is it color or light, and for what light is required--where they speak in diverse ways. \(^{14}\) Again, about sensible species, how they differ from intelligible species, and whether they are received in the sense without matter. Again, whether imagination is sensation, opinion, knowledge [scientia] or intellect.

About the third book of the De Anima they diverge in many points. First, whether the intellect that is conjoined in existence [secundum esse] with the soul is a body or a power in a body or the soul itself. Again, that the quantity of a mobile thing \(^{15}\) is the object of the intellect according to Aristotle and the teaching of the Realists, and whether the true or being is the object of the intellect.

Again, about the agent intellect, whether it is really distinguished from the possible intellect and from the intellect in actuality. Again, whether the intellect first known divisibles or indivisibles. Whether the intellect understands \(^{16}\) only by turning itself toward the phantasm, and how it abstracts. Again, whether the intellect can understand separate substances. Again about the intellect, as it is said formally, \(^{17}\) being somehow [identical with] all of [its] intelligibles. Again, they are widely divergent about how the intellect is called speculative and how it is called practical. Again, the appetitive power and how appetite is said \(^{18}\) and whence a science is called practical or speculative. Again, whether the will is a higher power than the intellect.

\(^{11}\) Reading natura for materia.

\(^{12}\) I.e. this consequence, which according to Aristotle is absurd.

\(^{13}\) We must either make sensum plural or make possint singular.

\(^{14}\) Reading diverse for diversi.

\(^{15}\) Emend to "quiddity of a material thing"?

\(^{16}\) Sc. how it understands singulars?

\(^{17}\) Reading ut dicitur formaliter for ut dicitur formalis. I suppose the transmitted text would mean "the so-called formal intellect"--but is there anything called a formal intellect?

\(^{18}\) I.e. how it is called appetite? Or how many ways "appetite" is said in? Either of these is on the assumption that we read quomodo instead of quid modo--I don't know what it would mean with quid modo.
In metaphysics, likewise, they are opposed on many points. For the Nominalists hold that in material things the nature and the suppositum do not differ in reality. Again, that the essence [quod quid est] does not differ from that whose [essence] it is. Again, they hold that a subsistent creature is [identical with] its own existence. Again, that truth is not chiefly in the intellect. Again, about [the assertion] that good and being are the same in reality and, if so, whether one of them is prior to the other. Again, what is actuality and what is potentiality, and whether they are primarily diverse [from each other].

Here we pass over in silence many passages of metaphysics and of other parts of philosophy, in which the Realists and the Moderns have contrary opinions, and especially in the articles above cited, in which the Realists, following Aristotle's assertion, diverge from the Moderns, who many times deviate from Aristotle in their own assertions [and] hold contrary opinions. And even if sometimes they agree in words with the teaching of the Realists, they still diverge on the meaning. From all of which points it is clear how great is the difference or diversity between the teachings of the Realists and the Nominalists throughout many of Aristotle's books, just in rational and real philosophy, setting aside moral philosophy and sacred [i.e. Christian] theology and how false it is [to say] that the differ only in names. From which also it is manifest that the teaching of the Realists is more conformable to the teaching of the faith and of holy Scripture than the teaching of the others; [the teaching of the Realists] rests more on the teaching of Aristotle, which is supported by all and is permitted by the law, especially where there is no contrary article of faith. Whence also the teaching of the Realists is defended by three orders of religious, the teaching of Thomas and Albert by the Preachers [= Dominicans], the teaching of Scotus by the [Friars] Minor [= Franciscans] and the teaching of Giles by the Augustinian Order. And the teaching of the blessed Thomas, Giles, Albert etc. is spread through the universities of the whole world, while the teaching of Marsilius [of Inghen] and Dinkelspuchel is confined to two.

We omit here many frivolous and outrageous [impertinentes] positions, which many by a rash daring are not ashamed to maintain and defend, which are more offensive to pious ears than conducive to the benefit of the hearers.

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19 I leave out "aut pluribus," from which I can extract no sense; is there a plausible emendation?
20 I.e. in logic and in the part of philosophy which speculates about extramental things, namely physics plus metaphysics.
21 Heidelberg and Vienna.
figure is understood as an error of some sort. But if figure is understood as a very brief way of speaking whose reason is ornament, then figure certainly exists, and in that case it will be proper to time and not improper.

9. Other opinions of the realists are rejected in the principles, and this suffices for grammar. Now let us move on to logic, in order to point out the mistakes of the realists.

4

Mistakes of the Realists

1. **Realist** – Humanity differs really from a human, and the reason is that ‘humanity’ signifies only the nature of the species, whereas ‘a human’ adds an individual difference besides.

2. **Nominalist** – I argue the contrary, that a human stands to humanity just as Sortes stands to Sorteity. But ‘Sortes’ signifies no formally or really distinct thing that is not signified by the name ‘Sorteity,’ nor the reverse. Therefore ‘man’ does not signify any thing that is not signified by the name ‘humanity,’ nor the reverse. The proof is from likeness, because if either of these names – ‘Sortes’ and ‘Sorteity’ – signifies something that is not signified by the other, then either that is the nature of the species, and it is obvious that it is signified equally by both or by neither, otherwise it would be matter or form or a composite or an accident, which all are denied; or else it would be the individual difference that they posit, and this cannot be said. So it remains that nothing is signified by the name ‘Sortes’ that is not signified by the name ‘Sorteity.’ This is conceded, then: Sortes is Sorteity, so a human is also humanity. I draw that conclusion, then: a human is humanity. And yet not every human is humanity since Christ, the son of God, is a human and is not humanity, nonetheless. Sortes too is human, however, and is humanity.29

3. **Realist** – A universal has existence involving extra-mental reality, and that universal is a common nature which exists in all its singulars: to illustrate, this common nature really exists in Peter and is formally distinguished from him.30

4. **Nominalist** – Everything that is in Peter is one in number. But a common nature is not one in number, so a common nature is not be posited in him additionally. Besides, every

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29Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.7: this begins a series of verbatim borrowings from Ockham, continuing through *Isag.* 6.2 near the end of the book. Champier’s main source is the first book of the *Summa logicae*, where Ockham examines terms before moving to propositions in the second book. But Ockham’s exposition tracks Aristotle’s *Categories*, giving Champier an opening to reject realist ontology piece by piece, as he proceeds through substance, quantity, relation and the other predicaments. Since the object of modist grammar is always an individual word, a ‘constructible,’ as related to another individual word in a two-word ‘construction’ (above, n. 3), Ockham’s first book is the right locus of comparison. However, Champier may have been using a commentary on Ockham or, more likely, a digest like the one given by Prantl in nn. 68-70 below. *Sortes* is the conventional form of ‘Socrates’ in scholastic Latin, and *Sorteitas* is an abstract noun formed on that word.

30In the case of the Trinity, where God’s unity had to be reconciled with a triad of divine persons, nominalist followers of Ockham accepted the ‘formal distinction’ used by realist followers of Scotus, but Scotists had larger ambitions for this subtle metaphysical device.
common nature accepts a plurality along with itself. Nothing that is in Peter accepts a plurality along with itself, so nothing that is in Peter is a common nature. The inference is clear in CAMESTRES. Another argument: it would follow that something of Christ’s nature will be afflicted and damned because that common nature, really existing in Christ and in a damned person, will be damned, because it is so in the wicked Dives. But this is absurd. Therefore, a universal is not to be posited in singulars. Also, a universal cannot be posited as something outside an individual’s essence, resulting in an individual composed of universals, so the universal will be more than singular. But this is absurd to say.  

5. **Realist** – A proper passion is really distinguished from its subject, and a proper passion is a thing inhering its own subject, of which it is a property.

6. **Nominalist** – If your opinion were true, it would follow that these propositions – ‘man is risible,’ ‘the horse is whinnible,’ ‘the donkey is brayable’ – could be false since God can make any created thing without another (except the prior without the posterior) because it is doctrine that God can separate, and separately preserve, all the things that really differ from one another. Then let it be posited that God separates risibility from man. Next let him destroy the risibility in an existing man. The man will then exist and yet will not be risible – which is impossible.

7. Hence I say that a property or proper passion is a single universal. It is also a kind of intention, adequately and inalterably predicable in what-kind, affirmatively or negatively indicating something external to itself, which is brought in through a subject. However, that external need not always be a thing outside the soul, really existing in nature. Instead, it sometimes suffices for it to be something potential, something possible in nature, or else a proposition existing or able to exist in the mind. Hence I say that any universal is some intention of the soul signifying the many items for which it can supposit. Accordingly, one intention, distinct from another, is predicated of the other not as itself but as standing for the thing that it signifies. And this is why such universals are not real beings nor are they outside the soul but are certain beings in the soul, distinct from each other and from things outside the soul.

8. **Realist** – The truth and falsity of propositions is a certain quality inhering in them.

9. **Nominalist** – On the contrary, if this were so, it would follow that a proposition that is sometimes true would sometimes accept contraries. It would even follow, if this were so, that a written proposition would truly be altered by a fly’s buzzing off – which is an absurd thing to say. Also, whenever something moves and then rests, it would follow

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31 Luke 16:19-31: in the parable of Lazarus, Dives is the rich man who thirsts in Hell. CAMESTRES is a valid mood of the syllogism.

32 A ‘proper passion’ or ‘property’ is one that flows from the essence of a thing. A ‘real distinction’ exists only between items that can be separated, which is not true of the persons of the Trinity, as in n. 30 above.

33 The nominalist contradicts what the realist Scotus says in *De primo principio*, 1.8: “The prior according to nature and essence can exist without the posterior, but the reverse is not true.” Ross Inman, “Essential Dependence, Truthmaking and Mereology, Then and Now,” in *Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic*, ed. Lukas Novak et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2012), pp. 78-84; above, n. 15.


35 Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.43.
that there would be a new quality in the intellect of anyone formulating a proposition like ‘this moves,’ and another quality would be destroyed – which is absurd.36

10. **Realist** – Every quantity is a certain thing really and totally distinct from substance and quality. And continuous quantity is one accident, midway between substance and quality, which is posited to exist subjectively in substance and to be a subject of qualities. And discrete quantity is a certain thing distinct from substances and qualities. And the same is said of place and time.37

11. **Nominalist** – On the contrary, Aristotle in his *Predicaments*, in the chapter on substance, says that no accident really distinct from substance accepts contraries through a change in itself. But if continuous quantity were a separate accident, distinct from substance and quality and a direct subject of qualities, then it would be changed by receiving quantity. And thus it would receive contraries through a change in itself – which contradicts Aristotle.38

12. Again, if a line is a thing apart from a surface and a point from a line, then God will be able to preserve the line and destroy the point. Once this is done, I have a problem. The line is either finite or infinite. It is not infinite, obviously, so it is finite. And yet it has no point. So it is useless to treat the line as terminated by a point, which is why we say that permanent continuous quantity is nothing other than ‘a single thing having one part distant in place from another part,’ such that ‘permanent continuous quantity’ and that phrase with equivalent meaning are convertible terms, unless some determination is included equivalently that impedes convertibility and predicating the one of the other.39

13. I say this speaking naturally and following the Peripatetic way, which is why those realists are wrong to say – speaking naturally – that quantity is a thing apart from substance. Also, when they say that a point is a thing totally distinct from the line, joining the body’s parts to each other; that a line is a thing apart from the surface, continuing and joining the parts of the surface; that a surface is a thing apart from the body, continuing and joining the body’s parts to each other; that a statement is a thing apart from the spoken sound and its quantity; that a number is a thing apart from the things numbered and an accident existing in them; and that place and time are each things distinct from one other and from all the above – when they say all these things, they are false and basically impossible. And the reasons for these claims of theirs are human fantasies.40

14. **Realist** – A relation is a thing really and totally distinct from a separate thing and from separate things.41

15. **Nominalist** – Against your account I argue in this way. If there were any such thing, then, whenever a fly moves in place here below, any heavenly body you pick would

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36Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.43.
37Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.44, opposing the stated view.
39Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.44.
40Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.44; *Exp. phys.* 3 ad 71.
41Ockham, *Summ. log.* 1.49, opposing the stated view.
change and would take some thing into itself anew because now the fly is at a different
distance than before, and as a consequence it would truly both lose one thing and also
take in another anew. Also, the Philosopher in the fifth book of the Physics says that for
a relation there is neither motion nor change. But for every thing outside the soul there is
change, therefore and so on.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.49-50, where the moving animal is a donkey; Arist. \textit{Phys.} 225\textsuperscript{o}11-13.}

16. Also, if this were true, it would follow that the potency of prime matter by which it
can receive form would be additional matter. The conclusion is false because then there
would be infinite things in matter whereby it could receive forms in infinite succession.
Hence, for those reasons I say that a relation is not another thing outside the soul, really
and totally distinct from a separate thing and from separate things. And I reckon
Aristotle to be of this opinion and also his Commentator.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. Log.} 1.49-50; the Commentator is Averroes, \textit{Comm. in 12 Metaph.}, 19}

17. \textit{Realist} – Action is a certain thing distinct from the agent, the product and the
affected, and also from other separate things. And it is a sort of ‘attitude’ that some claim
to be in the agent subjectively and some claim to be in the affected. And sometimes the
attitude is real, sometimes it is an attitude of reason, just as God’s acting is nothing but an
attitude of reason.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. Log.} 1.57, opposing the stated view: \textit{respectus} is more or less synonymous with \textit{relatio}
or \textit{habitus} in the sense of ‘relation’; we use ‘attitude’ for \textit{respectus} to preserve the distinction in terminology.}

18. \textit{Nominalist} – If your view were correct, then I ask whether the thing that is action is a
created or uncreated thing. If it is not created, then it is God. If it is created, I ask by
whom. Only by an agent, of course, in order for it to produce the thing. Given this, I ask
about the production of the thing. Just as before, there will be an infinite regress, or it
will remain that a thing is produced without any intermediary, which is false. And we
can say the same about passion. Hence, for many reasons, we say that action is not
another thing distinct from the agent. And passion and the substance that is affected are
one and the same.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.57-8.}

19. \textit{Realist} – \textit{When} or \textit{whenness} is a certain element of attitude, left over in a temporal
thing from the nearness of the time because of which we say that a thing was or will be or
is, and it is a thing distinct from substance and from quality.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.59, opposing the stated view.}

20. \textit{Nominalist} – On the contrary, according to all logicians any attitude has to establish
some term, and – as is clear in itself – for this \textit{when} attitude no term can be established
except time.\footnote{Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.57, opposing the stated view: \textit{respectus} is more or less synonymous with \textit{relatio}
or \textit{habitus} in the sense of ‘relation’; we use ‘attitude’ for \textit{respectus} to preserve the distinction in terminology.} But for many things the time that is called ‘when’ is past, and as a
consequence it does not terminate such a real attitude. This is why I say that \textit{when} is an
ordering of adverbs or of other equivalents – like ‘today,’ ‘yesterday,’ ‘tomorrow’ – that
respond appropriately to a question asked by the interrogative ‘when.’ Hence, following
the path of the Peripatetics, this predicament does not bring in any thing distinct from
substance and quality, but those it brings in as the same things, though only adverbially, not nominally.\textsuperscript{48}

21. \textit{Realist} – Where or whereness is a certain attitude fixed in what is placed, arising from the boundedness of the place. The thing placed fixes that attitude, and the place terminates it.\textsuperscript{49}

22. \textit{Nominalist} – On the contrary, if God were to make a single body without any place, that body could still be moved, and yet nothing would then rest, nor, if it did, would any \textit{where} be gained in addition. Then there would be no ‘whole heavens,’ but any part at all would also have such a \textit{where}, and as a consequence there would be as many other \textit{wheres} in the heavens as there are parts in it. Or else there will be one total attitude extended to the extent of the heavens, which one cannot imagine. So I say that \textit{where} is not another thing distinct from place and other separate things.\textsuperscript{50}

23. But the Philosopher always names this predicament with an interrogative adverb of place, putting in that predicament those items that respond appropriately to a question asked using the adverb ‘where,’ as, when one asks ‘where is Plato,’ an appropriate response is that he is ‘in the theater’ or ‘in the agora.’ This is why the Philosopher puts those prepositions with their inflected words in the \textit{where} category.\textsuperscript{51}

24. \textit{Realist} – Position is a certain attitude inhering in the whole or in the parts so that one who sits after standing has in himself a thing that he did not have before, and he has lost one thing that he did have before.\textsuperscript{52}

25. \textit{Nominalist} – On the contrary, even if I accept that someone has clothes on, it is possible for God to destroy the attitude called ‘having’ without destroying the clothing or the body or moving its place. With this established, I ask whether the person would be clothed or not. If so, the proposition holds. If not, and if no separate item is destroyed, then at some time it has moved in place since it is impossible for anyone first to be clothed and later unclothed unless something separate is destroyed or something separate has moved in place. For this reason, I say that position does not signify a thing distinct from separate things but signifies instead how the parts of a thing are ordered, situated and brought near. In this predicament are sitting as well as standing, also bending and lying.\textsuperscript{53}

26. \textit{Realist} – Having is a certain attitude in the body that surrounds a body or in the body that is contained.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{48}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.59
\textsuperscript{49}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.60, opposing the stated view.
\textsuperscript{50}Ockham, \textit{Quodlib.} 7.11.
\textsuperscript{51}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.60, with different examples and alluding to Arist. \textit{Cat.} 11\textsuperscript{3}13-14.
\textsuperscript{52}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.61, opposing the stated view.
\textsuperscript{53}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.61: note that \textit{positio} in Champier’s conclusion is our emendation, based on Ockham, of \textit{ubi}, which is a different category already discussed, and that Ockham does not use the clothing example.
\textsuperscript{54}Ockham, \textit{Summ. log.} 1.62, opposing the stated view.
27. Nominalist – Having does not signify a thing distinct from separate things, signifying instead that one thing surrounds another thing, moving with its motion unless something blocks it, and is not part of the thing nor together with it but distinct from it in place and situation. In this predicament we put such things as being armored or shod, and so on. And we can argue against the realist in the same way as the argument went for the other predicaments.⁵⁵

5

The end of the statements of the realists
with nominalist arguments
by Symphorien Champier.

General rules of suppositions follow,
very useful for young students.

1. Concerning suppositions it should be noted that only a categorematic term which is an extreme – taken as signifying – of a proposition supposit personally.⁵⁶

2. Material supposition is when a term does not supposit as signifying but supposit for a spoken or written word, as in saying that ‘man’ is a written term.⁵⁷

3. Simple supposition is when a term supposit for an intention of the soul but is not taken as signifying – as the ‘man’ in ‘man is a species’ supposits simply.⁵⁸

4. Note that it is also a good definition of personal supposition when a term stands for what is signified by it and is understood as signifying, as in ‘man is an animal.’⁵⁹

5. The following are particular rules.

First rule: a discrete term always supposit discretely, and there is no descending under it, like ‘Peter is a man’ and ‘that man runs.’⁶⁰

6. Second rule: every common term put in a proposition without a sign supposit determinately, and under it there is descending disjunctively, as in saying ‘man runs.’⁶¹

⁵⁵Ockham, *Summ. log. I. 62
⁵⁶Ockham, *Summ. log. I. 69: Champier now follows Ockham through the last fourteen chapters of the *Summa* that introduce supposition as a property of terms, as distinct from the issues of signification discussed in the previous part of the *Summa*. The properties and significations of terms are the core of the older ‘terminist’ logic that Ockham successfully challenged, unlike the modists, who failed in their attempt to replace the terminist ‘logic of the moderns’ with something entirely different. For the background, see Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham* (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 1.327-67; Calvin Normore, “Material Supposition and the Mental Language of Ockham’s *Summa logicae*,” *Topoi*, 16 (1997), 27-33.
⁵⁷Ockham, *Summ. log. I. 64
⁵⁸Ockham, *Summ. log. I. 64
⁵⁹Ockham, *Summ. log. I. 64