

Duns Scotus: Ordinatio II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1*

**[Whether a material substance is individual
or singular from itself or from its nature]**

[1] With regard to the third distinction, we should investigate personal distinctness among angels. Now to see about this distinctness in [angels], we should first of all investigate individual distinctness in material substances. Just as different persons say different things about [individual distinctness in material substances], so consequently do they say [different things] about the plurality of individuals in the same angelic species. To get a clear look at the diverse positions on the distinctness or non-distinctness of material substances that are offered, I shall inquire one by one into the diverse ways of putting forward [such distinctness]. First of all, [I ask] whether a material substance is individual or singular from itself or from its nature.

[The Principal Arguments]

[2] That it *is* [individual of its nature]: The Philosopher proves against Plato that (*Met.* 7.13 [1038^b10–11]):

The substance of any given thing is proper to that to which it belongs, and is not in another.

Therefore, *etc.* Hence a material substance from its very nature, putting all else aside, is proper to that in which it is present, such that from its nature it cannot be in another. Therefore, from its nature it is individual.

[3] To the contrary: Whatever from its account (*ratio*) is present in something *per se* is present in it in anything at all. Hence, if the nature stone were of itself a *this*, whatever the nature stone would be in, that nature would be this stone. The consequent is inadmissible (speaking of determinate singularity—and the question is about this).

[4] Besides, for that to which one of a pair of opposites is suitable of itself, the other opposite is incompatible with it of itself. Therefore, if the nature of itself were numerically one, numerical multiplicity is incompatible with it.

* Translated from *Iohanni Duns Scoti opera omnia* tom. VII, studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae (ad fidem codicum edita), praeside P. Carolo Balić, Civitatis Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973, 391–410.

[Roger Marston's View]

[5] Here it is claimed that just as the nature is formally the nature from itself, so too it is singular from itself, such that it isn't necessary to seek a cause of singularity other than the cause of the nature—as if the nature were first (temporally or naturally) the nature before it is singular, and thereafter were contracted by something advening on it so that it becomes singular.

[6] This is proved by an analogy. Just as a nature from itself has genuine *esse* outside the soul, but has *esse* in the soul only by another, that is, by the soul itself—and the reason is because genuine *esse* is suitable to it simply, whereas *esse* in the soul is its *esse* in a respect—so too universality is suitable to a thing only according to its *esse* in a respect, namely in the soul, whereas singularity is suitable to a thing according to its genuine *esse*, and hence from itself and simply. Therefore, the cause to be looked for is the cause whereby the nature is universal. (The intellect is given as this cause.) Yet no cause that mediates between [the nature] and its singularity whereby the nature is singular need be looked for, other than the nature of the thing. Rather, the same causes that are causes of the unity of the thing are also causes of its singularity. Therefore, [the nature is singular from itself].

[Refutation of Marston]

[7] Against this view it is argued as follows. [First], the object insofar as it is an object is naturally prior to the act itself. And in that “prior [condition],” according to [Marston], the object is singular from itself—since this is always suitable to a nature not taken in a respect or according to the *esse* that it has in the soul. Therefore, an intellect that understands the object under the account *universal* understands it under an account opposed to its own account, because as [the object] precedes the act it is determined from itself to the opposite of the account *universal*.

[8] [Second] the real, proper, and sufficient unity of anything that is less than numerical unity is not of itself one by a numerical unity (or is not of itself a *this*). But the proper, real, or sufficient unity of the nature that exists in this stone is less than numerical unity. Therefore, *etc.*

[9] The major premiss [in n. 8] is clear of itself, since nothing is of itself one by a unity greater than the unity sufficient for it. For if the proper unity that is due to something of itself were less than numerical unity, numerical unity would not be suitable to it from its own nature and according to itself.

Otherwise, precisely from its own nature, it would have both greater and lesser unity—and these are opposites with regard to the same thing in the same respect. A multiplicity that is opposed to a greater unity can obtain with a lesser unity without contradiction. [However], the multiplicity cannot obtain with a greater unity, since it is incompatible with it. Therefore, *etc.*

[10] Proof of the minor premiss [in n. 8]: If there is no real unity of the nature less than [the unity of] singularity, and every unity other than the unity of singularity and [the unity] of the specific nature is less than real unity, then there will be no real unity that is less than numerical unity. But the consequent is false, as I shall prove in seven¹ ways; therefore, *etc.*

[11] [The First Way] The first way [to prove that there is a real unity that is less than numerical unity] is as follows. According to the Philosopher (*Met.* 10.1 [1052^b18]):

In every genus there is a first one that is the rule and measure of everything belonging to the genus.

[12] This unity of the first measurer is real, [shown as follows]. The Philosopher proves that the primary account of measuring is suitable to the one, and in turn states how that is one to which the account of measuring is suitable in every genus ([1052^b19–1054^a19]). However, the unity [of the first measurer] belongs to something insofar as it is first in the genus. Therefore, [this unity] is real, since the [items] measured are real and are really measured. A real being, however, cannot be really measured by a [mere] being of reason. Therefore, [this unity] is real.

[13] Furthermore, this unity is not numerical, [established as follows (nn. 13–15)]. There is no singular in a genus that is the measure of all those [items] that are in the genus. For, according to the Philosopher (*Met.* 3.3 [999a12–13]):

Among individuals belonging to the same species, it is not the case that this [individual] is prior and that one posterior.

[14] The ‘prior’ [in this passage]—although the Commentator explains it as the prior constituting the posterior ([*Met.* 3 com.11]), that is nevertheless irrelevant. For in this passage, the Philosopher intends to give the reason why Plato postulated a separated account for the species but not for the genus. For among species there is an essential order, on account of which the posterior can be reduced to the prior. And therefore, according to Plato, it is not necessary to postulate an Idea for the genus, “through participation

¹ Scotus writes “five or six ways” but in fact there are seven: n. 11, n. 16, n. 18, n. 19, n. 20, n. 23, n. 28.

in which the species are what they are,” but rather [only] an Idea for the species, to which all the other genera are reduced. Yet according to Plato (and according to the Philosopher as he reports him), there is no such [essential] order among individuals, whether one [individual] constitutes another or not. Hence [the Commentator’s remarks are irrelevant].

[15] Therefore, the Philosopher’s intent in this passage is to agree with Plato that among individuals belonging to the same species there is no essential order. Hence no individual is *per se* the measure of those in its species. Therefore, unity is neither numerical nor individual.

[16] [The Second Way] Besides, secondly, I prove that the same consequent [in n. 10] is false [as follows]. According to the Philosopher in *Phys.* 7.4 [249^a3–8], comparison occurs in an atomic species because there is one nature—it does not, however, occur in a genus, since the genus does not have such a unity.

[17] This difference [between generic unity and specific unity] is not [a difference] of unity according to reason. For within the intellect, the concept of a genus is just as numerically one as the concept of a species is. Otherwise, no concept would be said *in quid* of many species, and thus no concept would be a genus; instead, there would be as many concepts said of the [various] species as there are concepts of those species—and then in each of the predications the same would be predicated of itself. Likewise, the unity of a concept—or the disunity of a concept—is irrelevant to the Philosopher’s intent in this passage, namely [whether] there is a comparison or not. Hence the Philosopher means in this passage that the specific nature is one by the unity of a specific nature. But he does not mean that [the specific nature] is one in this way by a numerical unity, since in a numerical unity no comparison occurs. Therefore, [specific unity must be real and less than numerical unity].

[18] [The Third Way] According to the Philosopher in *Met.* 5.15 [1021^a9–12], the same, the similar, and the equal are all founded on one. As a result, even though a similarity has for its foundation a thing in the genus of Quality, such a relation [of similarity] is nevertheless not real unless it has a real foundation and a real proximate account for the founding. Hence the unity that is required in the foundation of a relation of similarity is real. However, it is not a numerical unity, since nothing that is one and the same is similar or equal to itself.

[19] [The Fourth Way] For one real opposition there are two primary real extremes [of the opposition]. But contrareity is a real opposition. This is apparent because, putting aside any operation of the intellect, one [contrary]

really corrupts or destroys the other [contrary], and [it does so] only because they are contraries. Hence each primary extreme of this opposition is real and one by some real unity. Not by a numerical unity, however, because in that case precisely this white or precisely that white would be the primary contrary of this black—and this is inadmissible, since then there would be as many primary contrarieties as there are individual contraries. Therefore, [this unity is real and less than numerical unity].

[20] [The Fifth Way] For one action of sensing there is one object according to some real unity. But this is not numerical. Therefore, there is some real unity other than numerical unity.

[21] Proof of the minor² premiss [in n.20]: The power that cognizes an object in this fashion, namely insofar as it is one by this unity, cognizes it insofar as it is distinct from anything that is not one by this unity. But sense does not cognize the object insofar as it is distinct from anything that is not one by that numerical unity. This is apparent, because no sense distinguishes this ray of sunlight to differ numerically from another ray, even though they nevertheless are diverse due to the Sun's motion. If all the common sensibles, for instance diversity in place or position, were put aside, and if two amounts that are completely similar and equal in whiteness were postulated to be simultaneously by Divine power, vision would not distinguish that there are two white [things] there. (Nevertheless, if [vision] were to cognize one of them insofar as it is one by a numerical unity, it would cognize it insofar as it is one and distinct by a numerical unity!)

[22] In line with [n.20], it could be argued that the primary object of sensing is one in itself by some real unity, since just as the object of this power, insofar as it is an object, precedes the intellect, so too it precedes any action of the intellect with regard to its real unity. But this reasoning does not conclude in the way [n.20] does. For it could be maintained that some primary object, to the extent that it is adequate to a power, is something common that is abstracted from all the particular objects, and so has only a unity of commonness with respect to those many particular objects. But with regard to one object of one act of sensing, it does not seem to deny that [this one object] has a real unity that is less than numerical unity.

[23] [The Sixth Way] If every real unity is numerical, then every real diversity is numerical. But the consequent is false, since every numerical diversity, insofar as it is numerical, is equal, and so all things would be equally distinct—and in that case, it would follow that the intellect could

² Reading *minor* for *maior*.

not abstract something common from Plato and Socrates any more than from Socrates and a line, and every universal would be a pure fiction of the intellect.

[24] The first consequence [in n. 23] is proved in two ways. [First], *one* and *many*, *same* and *diverse*, are opposites (from *Met.* 10.3 [1054^a20–21 and 1054^b22–23]). Yet one of a pair of opposites is said in as many ways as the other one is (from *Top.* 1.15 [106^b14–15]). Therefore, to any unity whatever there corresponds its own proper diversity.

[25] [Second], for any diversity whatsoever, each extreme is one in itself, and in the same way in which it is one in itself it seems to be diverse from the other extreme, such that the unity of one extreme seems to be *per se* the account for the diversity of the other extreme.

[26] This is confirmed in another way, since if the only real unity in this thing is numerical, whatever unity is in that thing is from itself numerically one. Hence this [thing] and that [thing] are primarily diverse according to every beingness in them, for they are diverse [things] that have no agreement in any one at all.

[27] It is also confirmed by the fact that numerical diversity is for this singular not to be that singular (assuming the beingness of each extreme). But such a unity necessarily belongs to the other extreme.

[28] [The Seventh Way] Even were no intellect to exist, fire would generate fire and destroy water, and there would be some real unity “of the generator with regard to what is generated” according to form. On account of this, the generation would be univocal. For the intellect that considers the generation does not make it univocal, but rather cognizes it to be univocal.

[Scotus's View]

[29] Therefore, as regards Question 1: Granting the conclusions of the arguments [in nn. 7–8], I say that material substance from its nature is not of itself a *this*. For, in that case, as the first argument [in n. 7] entails, the intellect could not understand [a material substance] under an opposite unless it were to understand its object under an account of understanding that is incompatible with the account of such an object.

[30] Also, as the second argument [in n. 8] (along with all its proofs [in nn. 9–28]) entails, apart from any operation of the intellect there is some real unity in the thing that is less than numerical unity or the proper unity of the singular. This unity belongs to the nature in itself. According to this unity, proper to the nature insofar as it is the nature, the nature is

indifferent to the unity of singularity. Hence [the nature] is not thus of itself one by the latter (namely by the unity of singularity).

[31] Furthermore, how this should be understood can somehow be seen by Avicenna's remark (*Met.* 5.1 [fol. 86va]) where he holds that:

Horseness is just horseness—it is neither of itself one nor many, neither universal nor particular.

I understand [his remark in this way]: it is neither from itself one by a numerical unity, nor many by a plurality opposed to that unity; it is neither universal actually (namely in the way in which something is universal insofar as it is the object of the intellect), nor is it particular of itself.

[32] Indeed, although [the nature] never really exists without some of these [features], nevertheless of itself it is not any of them. Rather, [the nature] is naturally prior to all of these [features]. According to [this] natural priority:

- (i) [the nature] is the what-it-is *per se* of the object of the intellect
- (ii) [the nature] *per se*, as such, is considered by the metaphysician
- (iii) [the nature] is expressed by the definition
- (iv) propositions that are true *per se primo modo* are true by the account of the quiddity taken in this way

([With regard to (iv)]: nothing is said *per se primo modo* of the quiddity except what is included in it essentially, insofar as [the quiddity] is abstracted from all those [features] that are naturally posterior to it.)

[33] Furthermore, not only is the nature of itself indifferent to *ess/e* in the intellect and in the particular—and, by this fact, it is also [indifferent] to universal and to particular (or singular) *esse*—but also the [nature], having *esse* in the intellect, does not have universality primarily from itself. For although [the nature] is understood under *universality* as under a mode of understanding it, nevertheless *universality* is not part of its primary concept, since it is not a concept of metaphysics but of logic. (The logician considers second intentions that are applied to first [intentions] according to him.) Therefore, the primary understanding is one of the nature insofar as no mode is understood along with it—neither the [mode] that belongs to it in the intellect nor the [mode] that belongs to it outside the intellect. Even though the mode of understanding what is understood is *universality*, it is not a mode of what is understood!

[34] Just as the nature is not of itself universal according to *esse* [in the intellect], but instead universality accrues to the nature according to its primary account as an object, so too in a thing outside [the intellect], where the nature exists along with singularity, the nature is not of itself determined

to singularity, but rather is naturally prior to the account that contracts it to that singularity. Insofar as [the nature] is naturally prior to that contracting [factor], it is not incompatible with it to be without that contracting [factor]. Just as the object in the intellect had genuinely intelligible *esse* according to its primacy and universality, so too in a thing the nature, according to that beingness, has genuine real *esse* outside the mind. According to that beingness, [the nature] has a unity that is proportional to it. This [unity] is indifferent to singularity, such that it is not incompatible with that unity of itself that it be postulated along with any unity of singularity whatsoever. Therefore, I understand “the nature has a real unity less than numerical unity” in this way. Although [the nature] does not have this [real less-than-numerical unity] of itself, such that it is intrinsic to the account of the nature—for “horseness is just horseness,” according to Avicenna in *Met.* 5.1 [fol. 86va])—nevertheless, that unity is a proper attribute of the nature according to its primary beingness. Consequently, [the nature] is from itself a *this* neither intrinsically, nor according to its proper unity³ that is necessarily included in the nature itself according to its primary beingness.

[Objections to Scotus's View]

[35] But there seem to be two objections against this view. First, it seems to postulate the universal to be something real in the thing. This is contrary to the Commentator, who says (*De an.* 1.1 com.8):

The intellect produces universality in things, such that [universality] only exists by means of the intellect.

Hence [the universal] is only a being of reason. For this nature, in that it is a being in this stone, is nevertheless naturally prior to the singularity of the stone; on the basis of what has been said [in n. 34], [the nature] is indifferent to this singular and that [singular].

[36] [Second], Damascene (*[De fide orthodoxia]* 1.8.17):

It is necessary to know that being considered in reality is one matter, and [being considered] in reason or thought is another matter. Hence, more specifically, in all creatures the division of hypostases is considered in reality. (For in reality Peter is considered as separate from Paul.) However, commonness and connection is considered only in the intellect, reason, and thought—for we understand by the intellect that Peter and Paul are of one nature and have one common nature. . . . Indeed, these hypostases are not in one another.

³ Reading *unitas* for *entitas*.

Rather, any [hypostasis] is partitioned off one by one, *i. e.* separated according to reality.

And afterwards:

Yet it is the other way around in the holy and supersubstantial Trinity: there, what is common is considered one in reality... but afterwards it is divided by thought.

[Replies to the Objections]

[37] To the first objection [in n. 35]: I state that the universal in act is that which has some indifferent unity according to which it is itself, as the same, in proximate potency to being said of any suppositum whatsoever. For, according to the Philosopher (*Post. an.* 1.4 [73^b26–33]), the universal is what is one in many and of many. Indeed, nothing in a thing—according to any unity whatsoever – is such that according to that precise unity it be in proximate potency to any suppositum whatsoever in a predication that says “*This is this.*” The reason for this is that although being in some singularity other than that in which it is is not incompatible with something existing in a thing, nevertheless it cannot be truly said of anything lower-level that ‘any given one is it.’ This is only possible for object numerically the same, actually considered by the intellect. This [object], as understood, has also the numerical unity of the object, according to which it is itself, as the same, predicable of every singular by saying “*This is this.*”

[38] On this basis, the disproof of [Avicenna’s] remark [in n. 35] that “the agent intellect produces universality in things” is apparent, [as follows]. [First], it can be said of every what-it-is existing in the phantasm that it is such that being in another is not incompatible with it. [Second], the [agent intellect] lays bare the what-it-is existing in the phantasm. For no matter where it is before it has objective being in the possible intellect—whether in a thing or in the phantasm, whether it has definite *esse* or [*esse*] drawn forth by reason (and so not by any light but instead the nature is always such that from itself being in another is not incompatible with it)—nevertheless, it is not such that being said of anything whatsoever is suitable to it by a proximate potency. Instead, [being said of anything whatsoever] is only [suitable to it] by a proximate potency [when] it is in the possible intellect. Therefore, in a thing there is a common [item] that is not of itself a *this*. Consequently, [being] *not-this* is not incompatible with it of itself. But such a common [item] is not the universal in act, because it lacks that indifference according to which the universal is completely universal—namely [the indifference] according to which it is itself, as the same (by some identity), predicable of any individual whatsoever such that ‘any given one

is it.’

[39] With regard to the second objection, that of Damascene [in n. 36]: I state that what is common in creatures is not really one in the way in which what is common in the Divine [Persons] is really one. For in the case [of the Divine Persons], what is common is singular and individual, since the Divine Nature is of itself a *this*. It is obvious that no universal in creatures is really one in this way. For maintaining this would be to maintain that some undivided created nature would be predicated of many individuals by a predication that says “*This is this*,” just as it is said that the Father is God and the Son is the same God. Yet in creatures, there is something common that is one by a real unity, less than numerical unity. That ‘[something] common’ is not common such that it is predicable of many, although it is common such that being in another than that in which it is is not incompatible with it.

[40] Therefore, it is clear in two ways how the passage [from Damascene] does not go against me. First, [Damascene] is speaking of the unity of singularity in the Divine [Persons], and in this way not only is the created universal not one, but also what is common in creatures is not [one]. Second, [Damascene] is speaking about what is common as predicable, not precisely about a common [item] that is in fact determined, even though being in another is not incompatible with it. What is common can really be precisely postulated in creatures in this fashion.

[Reply to the Positive Principal Argument]

[41] From what has been said, [the reply] to the [positive] principal argument [in n. 2] is clear. The Philosopher disproves the fiction he imputes to Plato. That is, [he shows] that this man existing *per se* —which is postulated to be an Idea—cannot be *per se* universal to every man. For every substance existing *per se* is proper to that to which it belongs ([*Met.* 7.13 1038^b10–11])—that is, it is either proper from itself, or else it is made proper by something that contracts it. With this contracting [factor] postulated, it cannot be in another, although being in another is not incompatible with it of itself. This gloss [of Aristotle] is even true speaking of ‘substance’ in that it is taken for the nature. In that case, it follows that the Idea will not be the substance of Socrates, since it is not the nature of Socrates. For it is neither proper to Socrates from itself, nor is it made proper to him such that it would be only in him; rather, according to [Plato], it is also in another. If, however, ‘substance’ is taken for primary substance, then it is true that any given [primary] substance is proper to that to which it belongs. And in

that case, it follows all the more that the Idea, which is postulated to be a substance existing *per se*, cannot be the substance of Socrates or Plato in this way. But the first gloss is sufficient for the case at hand.

[Reply to the Argument for Marston's View]

[42] With regard to the confirmation of the view [in n.6]: It is clear that commonness and singularity are not related to the nature as *esse* in the intellect and genuine *esse* outside the soul, [as follows]. Commonness is suitable to the nature outside the intellect, and likewise singularity: commonness is suitable to the nature from itself, while singularity is suitable to the nature through something in the thing that contracts [the nature]. But universality is not suitable to the thing from itself. And so I grant that a cause of universality should be looked for, [as maintained in n.6]. Nevertheless, no cause of commonness other than the nature itself need be looked for. Once commonness is postulated in the nature itself according to its proper beingness and unity, one must necessarily look for the cause of singularity, which adds something more to the nature to which it belongs.

[End of the Question]