

Summa Logicae

PART I On Terms

14: ON THE UNIVERSAL

It is not enough for the logician to have a merely general knowledge of terms; he needs a deep understanding of the concept of a term. Therefore, after discussing some general divisions among terms we should examine in detail the various headings under these divisions.

First, we should deal with terms of second intention and afterwards with terms of first intention. I have said that 'universal,' 'genus,' and 'species' are examples of terms of second intention. We must discuss those terms of second intention which are called the five universals, but first we should consider the common term 'universal.' It is predicated of every universal and is opposed to the notion of a particular.

First, it should be noted that the term 'particular' has two senses. In the first sense a particular is that which is one and not many. Those who hold that a universal is a certain quality residing in the mind which is predicable of many (not suppositing for itself, of course, but for the many of which it is predicated) must grant that, in this sense of the word, every universal is a particular. Just as a word, even if convention makes it common, is a particular, the intention of the soul signifying many is numerically one thing, a particular; for although it signifies many things it is nonetheless one thing and not many.

In another sense of the word we use 'particular' to mean that which is one and not many and which cannot function as a sign of many. Taking 'particular'

in this sense no universal is a particular, since every universal is capable of signifying many and of being predicated of many. Thus, if we take the term 'universal' to mean that which is not one in number, as many do, then, I want to say that nothing is a universal. One could, of course, abuse the expression and say that a population constitutes a single universal because it is not one but many. But that would be puerile.

Therefore, it ought to be said that every universal is one particular thing and that it is not a universal except in its signification, in its signifying many things. This is what Avicenna¹ means to say in his commentary on the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*. He says, "One form in the intellect is related to many things, and in this respect it is a universal; for it is an intention of the intellect which has an invariant relationship to anything you choose." He then continues, "Although this form is a universal in its relationship to individuals, it is a particular in its relationship to the particular soul in which it resides; for it is just one form among many in the intellect." He means to say that a universal is an intention of a particular soul. Insofar as it can be predicated of many things not for itself but for these many, it is said to be a universal; but insofar as it is a particular form actually existing in the intellect, it is said to be a particular. Thus 'particular' is predicated of a universal in the first sense but not in the second. In the same way we say that the sun is a universal cause and, nevertheless, that it is really and truly a particular or individual cause. For the sun is said to be a universal cause because it is the cause of many things (i.e., every object that is generable and corruptible), but it is said to be a particular cause because it is one cause and

1. [The reference is to the renowned Islamic philosopher and physician Ibn Sina (980–1037), also known as Avicenna.]

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not many. In the same way the intention of the soul is said to be a universal because it is a sign predicable of many things, but it is said to be a particular because it is one thing and not many.

But it should be noted that there are two kinds of universals. Some things are universal by nature; that is, by nature they are signs predicable of many in the same way that the smoke is by nature a sign of fire; weeping, a sign of grief; and laughter, a sign of internal joy. The intention of the soul, of course, is a universal by nature. Thus, no substance outside the soul, nor any accident outside the soul is a universal of this sort. It is of this kind of universal that I shall speak in the following chapters.

Other things are universals by convention. Thus, a spoken word, which is numerically one quality, is a universal; it is a sign conventionally appointed for the signification of many things. Thus, since the word is said to be common, it can be called a universal. But notice it is not by nature, but only by convention, that this label applies.

15: THAT THE UNIVERSAL IS NOT A THING OUTSIDE THE MIND

But it is not enough just to state one's position; one must defend it by philosophical arguments. Therefore, I shall set forth some arguments for my view, and then corroborate it by an appeal to the authorities.

That no universal is a substance existing outside the mind can be proved in a number of ways:

No universal is a particular substance, numerically one; for if this were the case, then it would follow that Socrates is a universal; for there is no good reason why one substance should be a universal rather than another. Therefore no particular substance is a universal; every substance is numerically one and a particular. For every substance is either one thing and not many or it is many things. Now, if a substance is one thing and not many, then it is numerically one; for that is what we mean by 'numerically one.' But if, on the other hand, some substance is several things, it is either several particular things or several universal things. If the first alternative is chosen, then it follows that some substance would be several particular substances; and consequently that some substance would be several men. But although the universal would be

distinguished from a single particular, it would not be distinguished from several particulars. If, however, some substance were to be several universal entities, I take one of those universal entities and ask, "Is it many things or is it one and not many?" If the second is the case then it follows that the thing is particular. If the first is the case then I ask, "Is it several particular things or several universal things?" Thus, either an infinite regress will follow or it will be granted that no substance is a universal in a way that would be incompatible with its also being a particular. From this it follows that no substance is a universal.

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

Again, if the view in question were true, no individual would be able to be created. Something of the individual would pre-exist it, for the whole individual would not take its existence from nothing if the universal which is in it were already in something else. For the same reason it would follow that God could not annihilate an individual substance without destroying the other individuals of the same kind. If He were to annihilate some individual, he would destroy the whole which is essentially that individual and consequently, He would destroy the universal which is in that thing and in others of the same essence. Consequently, other things of the same essence would not remain, for they could not continue to exist without the universal which constitutes a part of them.

Again, such a universal could not be construed as something completely extrinsic to the essence of an individual; therefore, it would belong to the essence of the individual; and, consequently, an individual would be composed of universals, so that the individual would not be any more a particular than a universal.

Again, it follows that something of the essence of Christ would be miserable and damned, since that common nature really existing in Christ would be damned in the damned individual; for surely that essence is also in Judas. But this is absurd.

Many other arguments could be brought forth, but in the interests of brevity, I shall dispense with them.

Instead, I shall corroborate my account by an appeal to authorities.

First, in the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle is treating the question of whether a universal is a substance. He shows that no universal is a substance. Thus, he says, "it is impossible that substance be something that can be predicated universally."

Again, in the tenth book of the *Metaphysics*, he says, "Thus, if, as we argued in the discussions on substance and being, no universal can be a substance, it is not possible that a universal be a substance in the sense of a one over and against the many."

From these remarks it is clear that, in Aristotle's view, although universals can supposit for substances, no universal is a substance.

Again, the Commentator in his forty-fourth comment on the seventh book of the *Metaphysics* says, "In the individual, the only substance is the particular form and matter out of which the individual is composed."

Again, in the forty-fifth comment, he says, "Let us say, therefore, that it is impossible that one of those things we call universals be the substance of anything, although they do express the substances of things."

And, again, in the forty-seventh comment, "It is impossible that they (universals) be parts of substances existing of and by themselves."

Again, in the second comment on the eighth book of the *Metaphysics*, he says, "No universal is either a substance or a genius."

Again, in the sixth comment on the tenth book, he says, "Since universals are not substances, it is clear that the common notion of being is not a substance existing outside the mind."

Using these and many other authorities, the general point emerges: no universal is a substance regardless of the viewpoint from which we consider the matter. Thus, the viewpoint from which we consider the matter is irrelevant to the question of whether something is a substance. Nevertheless, the meaning of a term is relevant to the question of whether the expression 'substance' can be predicated of the term. Thus, if the term 'dog' in the proposition 'The dog is an animal' is used to stand for the barking animal, the proposition is true; but if it is used for the celestial body which goes by that name, the proposition is false. But it is impossible that one and the same thing

should be a substance from one viewpoint and not a substance from another.

Therefore, it ought to be granted that no universal is a substance regardless of how it is considered. On the contrary, every universal is an intention of the mind which, on the most probable account, is identical with the act of understanding. Thus, it is said that the act of understanding by which I grasp men is a natural sign of men in the same way that weeping is a natural sign of grief. It is a natural sign such that it can stand for men in mental propositions in the same way that a spoken word can stand for things in spoken propositions.

That the universal is an intention of the soul is clearly expressed by Avicenna in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, in which he comments, "I say, therefore, that there are three senses of 'universal.' For we say that something is a universal if (like 'man') it is actually predicated of many things; and we also call an intention a universal if it could be predicated of many." Then follows the remark, "An intention is also called a universal if there is nothing inconceivable in its being predicated of many."

From these remarks it is clear that the universal is an intention of the soul capable of being predicated of many. The claim can be corroborated by argument. For every one agrees that a universal is something predicable of many, but only an intention of the soul or a conventional sign is predicated. No substance is ever predicated of anything. Therefore, only an intention of the soul or a conventional sign is a universal; but I am not here using the term 'universal' for conventional signs, but only for signs that are universals by nature. That substance is not capable of functioning as predicate is clear; for if it were, it would follow that a proposition would be composed of particular substances; and, consequently, the subject would be in Rome and the predicate in England which is absurd.

Furthermore, propositions occur only in the mind, in speech, or in writing; therefore, their parts can exist only in the mind, in speech, and in writing. Particular substances, however, cannot themselves exist in the mind, in speech, or in writing. Thus, no proposition can be composed of particular substances. Propositions are, however, composed of universals; therefore, universals cannot conceivably be substances.

16: AGAINST SCOTUS² ACCOUNT
OF THE UNIVERSAL

It may be clear to many that a universal is not a substance outside the mind which exists in, but is distinct from, particulars. Nevertheless, some want to claim that the universal is, in some way, outside the soul and in particulars; and while they do not want to say that a universal is really distinct from particulars, they say that it is formally distinct from particulars. Thus, they say that in Socrates there is human nature which is contracted to Socrates by an individual difference which is not really, but only formally, distinct from that nature. Thus, while there are not two things, one is not formally the other.

I do not find this view tenable:

First, in creatures there can never be any distinction outside the mind unless there are distinct things; if, therefore, there is any distinction between the nature and the difference, it is necessary that they really be distinct things. I prove my premise by the following syllogism: the nature is not formally distinct from itself; this individual difference is formally distinct from this nature; therefore, this individual difference is not this nature.

2 Again, the same entity is not both common and proper, but in their view the individual difference is proper and the universal is common; therefore, no universal is identical with an individual difference.

3 Again, opposites cannot be attributed to one and the same created thing, but *common* and *proper* are opposites; therefore, the same thing is not both common and proper. Nevertheless, that conclusion would follow if an individual difference and a common nature were the same thing.

4 Again, if a common nature were the same thing as an individual difference, there would be as many common natures as there are individual differences; and, consequently, none of those natures would be common, but each would be peculiar to the difference with which it is identical.

5 Again, whenever one thing is distinct from another it is distinguished from that thing either of and by itself or by something intrinsic to itself. Now, the humanity of Socrates is something different from the

humanity of Plato; therefore, they are distinguished of and by themselves and not by differences that are added to them.

Again, according to Aristotle things differing in species also differ in number, but the nature of a man and the nature of a donkey differ in species of and by themselves; therefore, they are numerically distinguished of and by themselves; therefore, each of them is numerically one of and by itself.

Again, that which cannot belong to many cannot be predicated of many; but such a nature, if it really is the same thing as the individual difference, cannot belong to many since it cannot belong to any other particular. Thus, it cannot be predicable of many; but, then, it cannot be a universal.

Again, take an individual difference and the nature which it contracts. Either the difference between these two things is greater or less than the difference between two particulars. It is not greater because they do not differ really; particulars, however, do differ really. But neither is it less because then they would admit of one and the same definition, since two particulars can admit of the same definition. Consequently, if one of them is, by itself, one in number, the other will also be.

Again, either the nature is the individual difference or it is not. If it is the difference I argue as follows: this individual difference is proper and not common; this individual difference is this nature; therefore this nature is proper and not common, but that is what I set out to prove. Likewise, I argue as follows: the individual difference is not formally distinct from the individual difference; the individual difference is the nature; therefore, the nature is not formally distinct from the individual difference. But if it be said that the individual difference is not the nature, my point has been proved; for it follows that if the individual difference is not the nature, the individual difference is not really the nature; for from the opposite of the consequent follows the opposite of the antecedent. Thus, if it is true that the individual difference really is the nature, then the individual difference is the nature. The inference is valid, for from a determinable taken with its determination (where the determination does not detract from or diminish the determinable) one can infer the determinable taken by itself; but 'really' does not express a determination that detracts or diminishes. Therefore, it follows that

2. [The reference is to the influential Scottish philosopher John Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308).]

if the individual difference is really the nature, the individual difference is the nature.

Therefore, one should grant that in created things there is no such thing as a formal distinction. All things which are distinct in creatures are really distinct and, therefore, different things. In regard to creatures modes of argument like the following ought never be denied: this is A; this is B; therefore, B is A; and this is not A; this is B; therefore, B is not A. Likewise, one ought never deny that, as regards creatures, there are distinct things where contradictory notions hold. The only exception would be the case where contradictory notions hold true because of some syncategorematic element or similar determination, but in the same present case this is not so.

Therefore, we ought to say with the philosophers that in a particular substance there is nothing substantial except the particular form, the particular matter, or the composite of the two. And, therefore, no one ought to think that in Socrates there is a humanity or a human nature which is distinct from Socrates and to which there is added an individual difference which contracts that nature. The only thing in Socrates which can be construed as substantial is this particular matter, this particular form, or the composite of the two. And, therefore, every essence and quiddity and whatever belongs to substance, if it is really outside the soul, is just matter, form, or the composite of these or, following the doctrine of the Peripatetics, a separated and immaterial substance.

17: RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS

The ability of a doctrine to handle objections is a sign of its truth. Consequently, I shall outline some objections against the foregoing and show how they can be met. Many men of no small authority hold that the universal is, in some sense, an entity outside the soul and belonging to the essence of particular substances. They bring forth arguments and authorities to show this:

(1) It is claimed that when things both really agree and really differ, there is something by which they agree and something else by which they differ. But Socrates and Plato really agree and really differ; therefore, they must agree and differ with respect to different things. They agree with respect to humanity, matter, and form; therefore, they each include an

entity over and above these things, an entity in terms of which they are distinguished. These additional entities are called individual differences.

(2) Again, Socrates and Plato agree more than Socrates and a donkey; therefore, there is something in which Plato and Socrates agree but something in which Socrates and the donkey do not agree. However, Socrates and Plato do not agree in anything that is numerically one. Therefore, that in which they agree is not a particular; it must be something common.

(3) Again, in the tenth book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that in every genus there is some one thing that is first and the measure of all other things in that genus. But no particular can be the measure of all other particulars in the same genus, for no particular can be the measure of all individuals of the same species; therefore, there is something over and above particulars.

(4) Again, every common notion belongs to the essence of what is subsumed under it; therefore, a universal belongs to the essence of substance. But non-substantiality is not a part of the essence of any substance; therefore, some universal must be a substance.

(5) Again, if no universal were a substance, then all universals would be accidents and, consequently, all the categories would be accidents. Thus, the category of substance would itself be an accident. Consequently, some accident would be more general than substance. Indeed, it would follow that one and the same thing would be more general than itself; for if universals are accidents, they must be placed in the genus of quality; and, consequently, the category of quality would be common to all the universals. Thus, it would be common to the universal which is itself the category of quality.

Other arguments and innumerable authorities are adduced in behalf of this view, but in the interests of brevity I shall not consider them now. I shall, however, refer to them in a number of places later in the book. To the objections raised I respond as follows:

Response to (1) To the first objection I grant that Socrates and Plato both really agree and really differ; they agree specifically and differ numerically. But I want to claim that it is in terms of the same thing that they agree specifically and differ numerically; and here I do not differ from those who distinguish

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between the common nature and the individual difference, for they are forced to say that it is in terms of the same thing that the individual difference is both really the same as and formally different from the nature. One might object here that the same thing cannot be the cause both of agreement and of the difference which is its opposite. While the claim is true, it is beside the point; for specific identity and numerical difference are not intrinsically opposed. It ought to be granted, therefore, that Socrates agrees specifically with Plato and differs numerically from him by one and the same thing.

Response to (2) In the same way the second argument fails. For it does not follow that if Socrates and Plato agree more than Socrates and the donkey, there is some one thing with respect to which they agree more. But it is sufficient they agree more of and by themselves. Thus, I say that Socrates agrees more with Plato in virtue of his intellective soul; and, similarly, that he agrees with Plato more than with the donkey with respect to his whole being. Thus, if we are to be accurate we should not say that Socrates and Plato agree in some one thing which is their essence; we should say rather that they agree in several things, for they agree in their forms and in themselves taken as wholes.

Of course, if by contradiction there was one nature in both of them, they would agree in that too; but one might as well say that if by contradiction God were frivolous, He would rule the world badly.

Response to (3) With regard to the third point one should say that although an individual may not be the measure of all the individuals of the same genus or the same lowest level species, nonetheless, one and the same individual can be the measure of individuals from another genus or of many individuals from the same species. This is all that is needed to preserve Aristotle's view.

Response to (4) The response to the fourth objection is that, properly speaking, no universal belongs to the essence of any substance, for every universal is an intention of the soul or a conventional sign and nothing of either sort can belong to the essence of substance. Consequently, no genus nor any species nor any other universal belongs to the essence of any substance. But, strictly speaking, it should be said that a universal expresses or indicates the nature of a substance; that is, it expresses the nature which is

a substance. The Commentator makes this point in the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*, when he notes that although it is impossible that any universal belong to the essence of anything, universals do express the essence of things. Thus, all authorities who say that universals belong to the essence of substance or are in substance or are parts of substances should be interpreted as saying only that universals indicate, express, designate, and signify the essences of things.

But one might object along the following lines: common names like 'man' and 'animal' signify substantial entities but not particular entities. The items they signify are substantial; but if they were particular substances, the term 'man,' for example, would signify all men and clearly it does not. *'2nd sub'*

In response to this objection I want to claim that common names signify only particulars. Thus, the name 'man' does not signify anything other than the thing which is a particular man. Consequently, the only substantial entity for which it can suppose is a particular man. Indeed, it ought to be granted that the name 'man' signifies indifferently all particular men, but it does not follow that the term 'man' is equivocal. The reason is that although it signifies several individuals equally, it signifies them all by one convention; and in signifying them it is subordinated to only one concept and not several. Thus, it can be predicated of them univocally.

Response to (5) With respect to the last objection it should be noted that those who hold that intentions of the soul are qualities of the mind have to claim that all universals are accidents; nevertheless, not all universals are signs of accidents. On the contrary some are signs of substances only; they constitute the category of substance. Other universals constitute the other categories. Therefore, it should be granted that the category of substance is an accident, although it signifies substances and not accidents; and, consequently, it should be granted that some accident (i.e., the accident which is a sign only of substances) is, of itself, more general than substance. But this is not more perplexing than the claim that some word is a name of many substances.

But does not this imply that one and the same thing is more general than itself?

I think not, for in order that one thing be more general than another a distinction between them is required. Thus, although all universals are qualities

one can deny that all universals are per se less general than the common term 'quality.' The general term 'quality' is a quality; but this is not a case where one term is more or less general than another, for we are dealing here with just one term.

One might also object that since no one term is predicable of different categories, 'quality' cannot be common to different categories. But here we must ask whether the categories are being taken significatively or not. When the categories are not taken significatively, one and the same thing can be predicated of different categories. Thus, the proposition "'Substance' is a quality" is true if the subject supposits materially or simply for an intention. In the same way "'Quantity' is a quality" is true if 'quantity' does not stand significatively. It is in this way that the same thing is predicated of different categories. In the same way the proposition "'Substance' is a word" and "'Quality' is a word" are both true provided the subjects are suppositing materially and not significatively.

Likewise, one might object that the notion of *spiritual quality* is more general than any category, for it is predicated of several different categories and no one category is predicated of all the categories. The correct response here is that the notion *spiritual quality* is not predicated of all the categories when these are taken significatively, but only when they are taken as signs. Thus, it does not follow that the notion of *spiritual quality* is more general than any category; for one term is more general than another if, when

both are taken significatively, the first is predicated of more items than the second.

A similar difficulty arises with the name 'expression,' for this name is one subsumed under the notion 'name.' 'Expression' is a name and not every name is the name 'expression.' Nonetheless, the name 'expression' is somehow more general than all names, more general even than the term 'name'; for every name is an expression, but not every expression is a name. Thus, it seems that the same thing is both more general and less general than some other thing. The difficulty is removed when we note that the argument just presented is conclusive only if the relevant common terms are suppositing uniformly in all the propositions in which they appear. Careful consideration shows that they are not.

Nevertheless, one could use the term 'less general' in a different way. He could argue that one term is less general than another if the second is predicated of the first (along with others) when the first is suppositing in some way or other. Thus, it might be that the more general term cannot be predicated of its inferior when the inferior is suppositing in a different way, so that it would not be predicated of that inferior when it supposits in all ways. In this new sense one could hold that the same thing is both more and less general than some other thing, but in the revised usage 'less general' and 'more general' cease to function as opposites. They are simply different notions.