PREDICATION AND UNIVERSALS IN VINCENT FERRER'S LOGIC
Author(s): John Trentman

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The facility of scholars for finding historical antecedents for almost any philosophical position is surely a testimony to the perennial nature of philosophic problems. Although some may regard Frege's doctrine of predication as the last word on the subject, Professor P. T. Geach has recently maintained that Aquinas held a strikingly similar doctrine.[1] He also suggests that Frege may have been aware of some of the similarities between his views and those of some medieval philosophers.[2] Some of the characteristics of Aquinas' doctrine, as Geach sees it, which seem very Fregean are the following. First, Aquinas held that a general term used as a subject has a mode of reference radically different to that which it has when used as a predicate. In the former case it refers to a concrete thing (*supposition*); in the latter it signifies a form or nature.[3] Second, there is an essential incompleteness about the predicate expression (e. g., ". . . is wise" in "Socrates is wise") which can be completed by the sign of some object whose form is signified by it.[4] Third, although the analogy was, of course, unavailable to Aquinas, these relations between subject and predicate can be explicated by Frege's language of mathematical functions.[5]

I leave it to Thomistic scholars to decide whether Geach is right about Aquinas or not. In this essay I shall discuss the doctrine of predication of a fourteenth-century follower of Aquinas, St. Vincent Ferrer (c. 1350—1419), who claimed that he wrote in the spirit of St. Thomas (*secundum sententiam veridicam sancti Thome* is the way he put it) but who was, unlike his master, at least for a time a logician *ex professo*.[6]

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[1] See "Form and Existence", *Aristotelian Society, Proceedings*, LV (1954—55), 251—262; *Reference and Generality* (Ithaca, 1962), pp. 179—180; G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Ithaca, 1961), pp. 76 ff.

[2] *Three Philosophers*, p. 136. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 78. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 77 f., 80.
[6] On St Vincent's life see Matthieu-Maxime Gorce, *Saint Vincent Ferrier* (Paris, 1924). On the texts see Matthieu-Maxime Gorce, *Les Bases de l'étude historique de Saint Vincent Ferrier* (Paris, 1924), pp. 1—3, and M. Garcia Miralles, "Escritos Filosoficos de San Vicente Ferrer", *Estudios Filosoficos*, IV (1955), 279—284. For studies of St. Vincent's logic see Ivo Thomas, "Saint Vincent Ferrer's De Suppositionibus", *Dominican Studies*, V (1952),

The Fregean characteristics of Aquinas' doctrine noted by Geach can be found in Ferrer, however, and even the function analogy may not be as far-fetched as it seems. Not only does it help in describing the incomplete nature of predicate expressions; it also provides a kind of parallel to Ferrer's ascription of syncategorematic or formal functions to predicates. Yet although these ideas can be usefully employed in understanding Ferrer's doctrine, Vincent of course knew nothing of the modern mathematical notion of functions, and there is no reason to suppose Frege had heard of him; so a detailed comparison of their writings would be more likely misleading than enlightening. Nevertheless these Fregean characteristics of Ferrer's doctrine of predication also reflect his teaching about universals, which is found in *De Supposi-tionibus* and is more explicit in *De unitate universalis*, and comparing the doctrine of predication with its ontological implications will be a primary task of this essay.

The argument of the essay will proceed in this way. First, I shall review Ferrer's views about the relation of logic to ontology, of words to things. Then I shall show that Aquinas' comparison of predicate and subject to form and matter, which is crucial to Vincent's doctrine, is taken by him to mean that subjects and predicates perform radically different semantic roles, that predicates have an essentially incomplete nature and that this incompleteness can best be understood by seeing that his predicates really function as *syncategoremata*. Finally, I shall compare the ontological suggestions that emerge from this discussion with Ferrer's explicit claims about the status of universals.

First, then, what is logic about? Or, more to the point of this essay, what is a logical doctrine of predication about? According to Vincent, a doctrine of predication has to do with the way terms function in propositions. Although Ferrer, with many other writers before and after him, sometimes uses *subjectum* both for the subject term and for what that term refers to, he would maintain that in the strict sense terms and not things are logical subjects and predicates. But terms taken by themselves as written or spoken words are not subjects and predicates. Vincent did not think logic is an *ars sermocinalis*, and he was most anxious to avoid any anthropomorphic view of words. Words apart

88—102, and John Trentman, "Vincent Ferrer on the Logician as *Artifex Intellectualis*", *Franciscan Studies*, XXV (1965), 322—337. There is a twentieth-century edition of his works — *Oeuvres de Saint Vincent Ferrier*, ed. Fages (Paris, 1909). All references to Ferrer in this paper unless otherwise noted will be to his *De supposicionibus dialecticis* in the first volume of this edition.

from a possible use do not mean anything and have no logical pro-
perties; they acquire meanings and logical properties only as they are
used by someone in mental acts. Therefore, only terms used in acts of
the intellect to frame propositions can be subjects or predicates.[7] And
since he holds this anti-anthropomorphic view of words, he maintains
that the same word in different contexts may be used as either subject
or predicate (cf. pp. 14, 63, 87). In calling something a subject or pre-
dicate, then, one is referring to the role a word plays as a term in a
proposition expressing an act of an intellect.

But what has all this to do with ontology? First, Ferrer believes that
predication is not just a relation between terms in a proposition. The
roles played by subjects and predicates always involve some relation
to things, to what the proposition is about. One does not predicate a
term of a subject term. According to Ferrer, the act of making an asser-
tion can be broken down into acts of subjection (*subjicere*) and predication
(*predicare*), whose performance depends upon prior acts of apprehending
a thing and understanding something about it (p. 16). Both subject
and predicate, therefore, function in the expressing of a proposition to
perform roles that involve relations between the proposition and what
it may be asserted about. The predicate term is used to predicate some-
thing, not of the subject term, but of what the subject term is used to
stand for (*supponit pro*) in the proposition. The task of the logician is
to investigate the structures of the *intellectus* (sometimes called *sensus*
or *rationes*) of propositions, what may be intended about the world by
their users, as they are expressed in the words of the written or spoken
propositions.[8] In the light of these considerations one can better under-
stand Ferrer's attitude expressed in the opening paragraphs of *De
Supposicionibus*. Here he shows that he thinks his logic does reflect an
ontological position. He records that many logicians study supposition
theory with reference to possible ontological positions and in particular
to various possible opinions about universals. He then outlines three
such opinions, the extreme views, which he with doubtful justice attri-
butes to Ockham and someone called Galtirus (probably Walter Bur-
leigh), and the mean between these extremes, which he and his master,
Aquinas, and a variety of other persons (Aristotle, Albertus Magnus,
Herveius, Boethius, Avicenna, Averroes) are all supposed to have held.
The purpose of this ontological beginning to his treatise is not to suggest

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[7] pp. 13, 16—17, 73—74. Cf. Trentman, *op. cit.*
[8] For a detailed discussion of Ferrer on the logician's task see my "Vin-
cent Ferrer on the Logician as *Artifex Intellectualis*".

that logic is ontology or that his logical study will in any way establish or defend any ontological doctrine or refute a contrary ontological doctrine. Rather, he thinks logic is always studied as, what one might now call, an interpreted system. A logic is always studied with the understanding that it is applicable to and can be interpreted in terms of the structure of the world. Therefore, as he points out (p. 4), he simply assumes that the Thomist ontology is true in order to have some interpretive basis for appraising the structure of his logic.

With the expectation that Ferrer's logical doctrine of predication will reflect a position about the status of universals and the realization that it was, in fact, intended to do so, we may now proceed to a closer examination of the doctrine itself. The basic principle behind this doctrine is a remark made by Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle's *Perihermenias*, which Ferrer expresses, ... *subjectum est quasi pars materialis enunciacionis, predicatum autem est pars formalis ejusdem materie* (p. 82). Vincent uses this dictum by Aquinas in two interrelated ways. First, it is a kind of justification for his contention that subjects and predicates play radically different semantic roles in propositions with its corollary, adamant refusal of the property of *suppositio* to predicates. Secondly, it indicates that the relation between these differing semantic roles is o be understood as analogous to the relation between form and matter. I shall first consider the question of semantic roles and the denial of *suppositio* to predicates, and then I shall suggest how Ferrer's use of the form-matter comparison is to be understood.

In comparing subjects and predicates to matter and form Vincent is indicating that they perform different roles as they are used in propositions. Since they perform different roles, there are different semantic properties that may be attributed to them. Two of the most basic semantic properties that terms can have, according to fourteenth-century logicians, are *significatio* and *suppositio*.[9] According to Vincent (and here he is in general agreement with other fourtheenth-century logicians), terms taken by themselves apart from an actual use in a proposition may be said to have *significatio* but not *suppositio*. A word taken by itself may be said to have a signification because it has a

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[9] It has been maintained by Moody (E. A. Moody, *Truth and Consequence in Mediaeval Logic*, Amsterdam, 1953, pp. 22—23) that *suppositio* is a syntactical, not a semantical, property. Others, like I. M. Bocheński and William Kneale, claim that it has both semantic and syntactic elements, while Boehner seems to have regarded it as primarily semantical. By calling it semantic here I do not wish to ignore the valuable suggestions made by Moody about its syntactic roles. I shall have a little to say later in this essay about the semantics/syntactics distinction.

capacity for being used in a certain way to make meaningful utterances, and indeed in most cases it has been often so used in the past. But the primary *significatio* of a general term differs from that of proper names or demonstrative pronouns. Here Ferrer explicitly opposes the Ockhamist tradition that held that the *significatio* of all descriptive terms is basically the same kind of thing, namely, a property of standing for individuals, and this of course means that he must also reject the Ockhamist identity theory of predication. Predication cannot be accomplished as the Ockhamists claimed in, e. g., "Socrates is a man", by joining two names of the same semantic type, the proper name "Socrates" and the general term "man", by a sign for identity, because proper names and general terms are not, in fact, of the same semantic type; they have different kinds of *significatio*.[10] Ferrer maintains that the primary *significatio* of general terms is a nature or an essence while that of proper names and demonstrative pronouns is an individual concrete thing (p. 66). Only general terms can be used as predicates; no proper name or demonstrative pronoun can be predicated of anything. General terms, however, may be used as either subjects or predicates. Used as subjects they may, depending upon the predicate of the proposition (as we shall soon see, the phrase *in comparatione ad predicatum* is very important for Ferrer), be used with various kinds of *suppositio*. *Suppositio*, which Ferrer with his tradition regarded as a property terms have only when actually used in a proposition, is also a property of proper names and demonstrative pronouns used as subjects of propositions. But predicates, he insists, never have the property of *suppositio*.

On the actual definition of *suppositio* Ferrer is at odds with his tradition. He rejects variations of the traditional definition, *Suppositio est acceptio termini substantivi pro aliquo*, as being *pessima* for not stating the essential characteristics of supposition. He thinks a proper definition would have to include that *suppositio* is a property of the subject as it is compared to the predicate in a proposition. All of his contemporary logicians would agree that *suppositio* is a property that a term can have only in the context of a proposition; it is by his insistence upon its involving a comparison with the predicate that he breaks with tradition. The real significance of this dispute about what must be

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[10] The identity doctrine with its semantic corollaries appears in a modern dress in Leśniewski's Ontology. On this see my "Leśniewski's Ontology and Some Medieval Logicians", forthcoming in the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*. For some theological problems connected with this doctrine see Peter Geach, "Nominalism", *Sophia*, vol. III, No. 2 (July, 1964) 3—14.

included in a proper definition of *suppositio* will be apparent shortly. This dispute has no essential bearing, however, upon the question at issue here, which concerns Ferrer's view of the nature of the role that a subject plays when it is actually exercising the property of *suppositio*. On this matter Vincent is in substantial agreement with his contemporaries. When a term is exercising its property of *suppositio*, it is being used in a proposition to stand for or refer to (*supponit pro*) individual, concrete things. What Ferrer is saying, then, in limiting *suppositio* to subjects is that while subject terms, whether singular or general, may be used in propositions to refer to concrete individuals, predicate terms are never used to stand for concrete individuals. This is a semantical property that predicates in the very nature of the case can never have.

Ferrer's refusal of the property of *suppositio* to predicates is based upon his principle, attributed to Aquinas, that subjects and predicates are related as matter to form, and its real import is to be seen in the light of that comparison. Therefore, the form-matter metaphor and with it what Vincent holds to be the real relation predicate and subject must now be examined in detail. Vincent uses a number of terms that were fairly common in "anti-nominalist" logical treatises of the time to describe predication. Many of these indicate little more than the predicate is related in some suitable and fitting way to the subject and shed little light upon the form-matter comparison. For example, he writes that the predicate *pertinet ad* what the subject with its particular kind of *suppositio* is used to stand for. (Cf., e. g., pp. 17, 58.) He also describes the relation by writing that the predicate "is said" (*dicitur*) about whatever it is that the subject stands for in the proposition (pp. 19, 86). This sort of language is scarcely original with Ferrer. It is at least as old as Aristotle's *Categories* (cf. the use of λέγεται in 1a 20 ff). And it is also found in fourteenth-century logicians like Walter Burleigh, who wrote that the predicate "is enunciated" (*enunciatur*) about that for which the subject stands.[11] Burleigh's doctrine of predication is, in fact, in many respects, although not in all, very similar to Ferrer's.

Another term that occurs frequently in Ferrer's discussions of predication is *convenio*. It is also used in a number of contexts that have nothing directly to do with predication. Thus he writes that various kinds of *suppositio* or the property itself *convenit termino*. (E. g., pp. 5, 67.) Apparently such expressions mean that the kinds of supposition in

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[11] *De Puritate Artis Logicae, Tractatus Longior, With a Revised Edition of the Tractatus Brevior*, ed. Philotheus Boehner (St. Bonaventure, N. Y., 1955), I, III, p. 56.

question or the property of supposition itself are suitable to or are appropriate for the terms in question. Furthermore, when he is discussing predication, Ferrer tends to use *convenio* both when he is writing about the act of predication itself, that is, the relation of predicates to their subjects' *supposita* (e. g., *predicatum convenit omnibus suppositis subjecti*, p. 18), and when he is writing about the linguistic relation between predicate terms and subject terms (e. g., *predicata conveniunt ipsis subjectis* . . . p. 21).[12] When he means the act of predication itself, we might read *convenit* as "fits" or "applies to", (Ferrer also uses *competo* with this sense). This does not greatly increase our understanding of the form-matter comparison. It might be suggested, however, that the notion of the predicate's applying to what the subject stands for, which has a kind of modern ring, is not far from the idea of a predicate's being true of the subject's *supposita*. It is doubtful whether Ferrer would be satisfied to say that the predicate is *just* true of something and in no sense itself represents something; yet the "true of" notion does in a way occur in his work in his phrase *secundum veram predicati inherenciam ad subjectum*. Ferrer's view of the ontological status of whatever it is that predicates represent as well as his understanding of the traditional metaphysical term *inherentia* will emerge as this discussion proceeds.

Meanwhile there is more to be said about *convenio*, and Ferrer's use of it to describe the relation between terms in a proposition is suggestive for an understanding of the form-matter metaphor. While it would, of course, make sense to say that the terms in a proposition should fit together or be appropriate or in agreement with each other, I think the term *convenio* may possibly have also retained some overtones of a more literal meaning "to come together into a whole". The suggestion that the predicate term comes together with the subject term to make a whole then implies that the predicate by itself is incomplete and needs to be attached to a subject to make a whole expression. One would scarcely want to base a whole doctrine of predication simply upon this speculation about possible overtones of *convenio*, but this interpretation fits nicely with Aquinas' dictum and the form-matter metaphor. Just as form by itself is incomplete and needs to be the form of some matter before there is a whole thing, so the predicate term is an incomplete expression that must be joined to another term in order to yield a complete expression. And one might expect that the predicate, which

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[12] In this context he clearly means the subject terms by his use of *subjecta* because he is concerned about that which has the property of *suppositio*.

is incomplete like a form, would in its incompleteness reflect the in-completeness of its *significatum*, which is a form or essence.

Following the implications of the metaphor in any detail leads to puzzles, however. What is it that is incomplete ? To be sure, the predicate is incomplete, and its incompleteness reflects an essential incompleteness in the form it signifies. But what about the subject ? If the subject term is to be matter to the predicate's form, it ought also to be incomplete. Matter cannot, of itself, stand alone as a whole thing. In the Aristotelian tradition, which is responsible for these terms, it is the composite of form and matter that is the whole, independently existing thing. Both matter and form are, each in its own way, incomplete and dependent upon something else. The most natural reading of Ferrer's words (p.82) is to take the *ejusdem materie* that the predicate is form of to be the whole *enunciatio*, not the *pars materialis*, that is, the subject of the assertion. It is, after all, this same matter, the assertion, of which the subject is also a part.

The predicate is, in any case, an incomplete part of the whole assertion; it *convenit* with the subject to make a whole assertion. And it thereby reflects the incomplete nature in and of itself of its *significatum*, the essence or nature of a thing. Since predicates are not complete language units by themselves, they cannot properly be said to signify any com-plete entity, regardless of its ontological type. They attain a kind of completion only as they are used to inform some particular matter (a subject) in the making of a proposition. "Runs" in "Socrates runs" stands for no concrete thing; nor does it, by itself, make any complete expression. The sign of the form of this proposition, its predicate, would have to be ". . . runs", where it is understood that the blank must be filled in by a term that can refer to something to which it would be fitting to apply "runs". (Precisely the same analysis would of course apply to all "traditional categorical propositions"). Every predicate must be the form of some material part of a proposition; it must be the predicate of some subject or other. Functioning in this way, predicates reflect an ontological distinction in that about which the proposition makes an assertion. Ferrer writes that predicates are "as it were" (*quasi*) the forms of propositions; in signifying essences or natures (which are either forms or include forms), they reflect the ontological fact that what they signify is the form of the individual described by the assertion. But just as predicates need completion and cannot stand alone, forms need completion and cannot stand alone. Ferrer's doctrine

here, as elsewhere, echoes the anti-Platonism of his master, Aquinas. *Runs* and *is an animal* are not any sort of complete entities. A form always exists as the form of some complete thing.

But this analysis has not yet accounted satisfactorily for the role played by the subject. The form-matter comparison would suggest that, just as the subject term is an incomplete part of the assertion corresponding to its matter, the referent of the subject term must be an incomplete part of the whole entity described by the assertion (its matter, a substratum, in modern terms a "bare particular"?). This simply will not do, and I think it must be admitted that Ferrer's metaphor will not hold up to consistent scrutiny. Clearly, in his view, the subject term must refer to the whole entity described in the assertion. It is a complete expression in a way in which the predicate is not, and it refers to a complete entity which as such is of a different ontological kind to the *significatum* of the predicate. This is obvious from Ferrer's analysis, already cited (p. 4 above), of the kinds of mental acts expressed in assertions. He writes that the act of making something a subject depends upon an act of apprehending a thing, while that of predicating depends upon understanding something about it. Therefore, when one asserts "Socrates is wise", one has apprehended a thing, Socrates, to which one refers by the use of the subject term and has understood that it can be said about this thing that it is wise. Hence, although both subject term and predicate term are parts of the asserted proposition, the predicate has an essential incompleteness that the subject does not share, and this is reflected in the differing ontological natures of their *significata*.

Further understanding of the relation between predicate and subject and particularly of the way in which the subject is complete while the predicate is not can be attained by returning to Ferrer's dispute about the definition of *suppositio*. Other medieval philosophers regarded *suppositio* as a property of subjects as they are compared with predicates.[13] Ferrer's insistence upon it and the lengths to which he goes in proving that it is an essential part of any definition of *suppositio* set his discussion of predication apart from those of his like-minded contemporaries. And well he might have insisted upon it. It seems to me that this insistence is the key to understanding his view of predication. If the predicate term is instrumental in determining the sort of *suppositio* that its subject possesses, then it performs an essentially syncategorematic function.

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[13] Cf. Burleigh, I, I, c. i., pp. 1—2.

According to Ferrer, this determination takes place at various levels.[14] On the most basic level one can distinguish between material and formal supposition according to whether the subject is to stand for itself as a linguistic unit, which is material supposition, or not. If it does not thus stand for itself, it has formal supposition, and formal supposition can itself be divided into natural and accidental supposition depending upon whether or not the predicate has to do with the essence of the subject. Accidental supposition can be further divided into personal and simple supposition. In all this process of dividing and subdividing the predicate in the proposition plays the determining role. It is on the basis of the predicate term that one tells whether the subject term is to be taken for itself as a linguistic unit or for something else. The predicate term also shows whether the subject is to be used with natural supposition[15] or is to be taken for individual things or for something with *esse intentionale*.

The predicate term itself, therefore, indicates the category of thing the subject is to be taken as standing for — words, intentional objects, individual things. If it is to be taken for concrete individual things, it has personal supposition. For making some further divisions within the category of personal supposition predicates are aided by the use of terms like "some", "all", and "every". The use of such quantifiers shows the extent of the subject's reference by indicating the sort of deductive descent to singular statements that the proposition allows. Even within the category of personal supposition, however, Ferrer assigns to predicates alone a decisive role in making an important formal distinction. This has to do with problems that might now be handled by a theory of syntactic types. Ferrer distinguishes between the use of a general term with distributive supposition and its use with collective supposition. Some of his examples of the latter are, "All the apostles are twelve" and "All the precepts of the Decalogue are ten". He wishes, of course, to prohibit inferences from these to such propositions as "St. Peter is twelve" and "The first commandment is ten". It is not possible, he maintains, to make a valid propositional descent from such propositions to propositions taking the *supposita* of their subjects as

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[14] Ferrer's distinctions seem to combine the traditions from both William of Shyreswood and Peter of Spain. On these traditions see William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 253 ff.

[15] The use of a subject term with natural supposition (e. g., "rose" in "A rose is odoriferous") does not commit one to asserting the present existence of things to which the subject applies. Cf. the accounts of this matter in Kneale and Kneale, pp. 264 ff. and Thomas, pp. 93 f.

subjects. What indicates that the subject is to be taken with collective supposition, that it is of a syntactical type that will not allow the prohibited inferences, is the predicate term. Numerical predicates like "... is twelve" apply only to collectives. Other predicates may not apply to collectives at all, and when a particular subject term, e. g., "apostles", may be used either as a collective or not, its use on a given occasion will be indicated and governed by the predicate that is applied to it. For example, contrast "The apostles are twelve" with "The apostles run"; "... run" is applied to general terms used distributively, and "... are twelve" is applied to general terms used collectively.

If predicates, then, are syncategorematic expressions, and if they are used to make formal distinctions even within the category of personal supposition, whose operations are normally governed by the use of quantifiers; what has happened to the logical difference between predicates and quantifying expressions, which were clearly distinguished as *syncategoremata* by Ferrer's contemporaries? Vincent, not surprisingly, tends to blur this distinction. Therefore, although in an example like "Every man runs" he would be likely to call "... runs" and not the whole context "Every ... runs" the predicate in the strict sense of the word, he has amazingly little to say about the quantifying expressions themselves. This is especially striking in comparison with his contemporary logicians who not infrequently devoted long chapters in their logical treatises to them. In fact, even in his primary discussion of personal supposition, where one might most expect a detailed study of the quantifiers, Ferrer does not single them out for special attention. Rather, he reiterates in a variety of ways his contention that subject has the sort of *suppositio* that it has *respectu predicati*, with reference to its predicate. All of this means that Vincent thought that the really fundamental division in propositions like "Every man runs" is between the subject "man" and the whole predicational context "Every ... runs". Only the subject is purely categorematic and can refer to concrete objects; the rest of the sentence cannot be thus used to refer and makes a complete utterance only when its "gap" is filled in with an expression that can have *suppositio*.

So far it has been suggested that Ferrer assigns to predicates roles that involve them in making formal distinctions—type distinctions, distinctions between the use and mention of terms, and distinctions between kinds of *suppositio*. But what is meant by calling these "formal distinctions"? Whatever St. Vincent might have understood by "formal" it is clear that these distinctions constitute the bases for a number of

rules of inference. An example would be the one cited that prohibits inferences from a proposition with a collective subject to one of its singulars, from "C is F", where "C" is a general term that can be used as a collective and ". . . is F" is a predicate applying only to collectives, to "c_1 is F", where "c_1" is an individual instantiation of "C". One ought, however, to resist temptations to insist that Ferrer understood by "formal" something like "syntactical" in the modern sense. For one thing, as many modern scholars have pointed out, medieval supposition theory had to do with a curious (to modern logicians) blend of syntactic and semantic problems, and one looks in vain for any precise distinction between syntactical and semantical questions in these logicians. One primary reason for this is easy to find. The syntax/semantics distinction is, of course, a result of modern logistic method, which is quite foreign to the procedure of medieval logicians. They produced lists of rules of inference and not an axiomatic system in the modern sense. Further-more, the very doctrine under consideration in this essay provides an argument against viewing these distinctions as purely syntactical. These distinctions are based upon the predicate term, viewed not as a written shape, but as a term functioning with a meaning which it contributes to the structure of what Ferrer would call the *intellectus* or sense of the proposition.[16] The late medieval logicians did, however, have a clear notion of a formal logic in the sense that they regarded formal logic as a theory of the functioning of syncategorematic ex-pressions in propositions. The form of a proposition is indicated by the *syncategoremata* of the proposition, and rules of inference are stated on the basis of this form.

It is in this sense exactly that predicates perform essentially formal tasks for Ferrer. They really function as *syncategoremata*. Indeed, the meaning of the term *syncategoremata* suggests that a syncategorematic term makes a significant utterance when joined with another, cate-gorematic, term; and this, as we have seen, is precisely the way in which Vincent views predicates. They make a complete utterance only when combined with a categorematic term functioning as a subject. One might say in a more modern idiom that predicates are operators that form propositions out of names and relate what the name is used to denote to some state of affairs. Not all predicates can be applied to all names. Indeed, we have seen that some predicates have their range of application limited to general terms used as collectives; some predicates

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[16] He also uses the term *sensum* with this meaning. E. g., see p. 25.

apply only to words used as names for themselves; some apply to terms that stand for mental entities, things with *esse intentionale;* some apply to terms standing for concrete individual things. And because different predicates thus have different ranges of applicability, they are able to determine the sorts of *suppositio* possessed by their subjects. Applied to subjects falling within their appropriate range, predicates connect or associate what their subjects are used to stand for with some truth about the world. In the proposition formed by the predicate the subject exercises its property of *suppositio* in accordance with *veram predicati inherenciam ad subjectum,* as Vincent expresses it (p. 13).

I have stressed the futility of attempting to apply a distinction like that between syntax and semantics drawn from modern logistic method to medieval logic. I certainly should not want to belie all this by claiming that Ferrer treats predicates as functions. He, of course, was no more likely to have such a notion than Aquinas was, and it would be absurd to talk as though he did. Nevertheless, having been forewarned not to look for the modern doctrine clearly and coherently expressed in Ferrer's logic, one cannot help but feel that there are some similarities between elements of Vincent's doctrine of predication and some of the things modern logicians have said about functions. Functional signs, like Ferrer's predicates, are incomplete and do not signify anything until completed with signs for arguments. And the sort of operation of Ferrer's predicates whereby they connect some *supposita* of the subject with a true inherence in the world looks a little like the modern logician's idea of mapping.

I have already indicated that Vincent's doctrine reflects the anti-Platonism of his master, Aquinas. I wish in conclusion to elaborate a bit upon the suggestion that this doctrine of predication is closely related to Vincent's explicit position on the question of the ontological status of universals. Suppose one asked how we could tell from Ferrer's doctrine of predication what sorts of basic entities he thought there are in the world. Take any propositions, for example, "Jones sings" and "Roses are red"; we know from his doctrine that only the subjects of these propositions, "Jones" and "Roses", can possibly be used to refer to any *supposita*. Therefore, although the use of these propositions might suggest that there are individual human beings and individual roses in the world, there cannot in the same sense be any things referred to by part or all of the predicate expressions. As we have seen, predicate expressions are incomplete; they cannot stand alone and refer to anything. The forms that they signify must then have a very different

ontological status from the *supposita* of subjects and must also reflect the essentially incomplete nature of predicate expressions.

In the opening paragraphs of *De Supposicionibus* where he summarizes the position he regards as true, which he states as a commentary upon Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* 100a 7, Ferrer expresses quite clearly how he intends to treat the ontological status of universals. He writes that so far as the universal is regarded as one thing in the many it is truly a real thing (*vera res et realis*). In some sense universals are existing things; there is no doubt about that. But now for the qualification, in this sense the "universal" is not actually either one or universal; it can be called these things only *in potentia*. Something is, on the other hand, actually both one and universal only as it exists as a concept. Indeed, Ferrer maintains, ". . . if one sets aside all activity of the intellect, there is no actual unity but the unity of an individual". Nor could there be anything *in actu* that could be called a universal. So apart from concepts (and we need not worry at this point about their nature) there is no single entity that could be called a universal. Universals are not single entities. Philosophers who think there are universals that are in some sense single entities think they can name them by purely categorematic, referring expressions. This is, of course, precisely what Ferrer thinks cannot be done, hence the incomplete, "unsaturated" nature of his predicates. In "x is red" there is nothing that can be taken as a name for an actual, single entity red. There are no such entities. One might say that red exists, but it exists *extra animam* only as the individual forms of some individual objects. This is shown by the fact that ". . . is red" must be viewed as the linguistic form of some linguistic matter, some possible subject term. It is not a complete expression, let alone a name, by itself.[17]

This view is also central to Ferrer's treatise *De unitate universalis*. He states his conclusion to this treatise in the following way, "For we concede that the universal nature is real, but we do not say that it has a real unity . . .". (P. 12, Fages' edition). He explains what he means by this conclusion in the following two propositions.(1) "The unity of a universal nature is not real, nor is there any real unity besides numerical

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[17] In the light of this discussion I think it should be apparent that Thomas' suggestion that "All (some) a's have the property b with quantified 'b'" may perhaps express St Vincent's intended analysis of general propositions will not do. Thomas proposes this interpretation on the grounds that it is a distinctively realist explication, but that is, of course, the trouble with it. It is too much the analysis of a distinct realist and does not bring out the essential incomplete nature of predicates and what they signify. Cf. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 89—90.

unity, nor are two individuals really a single thing in virtue of some one real thing, which is the same dictum in different words."(2) "The unity of the universal itself is one in thought." (P. 9.) The only real unity in the world in the sense of a unity that is independent of the productions of acts of mind is numerical unity. Every individual is numerically distinct from every other individual. Furthermore, there is no universality in the world that is independent of the operations of minds. Universality exists in virtue of the activity of minds in predicating something of individuals. As we have seen, this activity is exhibited in the use of terms that are essentially syncategorematic in nature. It is an activity of connecting individuals, which are the *supposita* of subject terms, with the true state of affairs in the world. The unity of the universal is, as Vincent puts it, a unity of thought or reason (*unitas racionis*). When he writes that the universal is one *secundum racionem*, he means it is one by virtue of the one act of mind (or capacity for performing the act) by which the universal term is used to perform its syncategorematic functions.

The upshot of this is that Ferrer thinks two fundamentally different kinds of things can be distinguished. There are single, independent individuals, which can exist *in actu*. There are also universals, but to the extent that they are universals they can exist only *in potentia*. It is very important, however, to understand the use he makes of this distinction. He does not think the universal can exist *in potentia* in the sense that it might, as universal, become an actual, single entity. This would make no sense to him. It can be said to be *in potentia* in the sense that it is to be regarded always as the form of some matter or other. As it is completed by some particular matter one has a resulting single individual *in actu*. But the resulting real individual is not the universal; it is the whole thing, the individual with such and such a form. "One single universal" makes sense for Ferrer only with reference to the act of mind by which the universal term is predicated of individuals. Therefore, according to Ferrer's view of the matter, the ontological status of universals does differ fundamentally from that of individuals.

One of Frege's modern critics has charged that Frege's doctrine of predicates as functions "depresses" the status of universals and indicates a pronounced nominalistic tendency in his thought. It does this because universals appear in his system as functions, and functions are "syncategorematic entities". As such entities they must have a fundamentally different ontological status from that of objects; whereas objects exist,

Fregean universals "merely subsist".[18] In this essay I have tried to illustrate the ways in which the Fregean characteristics Geach notes in Aquinas' doctrine of predication are present in Vincent's theory. In so doing, I have tried to explicate Ferrer's doctrine, so far as possible, in its own terms, without making any claims about the extent to which this may or may not be Aquinas' or Frege's doctrine as well. Nor is it proper to abandon Ferrer at this stage to appraise this criticism of Frege. Nevertheless, whether it is correct about Frege or not, it should now be apparent that one could say these things about Vincent's ontology as it is reflected in his doctrine of predication. He quite explicitly holds that universals have a different ontological status from individuals, and if I am right in maintaining that his predicates are essentially syncategorematic expressions, it would not be too far-fetched to call the forms that are signified by them "syncategorematic entities". As for this doctrine's involving a depression of the status of universals or a tendency towards nominalism, Vincent Ferrer insists at the beginning of his treatise that his position is the mean between two extremes, but, good Aristotelian that he was, he knew that the mean is often closer to one extreme than to the other.

JOHN TRENTMAN

Huron College
The University of Western Ontario

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[18] Gustav Bergmann, *Logic and Reality* (Madison, 1964), pp. 132—140.