
William Ockham on Metaphysics

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William Ockham on Metaphysics

The Science of Being and God

By

Jenny E. Pelletier



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To Vincent

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	1
1 Metaphysics as a Science	11
A. The Ontology of Knowledge	13
B. Scientific Knowledge	17
C. Aggregate Sciences	26
D. Subjects and Objects	38
E. Real and Rational Sciences	50
F. The Necessity of Scientific Knowledge	54
G. Metaphysics as a Science	57
2 The Concept of Being	71
A. Preliminaries: The Origin, Nature, and Function of Concepts	72
B. A Distinct and Most General Concept	99
C. Delineating the Signification of the Concept of Being	106
D. Metaphysics as General Ontology	127
3 The Predication of the Term 'Being'	149
A. The Semantic Background	152
B. The Case of God and Creatures	169
C. The Case of Substance and Accident	179
D. Ontologically Justifying Univocity for God and Creatures	188
E. The Univocity of 'Being' and Metaphysics	199
4 Metaphysics and Theology	206
A. The Theology of the <i>Viator</i>	209
B. Philosophy and the <i>Viator's</i> Theology	242
C. Metaphysics, Physics, and Theology on God	261
Conclusion	271
Bibliography	279
Index	291

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ABBREVIATIONS

I cite primary sources using the conventional internal reference followed by the modern edition in parentheses accompanied by page and line numbers.

<i>Anal. Post.</i>	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
<i>Brev. Phys.</i>	<i>Brevis summa libri Physicorum</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categories</i>
<i>De trin.</i>	<i>De trinitate</i>
<i>Eth. Nic.</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Expos. Elenc.</i>	<i>Expositio super libros Elenchorum</i>
<i>Expos. Perih.</i>	<i>Expositio in librum Perihermenias</i>
<i>Expos. Phys.</i>	<i>Expositio in libros Physicorum Aristotelis</i>
<i>Expos. Praed.</i>	<i>Expositio in librum Praedicamentorum Aristotelis</i>
<i>In Cat.</i>	<i>In Categorias Aristotelis</i>
<i>In Metaphysicam</i>	<i>Commentum Magnum in Metaphysicam</i>
<i>In Perih.</i>	<i>Commentarii in librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias (in librum De Interpretatione)</i>
<i>In Physicam</i>	<i>Commentum Magnum in Physicam</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>OPh.</i>	<i>Opera Philosophica</i>
<i>Ord.</i>	<i>Ordinatio</i>
<i>OTh.</i>	<i>Opera Theologica</i>
<i>Phil. nat.</i>	<i>Summula philosophiae naturalis</i>
<i>Prooem. et Por.</i>	<i>Expositio in libros artis logicae, prooemium et Expositio in librum Porphyrii de Praedicabilibus</i>
<i>Quaes. var.</i>	<i>Quaestiones variae</i>
<i>Quaes. Phys.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in libros Physicorum</i>
<i>Quodl.</i>	<i>Quodlibeta</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Reportatio</i>
<i>Rep. Par.</i>	<i>Reportatio Parisiensia</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>Summa logicae</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>Top.</i>	<i>Topics</i>
<i>Tr. Corp.</i>	<i>Tractatus de Corpore Christi</i>

INTRODUCTION

Ockham never wrote a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* although he had intended to. In the prologue to his detailed expository commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* dating from 1322–1324, he alludes to a future work on the *Metaphysics*.¹ Prior to 1321, he had composed his commentary on the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard's collection of opinions or '*sententiae*' that was the standard theological textbook of the day, as well as a first work on physics entitled *Summula philosophiae naturalis*. Between 1321–1324, he commented on, amongst others, Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* and *Perihermenias* (*On Interpretation*) and wrote three works on physics including the aforementioned expository commentary, *Expositio in libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, *Brevis Summa Libri Physicorum* and *Quaestiones in libros Physicorum Aristotelis*. Within this period, he also participated in seven theological disputations held from 1322 to 1324, his *Quodlibeta septem*, and began his magnum opus *Summa logicae* in 1323.²

In 1324, Ockham was summoned to Avignon on suspicions of heresy, charges for which he was never officially condemned. Once in Avignon, where he was subject to an investigation into the orthodoxy of a number of his positions, Ockham became embroiled in a controversy on the question of Apostolic poverty. He eventually argued that the current pope, John XXII, was a heretic. In 1328, he fled, finding refuge under the protection of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ludwig (Louis) of Bavaria. He lived in Munich until his death in 1347. Apart from editing and revising his *Quodlibeta septem* and finishing the *Summa logicae* by the end of 1325, Ockham never wrote any further speculative philosophical and theological work after leaving England. Post-1325, his work was almost exclusively political.

¹ *Expos. Phys.* Prol., § 4 (OPh. IV, 14: 118–119).

² For the most recent account of Ockham's chronology, see Spade and Panaccio 2011. For a more detailed but older chronology, see the introduction to Spade 1999a. Before 1321, Ockham was in Oxford studying for his bachelor's degree in theology where he composed his commentary on the *Sentences* in accordance with the usual university requirements. Without having completed his theological training, hence his sobriquet *Venerabilis Inceptor* or worthy beginner, he likely moved to London for the period of 1321–1324 (it is possible he stayed in Oxford) where he waited to be selected for becoming a master in theology. This event never took place in part due to the summons to Avignon. See Courtenay 1990 and 1999. For an overview of the institutional history of the period, see Courtenay 1987.

Ockham could have written a commentary on the *Metaphysics* but for one reason or another he chose not to. Had he never been sent to Avignon, had his academic career transpired as he had expected it to, perhaps he would have produced one. Given the abrupt change occasioned by the events of 1324, with such remarkable consequences for his professional life and intellectual persuasions, it is not particularly surprising that his intention of writing a commentary on the *Metaphysics* was never realized after that date. He certainly could have composed one in the period from 1321–1324 when, no longer a student and thus outside the bounds of an institutionally set curriculum, he would have been free to write what he wanted. Yet, he focused on logic and natural philosophy in addition, of course, to theology. At least two explanations for this decision immediately suggest themselves. He might have been more interested in logic and natural philosophy. But he might have thought that he ought to concentrate on logic and natural philosophy *before* turning to metaphysics, implying not a lack of interest in metaphysics but rather a self-imposed developmental approach to his speculative work.

Why Ockham never wrote a commentary on the *Metaphysics* cannot be definitively answered. More important, however, is to emphasize that the absence of such a commentary does not allow us to infer that he was uninterested in or skeptical of metaphysics. Just because he produced a rich abundance of commentaries on logical and natural philosophical work but not one on the *Metaphysics* reveals nothing definitive about his opinion of metaphysics, neither on the possibility of metaphysics as a viable philosophical discipline nor on what metaphysical research would primarily consist of. It is a mistake to think that a medieval thinker would only develop and defend a concept of metaphysics in a commentary on the *Metaphysics*. Consequently, it is a mistake to attribute any skepticism about metaphysics to a medieval thinker whose non-theological and non-political works were logical and natural philosophical.

Indeed, references to metaphysics are frequent and ubiquitous throughout Ockham's corpus, whether in a work on logic, natural philosophy, or theology. Although he may not dwell on metaphysics at length or in considerable detail, he everywhere intimates that metaphysics is a distinct branch of philosophy, a domain of scientific knowledge, the acquisition of which can further our knowledge of the structure of reality. Furthermore, his work everywhere includes positions and arguments that are metaphysical. That is (if one can forgive my vagueness; I am fully aware of the

difficulty of defining precisely what a metaphysical position or argument might be) they invoke Ockham's convictions about what ultimate being is and what it is not: radically particular but not universal; divine and non-divine; immaterial and material; substances and some of their qualities but not relations, quantities, times, places, passions, actions, etc. as really distinct from substances and qualities; and so on. Finally, it is obvious from even the briefest acquaintance with his ideas that Ockham tackles problems we deem metaphysical today – universals and particulars; causality; free will and determinism; space and time; the nature of the self; material constitution; modality; etc.

However, past scholars have argued that Ockham has no concept of metaphysics, that Ockham is veritably anti-metaphysical. One reason for this pronouncement is undoubtedly the never-realized though promised *Metaphysics* commentary. More persuasive evidence for this thesis includes 1) Ockham's vociferously critical approach to the metaphysical views of his predecessors and peers, 2) his renowned association with the razor and his desire to "parse" entities away using logic, 3) as well as the implicitly held belief that nominalists who deny the existence of universal essences or common natures cannot have a metaphysics. An earlier generation of eminent medievalists including at least one Ockham specialist have argued that Ockham is not the sort of philosopher to find much value in metaphysics if indeed he thinks it at all possible. Depending on the philosophical proclivities of the scholar at hand, Ockham's alleged antipathy to metaphysics is taken to evince either a destructive or ingeniously scientific attitude. Thus, in his *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Étienne Gilson calls Ockham an "apprentice sorcerer" and charges him with having masterminded the demise of the intellectual achievements of the late 13th century as exemplified and perfected by Thomas Aquinas. Ockham's apparent skeptical tendencies, aided and abetted by his unrelentingly critical spirit, heralded the decadence of late scholasticism that would eventually disintegrate entirely in the Renaissance. On the subject of Ockham and metaphysics, Gilson writes that,

An Ockhamist intellect is as badly equipped as possible for metaphysical cognition, and since where there is no metaphysical knowledge theology can expect little help from philosophy, the consequence of Ockhamism was to substitute for the positive collaboration of faith and reason which obtained in the golden age of scholasticism, a new and much looser regime in which the absolute and self-sufficient certitude of faith was only backed by philosophical probabilities. (Gilson 1955, 489)

Gilson clearly thinks that Ockham has no right to a concept of metaphysics. Where Gilson sees a disturbing propensity towards destroying metaphysics particularly as it might best serve the ends of natural theology, Ernest Moody enthusiastically finds a refreshingly scientific and empirical perspective in this very same deleterious inclination. In stark contrast to Gilson, Moody sees Ockham's omission as a positive step forward in the history of philosophy. He defends the philosophical significance of the rise of empiricism and the demise of metaphysicalism in the 14th century precisely against scholars like Gilson, whom Moody cites, in his article "Empiricism and Metaphysics." Metaphysics, Moody writes, was criticized out of existence by means of a sophisticated logical and epistemological but theological critique that sought to diminish the threat that metaphysics posed against Christian theology. Moody defines 'metaphysics' as,

Metaphysics... has for long had the special connotation of being a science of ultimate causes of existence, of suprasensory realms of being, and of necessary and eternal truths known a priori. In this more special sense metaphysics is the kind of knowledge repudiated by empiricism in its more specific and customary meaning. (Moody 1975a, 292–293)

Ockham's place in the 14th century is made clear, as well as his opinion of metaphysics, "Thus natural theology and metaphysics in the sense of a science of suprasensory realms of being or of a priori factual truths, is quite fully repudiated by Ockham" (Moody 1975a, 298–299).

Gilson's scathing assessment of Ockham stems from his own particular project that aspired to underscore the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship between philosophy and theology in the late medieval period. His view is so patently biased against Ockham that it is difficult to know how or where to begin defending Ockham's philosophical integrity. Moody, on the other hand, clearly admits that Ockham is only anti-metaphysical on a rather narrow conception of metaphysics. With a different notion of metaphysics, Moody himself might concede that Ockham's penchant towards a proto-empiricism is not evidence of an aversion to metaphysics. This is in fact what Moody admits in an earlier book, where he explains that Ockham's metaphysics is the non-discursive grasp of indemonstrable first principles though not a "glorified cosmology nor a transcendental logic" (Moody 1935, 119–120). In Ockham's case, empiricism and metaphysics are not necessarily incompatible just because metaphysical knowledge like all knowledge originally arises from our experience, sensory and intellectual, of the beings of reality.

A more nuanced variant of the view that Ockham has no concept of metaphysics has been advanced by Gordon Leff and Pierre Alféri. They

think that even though Ockham might treat metaphysics as though it were a distinct science, he really reduces metaphysics to a universal logic that works in conjunction with the particular sciences of natural philosophy that, per definition, take up diverse kinds of beings. Leff writes,

... the special sciences together with logic can serve the same purpose traditionally ascribed to metaphysics in combining universal understanding with knowledge of specific being ... Ockham acknowledges both that the subjects of metaphysics are also those of the particular sciences and that the latter in conjunction with logic can know what metaphysics knows. The consequence is that metaphysics would seem to lose any defined area which is not shared by logic and the sciences of nature ... metaphysics is displaced not by nominalism but by the conjunction of logic providing terms of second intention, and the real particular sciences concerned with terms of first intention. (Leff 1975, 334–335)

Compare with this passage from Alferi, who notes that metaphysics is a ghost haunting Ockham's corpus ("la métaphysique est un fantôme") and concludes that,

La métaphysique se résume alors à un (méta-)discours sur la référence et la signification d'une part, et d'autre part à l'ensemble foisonnant du discours sur les étants et leur expérience dans toutes les sciences particulières – et avant tout dans la physique des singuliers ... On doit donc en donner la définition suivante: *la métaphysique n'est que de la logique et des sciences particulières*. (Alferi 1989, 461)

Both Leff and Alferi largely base their reading on a single passage in *Summa logicae* 3–2 that I think they misread. There, Ockham wonders whether a certain type of proposition such as, "animal is a genus," "human being is a species," "white is a material accident," "rational is a difference," belongs to metaphysics *or* to a synthesis of the particular sciences and logic. Is the proposition "human being is a species" a metaphysical truth or is it a truth that pertains to a science of the human being that uses logic?³ Ockham leans towards the second disjunct but nowhere identifies the two. He is not arguing that metaphysics is equivalent to a synthesis of the particular sciences and logic. Nor in fact does he deny that these propositions

³ *SL* 3-2, c. 22 (OPh. I, 543: 34–43): "Ideo dicendum est quod tales propositiones ['animal is a genus' etc.] vel pertinent ad metaphysicam ... vel tales pertinent ad aliquam scientiam specialem, ita quod aliquae pertinent ad unam scientiam specialem et aliae ad aliam, quae quodammodo subalternantur tam logicae quam aliis scientis particularibus, quae tamen scientiae in distinctis tractatibus non sunt traditae a philosophis, sed sine omni difficultate, nota logica et notis aliis scientiis, tales propositiones sunt notae."

could be metaphysical truths. The disjunction is not necessarily mutually exclusive but leaves open the possibility that they could belong to both.

Last but not least, Harry Klocker argues simply that metaphysics, for Ockham, is a logic of concepts and nothing else,

Metaphysics, as Ockham conceived it, can only represent the mental relationships which the mind itself establishes between its various conceptualizations of a myriad of concrete singulars. This is a science of concepts, a logic, which enables one to think consistently and coherently about reality, but which gives one no assurance that reality is in any way like the concepts which one forms of it. (Klocker 1992, 33)

Klocker's conclusion, at least in its stated form, is untenable because he overlooks Ockham's repeated and conspicuous claims that all concepts arise from our experience of concrete singulars and that we are very much capable of knowing when and how reality accords with the "concepts which one forms of it."

The view that Ockham was fundamentally antagonistic to metaphysics added fire to a radicalized and polemical image of Ockham that emerged just prior to the mid-20th century; the influence of Gilson and his vehement dismissal of Ockham and Ockhamism was profound. Not all scholars agreed. Philotheus Boehner, for instance, represents an older generation of Ockham scholar who always resisted the extremism of Gilson's apprentice sorcerer and Moody's revolutionary proto-empiricist and Moody himself was instrumental in fostering an appreciation for Ockham's logic. Since the 1980s, this image has undergone extensive revision by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic yet few have broached the subject of metaphysics as such. Recent commentators, particularly in the English-speaking world, have continued to concentrate on issues in his epistemology, theory of mind (cognition, concept formation), logic (semantics), various ontological issues (universals, relations, etc.) especially as connected to language, viz. how Ockham develops a semantic theory that clarifies his ontological commitments. What little has been written on Ockham's concept of metaphysics in the past twenty-five years is limited to a handful of German and French articles, with the exception of Boehner 1958e. These contributions unequivocally assert that Ockham has a concept of metaphysics and most of them claim that it remains largely Aristotelian however indelibly altered by Ockham's characteristic interest and emphasis on logic and language. The notion that Ockham's nominalism is decisive for this turn is implied but not explicitly thematized at length.

Of these articles, the majority give analyses of various key metaphysical terms with a view to establishing that Ockham irrefutably has a concept

of metaphysics and ultimately conclude that his metaphysics is primarily and essentially semantic. Boehner 1958e, originally published in 1947–1948, offers text selections with accompanying translations and commentary attesting to the presence of traditional metaphysical vocabulary in Ockham's corpus, e.g. being, existence, essence, quiddity, nothing. De Rijk 1987 and especially 1996 argue that Ockham is not anti-metaphysical but insists that metaphysics holds a modest place in his work. Leibold 1990 decides that metaphysics, for Ockham, is possible but only as *Sprachkritik*. Perler 1991 argues that Ockham's main contribution to the history of metaphysics is a semantic analysis of metaphysical terms. He is particularly interested in the copula and the semantic conditions of the predicability of the term 'being.' Similarly, Beckmann 1977 concentrates on the copula and the predication of 'being.' He revisits the topic in Beckmann 1994, where he concludes that metaphysics, for Ockham, is a grammar of 'being.' Finally, Honnefelder 2000 and Boulnois 2002a both argue that Ockham continues in the footsteps of Scotus. The former argues that Ockham's metaphysics is a universal formal semantics and the latter that Ockham furthers Scotus's onto-theological notion of metaphysics.

The subject of this book is Ockham's concept of metaphysics as it emerges throughout his corpus. By 'metaphysics', I mean very broadly that philosophical discipline as any medieval thinker would have defined it: an Aristotelian-inspired science of being in general and its attributes that somehow includes the consideration of first causes or principles that are identified with God in the Christian tradition. In the first instance, metaphysics is a universal science that seeks to understand all beings and the general features or properties they exhibit; it thus inquires into the ultimate categories of reality. In the second instance, metaphysics focuses on a particular being or beings, viz. first causes or God.

I do not think that Ockham radically departs from this broad characterization of metaphysics although it would be a mistake to argue that he develops a robust and elaborate concept of metaphysics. It is undeniably true that Ockham refrains from dwelling on metaphysics. Nevertheless, on the basis of a near exhaustive survey of his statements on metaphysics, which are sporadic and rarely prolix, I defend the two-fold claim that 1) Ockham considers metaphysics to qualify as scientific knowledge. It is a science, a viable and distinct branch of philosophy that contributes to our knowledge of the structure of reality. And, 2) Ockham provides us with a preliminary description of what metaphysics studies. He states that it has its own proper field of investigation: it is primarily the science of being and secondarily a science of God, who is the most perfect being.

I argue, therefore, that metaphysics is the study of all beings at a suitably general level. It presents and defends a general ontology that includes uncreated and created beings. This entails working out 1) what the basic entities of reality are, which for Ockham include radically particular substances, their essential parts, some of their equally particular inherent qualities, and God. 2) What their most general properties are, which include i) divine and non-divine attributes, viz. the so-called co-extensive transcendentals and perfections – one, good, true, wise, just, etc. and ii) non-divine attributes – being quantified or extended, being related, being temporally ordered, being spatially arranged, being numbered, being acted on and acting upon, being positioned, being qualified, etc. Finally 3) what connections these basic entities and their properties have to one another and their modes of being, such as subsistence and inherence, etc. Metaphysics would also include some analysis of its terms and concepts; this requires that the metaphysician is adequately proficient in logic, especially semantics. That, for instance, the term ‘being’ is univocally predicable of ‘God’ and ‘creatures’ as well as ‘substance’ and ‘accident’ is a metaphysical doctrine even though it relies on logical principles about the predication of terms in general. Moreover, metaphysics is closely connected to natural philosophy and theology insofar as various metaphysical truths can be incorporated into those intellectual disciplines for their proper inferences and demonstrations. Metaphysics can and does contribute to our natural knowledge of God.

Chapter 1 systematically analyses various features of scientific knowledge, concluding that metaphysics is appropriately deemed a science. The metaphysician knows a set of true and necessary propositions that are collected together on the basis of their subject and predicate terms. Ockham argues that metaphysical propositions bear two primary subject terms: ‘being’ and ‘God.’ Both are ultimately identified as concepts that are logical-linguistic signs, viz. the terms of mental propositions. ‘Being’ signifies and can refer to all beings – there is no such thing as an abstract entity that is being – while ‘God’ signifies and can refer to God. In chapter 2, I examine the concept of being; its origin in our experience of extramental and intramental beings; its signification over those beings; its status as a transcendental concept whereby its signification coincides with the signification of the terms of the categories and ‘God.’ This last point is key for my contention that metaphysics is essentially the defence of a given ontology. Chapter 3 addresses Ockham’s view on the univocal predication of the term ‘being’ and its relevance for metaphysics. I

explain Ockham's contention that 'being' is univocally predicable of 'God' and terms that signify and can refer to creatures as well as of substance and accident terms, emphasizing that it is a semantic doctrine justified by his ontological commitment to the existence of God, substances, and qualities. Without jeopardizing divine alterity, this doctrine renders God a subject of metaphysics and thus brings us to chapter 4, where I turn to the theology of the wayfarer (*viator*) and our concept of God. After describing the *viator's* theology at some length, I explore the relations that obtain between theology, metaphysics, and natural philosophy (physics). Considering God under a description that stems from our natural experience of creatures, metaphysics and physics together complement a purely theological understanding of God.

I follow Ockham's expressly articulated views and arguments. I discuss or cite virtually every passage where the term 'metaphysics' arises in his work. Each of the ensuing chapters contains an explanation of aspects of his logic, theory of cognition, and epistemology that comprise the relevant background necessary for grasping the full import of his concise statements about metaphysics. Much of this material has been addressed by existing secondary literature, certain topics have been discussed extensively, for instance Ockham's changing theory of the ontology of concepts, the presence of simple connotative concepts in mental language, concepts as natural signs endowed with signification, his so-called theory of reference or supposition, the distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, *possibilia* and *temporalia*, our ability to prove the existence of God through efficient causality. I provide notes to the literature that I used, often with an accompanying overview of the various interpretative positions taken by the authors of that literature who generally provide excellent, precise, and helpful readings of Ockham. The present work has benefited greatly from their prior contributions to Ockham studies.

By the end of this book, it should be clear that I strongly disagree with the Gilsonian vision of Ockham as virulently anti-metaphysical. I also disagree with the more nuanced view that he eradicates metaphysics in favour of the particular sciences of natural philosophy in conjunction with logic. I do agree with the conclusion that Ockham's metaphysics crucially includes an analysis of its key terms and concepts but I resist the notion that such analysis exhausts metaphysical speculation. However little Ockham may have overtly written on the concept of metaphysics as such, what he did write asserts that metaphysical knowledge is primarily concerned with *being(s)* and not only the terms and concepts that refer

to those beings. My reading of Ockham on metaphysics supplements the handful of positive accounts that exist thus far and more broadly contributes to the ongoing project of rectifying the old-fashioned and polemical image of Ockham. I certainly hope it dispels the notion that Ockham's nominalist commitments and supposedly destructive fideism rendered him allergic to metaphysics. My aim is to show that in Ockham we see a historical yet no less compelling example of how a logically rigorous nominalist and committed Christian theologian approaches the science of metaphysics.

CHAPTER ONE

METAPHYSICS AS A SCIENCE

Ockham briefly but explicitly and frequently remarks that metaphysics is a science (*scientia*) and thus qualifies as scientific knowledge.¹ His conception of knowledge, with a particular emphasis on scientific knowledge, suggests itself therefore as an appropriate point of departure for an inquiry into metaphysics.² Ockham discusses knowledge in the introductions to his commentaries on Lombard's *Sentences*, Aristotle's *Physics* and logical works, as well as in a number of *Quodlibeta*. The prologue to the *Expositio in libros Physicorum Aristotelis* (hereafter *Expositio Physicorum*), Ockham's penultimate work on natural philosophy, contains his most detailed treatment of the subject. Second in importance is the prologue to the *Ordinatio*, Ockham's revised commentary on Book I of the *Sentences*, over the course of which he considers various aspects of knowledge in a disparate and fragmented fashion. Other salient sources include three concise introductions to two works on natural philosophy, the preamble to the *Summula philosophiae naturalis* (hereafter *Summula*) and the prologue to the *Brevis summa Libri Physicorum* (hereafter *Brevis Physicorum*), and to one work on logic, the preface to the *Expositio in libros artis logicae* (hereafter *Prooemium*). Last but not least, *Quaestiones variae 2* on *Quid sit subiectum scientiae 'de anima'*.

In the first section of this chapter, we see that Ockham conceives of knowledge as a real quality existing in the intellect; it is an intellectual habit and its act. Ockham, like most medievals, accepts the Aristotelian view that habits are enduring yet acquired psychological capacities or propensities to perform and re-perform given acts. 'Knowledge' refers

¹ The term '*scientia*' can be translated as 'knowledge' or 'science.' In what follows, I use both depending on the context. I will refer to human knowledge at its most rigorous and accomplished as 'scientific knowledge' and 'scientific knowledge properly so-called.' I shall use 'science' to refer to bodies of knowledge like logic, natural philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, etc. By 'science,' we should not understand the contemporary notion of quantitative, experimental sciences.

² On Ockham's conception of scientific knowledge and science, see especially Maurer 1958; 1974; 1999, 135–148; Leinsle 1980; Beckmann 1981; Perini-Santos 2006, 129–159. For briefer discussions, see Goddu 1984, Introduction; Livesey 1985 and 1989.

equally to both persistent intellectual habits ('habitual knowledge') and the temporary or momentary acts they cause ('actual knowledge').

Ockham gives four definitions of 'knowledge' presented in the prologue to *Expositio Physicorum* that I discuss in the second section of this chapter. What emerges is that knowledge of the highest order, proper scientific knowledge or scientific knowledge properly so-called (*scientia proprie dicta*), are those intellectual acts by which we evidently judge a necessary proposition to be true that results from a demonstration from necessary principles (premises). That is, the intellectual act by which one knows the conclusions of demonstrations. In a somewhat looser sense, those intellectual acts by which we evidently judge a necessary proposition to be true irrespective of whether it is the result of a demonstration are also deemed scientific. Here, the intellectual acts by which one knows the principles and the conclusion of demonstrations are both scientific. Furthermore, as addressed in section three, Ockham advances the view that a science is best construed as an aggregate of many habits and acts that individually qualify as the scientific knowledge of its principles and conclusions that together form its numerous demonstrations. We encounter Ockham's principle of unity for a science: the habits and acts of a given science are affiliated with one another and thus unified on the basis of the subject and predicate terms of the propositions they cognize.

What are the subject and object of a science and can one science have multiple subjects and objects? In the fourth section of this chapter, I explain that Ockham identifies the subject of a science with the subject term of its conclusion(s) and the object of a science with its conclusion(s). A science will have as many subjects as it has conclusions bearing distinct subject terms with the consequence that subject terms are not necessarily what distinguish one science from another. Moreover, a science will have as many objects as it has conclusions. The same subject term and indeed the very same proposition can appear in any number of sciences as a conclusion or principle without compromising their mutual distinction.

I turn away from the internal organizational structure of sciences in section five to explore the difference between real sciences that study real and generally extramental entities and rational sciences that exclusively study mental objects, namely concepts, terms, propositions. Then I explain in the sixth section how Ockham establishes the possibility of scientific knowledge that is necessary in the face of a radically contingent universe whose entities are incessantly passing in and out of existence. Finally, I address the question of whether metaphysics is a science. By

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