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Paul Vincent Spade

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IN 1957 PETER GEACH ARGUED THAT Ockham's theory of mental language was too facile, that it made the grammar of mental language look too suspiciously like that of Latin: "He merely transfers features of Latin grammar to Mental, and then regards this as explaining why such features occur in Latin—they are needed there if what we say inwardly in Mental is to be outwardly got across to others in Latin. But clearly nothing is explained at all."[1] In 1970 John Trentman responded to this charge in a short article that has since become very influential.[2] In that article Trentman makes three claims among others:

1. Ockham thought of mental language as a kind of stripped-down, "ideal" language, containing just those grammatical features that affect the truth conditions of mental sentences.[3]
2. There can be no synonymy in mental language.[4]
3. There can be no equivocation in mental language.[5]

It is the purpose of this paper to examine each of these claims in turn.[6] In so doing we

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[1] *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 102. See also the whole of sec. 23, pp. 101–6.

[2] "Ockham on Mental," *Mind* 79 (1970):586–90.

[3] Ibid., p. 588: "I think Ockham's Mental can in many ways be compared to the now, I suppose, slightly old-fashioned ideal languages of twentieth-century philosophers. In distinguishing Mental from Latin or any spoken language, Ockham asks us to consider what would have to be the grammatical structure of a language that was ideal for one purpose—for giving a true description of things." See also ibid., p. 589: "Ockham's real criterion, then, for admitting grammatical distinctions into Mental amounts to asking whether the distinctions in question would be necessary in an ideal language—ideal for a complete, true description of the world."

[4] Ibid., p. 588: "The existence of synonyms seems not to mark any distinction of the requisite kind so that in principle synonymous expressions can be regarded as reducible to a common mental equivalent." See also n. 5, below.

[5] Ibid.: "But just as verbal ornament gives rise to synonymy it also gives rise to equivocation, and neither can be usefully purged from a language suitable for conversation. Neither, however, serves any purpose in an ideal language of the sort envisaged. Indeed, the distinction between equivocal and univocal expressions has no point in Mental by the very nature of the case."

[6] The second and third claims are of special interest to me personally. For in my "Ockham's Distinctions between Absolute and Connotative Terms," *Vivarium* 13 (1975):55–76, I have given an account of Ockham's notion of connotative terms that relies in important respects on the claim that there is no synonymy in mental language. Again, on the basis of the third of the above claims, I have argued in my "Ockham's Rule of Supposition: Two Conflicts in His Theory," *Vivarium* 12 (1974):63–73, that there is a tension or "conflict"

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shall discover that Ockham's theory of mental language is not so neat and tidy as might have been hoped. I shall argue that each of Trentman's three claims is "correct" in the sense that Ockham either explicitly holds it or else seems committed to holding it on the basis of other features of his thought. Nevertheless, I shall maintain, each of these claims also leads to difficulties for Ockham, either (with respect to the first claim) because there are certain empirical, linguistic reasons of a sort Ockham would accept for rejecting the claim as it stands, or else (with respect to the second and third claims) because it conflicts with things Ockham says elsewhere. All this suggests that Ockham had not completely thought out all the implications of what he wanted to say about mental language. And that in turn suggests that, whatever is true for other authors, the theory of mental language was perhaps not as central to Ockham's own thinking as we have come to believe.[7]

I.   Perhaps Ockham's clearest general statement of his criterion for what goes into mental language occurs in *Quodlibet* 5, q. 8 ("Whether all the grammatical accidents of spoken terms are applicable to mental ones?"), the text on which Trentman bases claim 1. There Ockham puts his criterion in terms of the "needs of signification."[8] In a word, if a grammatical feature of spoken or written language can affect truth conditions, it is found in mental language; otherwise it is not. Let us call this "Ockham's Criterion." Thus the distinction between nominative and genitive case in Latin has its counterpart in mental language since the truth conditions of "Homo est homo" ("A man is a man"), which is true, differ from those of "Homo est hominis" ("A man is a man's"), which is false if there are no slaves. On the other hand, the Latin distinction between first and second declension has no counterpart in mental language since as long as grammatical well-formedness (*congruitas*) is preserved it makes no difference to the truth conditions of a sentence whether a given term occurring in it is in the first or the second declension. As Ockham points out, an indication of this may be seen in the fact that synonymous nouns, which are intersubstitutable *salva veritate* (provided well-formedness is preserved), may belong to different declensions.[9]

Ockham's Criterion may be divided into two parts: (*a*) the positive claim that all grammatical features of spoken and written language that affect truth conditions are present also in mental language, and (*b*) the negative claim that all grammatical features of spoken and written language that do not affect truth conditions are not present in mental language.

The positive part of Ockham's criterion in unacceptable. For unless Latin or some

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in Ockham's theory of supposition. In neither paper, however, did I fully justify the claim on which my argument rested. That will be remedied here.

[7] See Trentman, "Ockham on Mental," p. 586: "Further, he thought mental language is really of prior importance to spoken or written language, and its structure is, in fact, the proper subject for the logician."

[8] William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta septem* (Strasbourg, 1491) (Hain 11941), fol. 77ra: "Ad argumentum principale dico quod omne quod accidit termino mentali accidit termini vocali sed non e converso, quia aliqua accidunt terminis vocalibus propter necessitatem significationis et expressionis et illa conveniunt terminis mentalibus, alia accidunt terminis vocalibus propter ornatum sermonis, sicut synonyma, vel propter congruitatem, et illa non conveniunt terminis mentalibus."

[9] Ibid., conclusion 2, fol. 76vb. Geach appears to have taken this observation as Ockham's guiding idea: the grammatical features with respect to which synonyms may differ are not found in mental language; all others are. (See Trentman, "Ockham on Mental," p. 597.) In fact, although this is a consequence of Ockham's Criterion, the Criterion itself is more deeply motivated, as Trentman argues.

other spoken or written language is to be given an arbitrarily privileged status (thus opening the door to Geach's criticism), Ockham's Criterion must treat them all on a par. Hence either (i) any truth-relevant grammatical feature found in *even a single* spoken or written language is found also in mental language, or else (ii) any such feature found in *all* spoken or written languages is found also in mental language. But neither alternative is satisfactory. Since different human languages frequently adopt a variety of grammatical devices to mark a given distinction (for instance, the difference between "John loves Mary" and "Mary loves John" is marked by word order in English but by case-inflection in Latin), alternative (i) would go beyond the "needs of signification" and clutter mental language with many grammatical devices any one of which suffices to mark the given distinction, but none of which is needed to do so.

One may object that Ockham's Criterion requires less, that it requires only that the distinction marked by a truth-relevant grammatical feature in a spoken or written language be made also in mental language by *some* grammatical feature, although not necessarily by the same one, so that the needless multiplication of grammatical devices in mental language is avoided. But this is in effect to say no more than that spoken and written sentences with different truth conditions must correspond to mental sentences with different truth-relevant grammatical features—that is, with different truth conditions. That is so, but it is not what is wanted. It tells us which distinctions must be made in mental language, but it says nothing at all about how mental language makes them; it does not give us a single rule of mental grammar, but only what is to be accomplished by such rules.

If alternative (i) is unacceptable, alternative (ii) is little better. The grammatical diversity of spoken and written languages makes it very doubtful that there are any surface-level grammatical features common to them all.[10] Alternative (ii) is therefore very likely vacuous. Hence the positive part of Ockham's Criterion, on either of its two permitted readings, is either unworkable or uninformative.

Nevertheless, the negative part of Ockham's Criterion may be accepted. Grammatical features that do not affect truth conditions in a spoken or written language do not appear in mental language. They occur in spoken or written language only for "decoration" or for the sake of "well-formedness" (for instance, agreement with resepct to gender).[11] Thus mental language is a minimal language; whatever the positive features of its grammar, there is nothing there that goes beyond the "needs of signification," that is not needed for the making of truth-relevant distinctions.

II.   We are now in a position to argue for the second of Trentman's claims, that there is no synonymy in mental language. As far as I know, Ockham asserts this explicitly only once.[12] Several times, however, he makes a weaker claim that, if one is not careful, may be misread as saying more than it actually does. He frequently says that synonyms in spoken or written language correspond or are subordinated to the same concept or term of mental language so that the subordination relation does not map

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[10] The surface-structure features must be the one that are at stake. For the closest Ockham comes to the notion of a "deep structure" is mental language itself.

[11] See above, n. 8.

[12] See the last sentence of the text quoted above in n. 8.

conventional synonyms into mental synonyms.[13] But this is not by itself sufficient to rule out mental synonymy across the board; it is only to say that mental synonyms, if there are any, are not the correlates of conventional synonyms.

On the other hand, if Ockham does not explicitly assert Trentman's second claim as often as one would like, there are at least two other reasons to think both that he *does* accept it and that philosophically he *ought* to accept it. The first reason is just the acceptable, negative part of Ockham's criterion: grammatical features of spoken or written language that do not serve the "needs of signification" by affecting truth conditions are not present in mental grammar. That this rules out all synonymy in mental language seems to be the clear intention of Ockham's whole discussion in *Quodlibet* 5, q. 8, with its repeated statement that what is in mental language is there only because of the "needs of signification," not for the sake of "decoration" or "well-formedness," and that synonymy does not serve the "needs of signification." Indeed, the intention is so clear in this text that one may regard the denial of any mental synonymy as all but explicit there.

Nevertheless, this first reason is perhaps the weaker of the two. For although the negative part of Ockham's Criterion is explicit in *Quodlibet* 5, q. 8, and is philosophically relatively unproblematic, still we must remember that the discussion there also affirms the unsatisfactory positive claim that all truth-relevant features of spoken and written language are found too in mental language. Perhaps one ought not to be entirely confident of even the acceptable parts of a text in which the philosophically unobjectionable and the philosophically objectionable are so thoroughly intertwined.

Whatever one thinks of these hesitations, the second and perhaps stronger reason for affirming Trentman's second claim is independent of these considerations. Ockham defines synonymy in the "broad" sense, which he says he will use,[14] as follows:

> Broadly, those things are called synonyms that simply signify the same thing in all ways, so that nothing is in any way signified by the one unless it is signified by the other in the same way.[15]

I have argued elsewhere[16] that the "ways" (modes) of signifying here are best interpreted syntactically, so that a mental expression or concept signifies a thing x in a given syntactic mode m if and only if x is signified by some constituent simple categorematic concept or mental term occurring within that expression in the grammatical or syntactical construction m (for instance, in the plural, in the passive voice, in a prepositional phrase, etc.).[17] It follows that synonymous mental expressions, signifying exactly the

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[13] E.g., *Summa logicae*, ed. Gedeon Gél and Stephen F. Brown (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1974), I, 3, ll. 20–22: "quia quidquid per omnia synonyma significatur posset per unum illorum exprimi sufficienter, et ideo multitudo conceptuum tali pluralitati synonymorum non correspondet." See also *Quodlibet* 5, q. 8, conclusion 2, fol. 76vb: "nec vocibus synonymis correspondet pluralitas conceptuum"; and *Quodlibet* 5, q. 9, fol. 77rb: "sed multitudini nominum synonymorum in voce non correspondet pluralitas in mente"; and fol. 77vb: "licet talis pluralitas sit in voce non tamen in conceptu, quia multitudini nominum synonymorum non correspondet multitudo conceptuum."

[14] *Summa logicae*, I, 6, ll. 15f.: "Isto secundo modo intendo uti in isto capitulo, et in multis aliis, hoc nomine 'synonyma'."

[15] Ibid., ll. 8–11: "Large dicuntur illa synonyma quae simplicter idem significant omnibus modis, ita quod nihil aliquo modo significatur per unum quin eodem modo significetur per reliquum." Ockham says the same thing, in almost the same terms, in *Quodlibet* 5, q. 10, fol. 78ra.

[16] Spade, "Ockham's Distinctions," pp. 68–69. (Although some of what is said in that article rests on the claim that there is no synonymy in mental language, the argument for the present point does not.)

[17] Spoken or written expressions, then, signify x in mode m if and only if they are subordinated to a mental expression that signifies x in mode m.

same things in exactly the same ways, would have to consist of exactly the same simple categorematic concepts in exactly the same syntactical constructions. But that is to say that they would be *identical*,[18] so that synonymy is ruled out in mental language after all.

For these two reasons, therefore, I think we ought to take Ockham at his word on the one occasion when he explicitly affirms Trentman's second claim. Nevertheless, he seems to deny it implicitly in at least one passage. In *Quodlibet* 5, q. 9 ("Whether mental names are distinguished like spoken names into concrete and abstract?"), Ockham argues that mental language possesses both the concrete term "white" and the abstract term "whiteness." The concrete term "white" is one of the paradigms of a connotative term; its nominal definition is "something having a whiteness."[19] If, therefore, mental language possesses the abstract term "whiteness," it certainly possesses the syntactic wherewithal to formulate the nominal definition of the concrete term "white." But, as I have argued elsewhere,[20] Ockham's theory of connotation seems to hold that connotative terms are synonymous with their nominal definitions. Hence if both "white" and "whiteness" are included in the vocabulary of mental language, mental synonymy will be possible after all.

Thus although the denial of synonymy is a legitimate part of Ockham's theory of mental language, he seems not to have fully realized its implications. If there is no synonymy in mental language, then mental names are not distinguished like spoken ones into concrete and abstract, despite what Ockham says in *Quodlibet* 5, q. 9.[21]

III.   In order to discuss Trentman's third claim, that there can be no equivocation in mental language, some preliminary explanation of Ockham's theory of equivocation is required. Ockham, following Aristotle[22] and the tradition,[23] distinguished equivocation, which pertains to ambiguous terms, from amphiboly, which pertains to ambiguous complex expressions and especially to ambiguous sentences. I shall discuss Trentman's third claim only with respect to equivocation proper, although many of the considera-

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[18] Or at most differ numerically. That is, they would be two tokens of the same mental type. But this kind of plurality is not what is involved in synonymy.

[19] *Summa logicae*, I, 10, ll. 41–46: "Sicut est de hoc nomine 'album', nam 'album' habet definitionem exprimentem quid nominis, in qua una dictio ponitur in recto et alia in obliquo. Unde si quaeras, quid significat hoc nomen 'album', dices quod illud idem quod ista oratio tota 'aliquid informatum albedine' vel 'aliquid habens albedinem'."

[20] Spade, "Ockham's Distinctions," secs. 7–9. The operative assumption in this argument is the principle I label Principle 9 in that paper (p. 67): "All the expressions expressing the *quid nominis* of a term *t* are synonymous if and only if *t* is itself synonymous with each of those expressions." Although Ockham never explicitly asserts that principle, I think it is legitimate to attribute it to him. See the discussion ibid.

[21] It is significant, therefore, that Ockham's argument in the passage rests on faulty reasoning. See ibid., n. 40. The issues raised by this passage are in fact more complicated, and whether it implies mental synonymy is in fact not so clear as I have suggested above. For a fuller discussion, see ibid. I refer to the matter here only to suggest that Ockham was perhaps not fully aware of the implications of his theory of mental language.

[22] Aristotle, *Sophistici elenchi*, 4, 165b30–166a23.

[23] E.g., William of Sherwood, *Die Introductiones in logicam des Wilhelm von Shyreswood († nach 1267)*, ed. Martin Grabmann (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), pp. 87–89; trans. Norman Kretzmann, *William of Sherwood's Introduction to Logic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), pp. 135–40. See also Peter of Spain, *Tractatus: Called Afterwards Summule logicales*, ed L. M. De Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), tract VII, secs. 25–26; Lambert of Auxerre, *Logica (Summa Lamberti)*, ed. Franco Alessio (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1971), pp. 149–55.

tions raised below in connection with the third mode of equivocation will apply *mutatis mutandis* to amphiboly. In the end I think no ambiguity of any sort, whether of terms or of expressions, ought to be allowed in mental language.

Ockham discusses equivocation in two main places in the *Summa logicae*, in I, 13, and in III-4, 2–4.[24] The latter is the fuller treatment, although the former adds some considerations especially relevant to mental language. In III-4, 2, Ockham observes that an equivocal term is sometimes defined as one that has a diverse signfication in an expression.[25] Ockham argues that this definition will not do. First, although this is not his objection, the phrase "diverse signification" must be properly understood. For if one holds with Ockham that terms do not in general signify external natures or concepts in the mind but rather individuals, then a common term such as "man" can signify diverse things—namely, individual men—and yet be univocal. The phrase "diverse signification" must therefore be read as meaning that the term is given more than one imposition at the same time.

But even if "diverse signification" is correctly interpreted, Ockham finds the proposed definition insufficient. For, and this is his actual argument, sometimes equivocation occurs where there is no diversity of signification. His example is the sentence "Man is a noun" in which the term 'man' is imposed to signify only individual men but may refer or supposit equivocally either for those individual men or for the spoken or written term "man."[26]

As the example suggests, Ockham holds that the correct definition of equivocation must be in terms of supposition rather than signification.[27] In effect, a term is equivocal in a sentence if it can refer or stand or supposit there for diverse things in such a way that it supposits for the one and not the other. The last proviso is added because in the sentence "Every man is an animal" the term 'man' supposits for diverse individual men, but it is not equivocal there since it supposits for all such men and not for some to the exclusion of others. On the other hand, in "Man is a species" the term "man," even though it is given only a single imposition, can supposit either for individual men and not for the concept "man" or for the concept and not for the individuals.[28]

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[24] Amphiboly is treated in III-4, 5–7. The discussion of equivocation in Ockham's *Expositio Praedicamentorum*, Ca. 1 (1 a 1–5: "Aequivoca dicuntur quorum solum") adds nothing relevant to our purposes. See his *Expositio aurea* (Bologna: Benedictus Hector Bononiensis, 1496), sign. g ii. (Hain 11950.)

[25] Lines 7–8: "Circa primum dicitur quod aequivocatio est diversa significatio alicuius termini positi in oratione." See William of Sherwood, *Introductiones in logicam*, p. 87, l. 19 (Kretzmann, p. 135); Lambert of Auxerre, *Logica*, p. 149.

[26] *Summa logicae*, III-4, 2, ll. 9–14: "Sed istud non est bene dictum, nam non semper ubi est aequivocatio ibi est diversitas significationis. Bene enim potest esse aequivocatio in pure univoco; sicut ista propositio 'homo est nomen' est distinguenda penes aequivocationem, etiam si hoc nomen 'homo' non significaret nisi unum, nec proprie nec improprie, et tamen hic non est diversa significatio."

[27] Ibid., ll. 15–18: "Et ideo dicendum est quod aequivocatio magis proprie definitur sic: aequivocatio est multorum vocatio sub eadem voce vel sub eodem signo. Ut 'vocatio' non accipiatur hic pro significatione tantum sed magis pro suppositione seu pro alicuius positione." See also n. 28, below.

[28] Ibid., ll. 30–36: "Sciendum tamen quod 'stare pro diversis' non facit aequivocationem, sed 'stare pro diversis, ita quod pro uno et non pro alio' facit aequivocationem. Sicut in ista 'omnis homo est animal', 'homo' stat pro diversis, et tamen non est aequivocatio; sed in ista 'homo est species' potest sic stare pro diversis, quia potest stare pro intentione et non pro re extra, vel potest stare pro re extra et non pro intentione, ita scilicet quod aliquis utatur hac voce pro uno et non pro alio." It seems to be intended here, although it is not explicitly said, that the term cannot be used to supposit for both the species and the individuals at once. That is, the alternatives are meant to be exclusive.

Ockham, again following Aristotle and the tradition,[29] distinguishes three modes of equivocation, which I shall call (1) equivocation by chance, (2) equivocation by analogy, and (3) equivocation by context. These are defined as follows.

A term is equivocal in the first mode (by chance) if and only if it is given more than one imposition at the same time in such a way that the impositions are independent of one another.[30] The last clause distinguishes equivocation by chance from equivocation by analogy, as we shall see. An example may be found in the term "dog," which is both imposed to signify canine animals and independently imposed to signify the constellation "the Dog."[31] Since the term has this dual imposition and signification, it may supposit in a sentence for the animals and not for the constellation or for the constellation and not for the animals. The user may have either the one or the other in mind on a given occasion. Hence the term is equivocal.[32]

A term is equivocal in the second mode (by analogy) if and only if it is given more than one imposition at the same time in such a way that the impositions are not independent of one another but rather one is primary and the rest are related in some way to it.[33] This is the familiar *pros hen* equivocity. As an example, the term "man" may be primarily imposed to signify human beings and also secondarily imposed to signify statues or images of human beings because the latter are related by resemblance to the former.[34] Just as for equivocation by chance, since the term can have this dual imposition and signification, it may supposit in a sentence for human beings and not for their images or for the images and not for the human beings. The user may have either the one or the other in mind on a given occasion. Hence the term is equivocal.[35]

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[29] See above, nn. 22–23.

[30] *Summa logicae*, III-4, 2, ll. 48–53: "Primus modus est quando aliqua dictio est aequivoca a casu. Vocatur autem 'aequivocum a casu' quando dictio aeque primo—non semper quidem aeque primo tempore sed intentione—pluribus impositionibus, vel una aequivalenti pluribus, imponitur ad significandum, ita scilicet quod una impositione imponitur ad significandum ac si non esset prius imposita."

[31] Ibid., ll. 92–116.

[32] In ll. 53–55, Ockham allows that a term may be called equivocal in this first mode with respect to different languages. That is, the diverse impositions need not belong to a single system of impositions constituting a single spoken or written language. ("Sicut contingit quando eadem dictio est eadem in diversis idiomatibus, sicut haec dictio 'me' est Latinum et est Anglicum, ideo est aequivocum a casu.")

[33] *Summa logicae*, III-4, 3, ll. 2–8: "Circa secundum modum aequivocationis est sciendum quod tunc est secundus modus aequivocationis quando eadem dictio primo et principaliter imponitur ad significandum vel consignificandum aliquid vel aliqua, et secundario propter aliquam attributionem alterius rei ad primum significatum imponitur ad significandum aliud vel alia, ita quod in aliquibus propositionibus utimur illo vocabulo aliter quam primo erat institutum, et non in omnibus."

[34] Ibid., ll. 8–13: "Sicut est de isto nomine 'homo', quod primo erat impositum ad significandum animalia rationalia et secundo propter similitudinem statuae ad hominem utimur hoc nomine 'homo' pro statua in aliquibus propositionibus, sicut in talibus 'homo depingitur', 'homo est aureus vel argenteus', quando statua fit ex auro vel argento.

[35] Ockham stipulates another important difference between equivocation by chance and equivocation by analogy. Whereas a term that is equivocal by chance requires that every sentence in which it occurs be distinguished (at least if the equivocation occurs within a single language), a term that is equivocal by analogy requires that only certain sentences be distinguished in this way. Such a term may supposit according to its primary imposition in any sentence in which it occurs. But it may supposit according to one of its secondary impositions only if it is "matched" in a sentence with a term that is truly predicable of one of its secondary significates. See ibid., ll. 18–28: "Ex hoc oritur una regula talis, quod numquam est propositio distinguenda penes secundum modum aequivocationis nisi quando illud vocabulum quod potest sic aequivoce accipi comparatur alicui verificabili de secundario significato vel pro aliquo consimili. Et ideo ista est distinguenda 'homo depingitur' et non ista 'homo currit' nec ista 'homo est animal', et sic de aliis. Et huius ratio est quia semper terminus, ubicumque ponatur, potest stare pro suo primario significato, sed non potest semper stare pro suo

Note that a term is equivocal in one of these first two modes only if it *imposed* to signify. But only conventional, spoken or written terms are imposed to signify; mental terms or concepts signify naturally and not by imposition. It follows that only conventional terms and not mental terms can be equivocal in one of these first two modes. Already, therefore, we have at least a weak form of Trentman's third claim: there is no equivocation in mental language according to the first or second mode.

Ockham says as much in *Summa logicae*, I, 13,[36] where indeed the first two modes of equivocation are the only ones he considers.[37] There too he explains the relation between conventionally equivocal terms in these first two modes and terms or concepts of mental language. Since imposition amounts to the subordination of spoken or written terms to mental terms or concepts, an equivocal term in one of the first two modes is just a term that is subordinated to more than one concept at the same time.[38]

It is perhaps hard to see how Ockham can reconcile all the things he says about these first two modes of equivocation. If a term supposits personally for what is signifies, and if a conventional term derives its signification from the concepts to which it is subordinated, then it would seem that a conventional term that is equivocal in one of the first two modes and so is subordinated to more than one concept at the same time would supposit, whenever it is used personally, according to all its impositions at once and not, as Ockham says, according to one to the exclusion of the rest.

What Ockham has in mind seems to be this. The user of an equivocal term in one of the first two modes has adopted a certain set of subordination conventions that map the term into more than one concept. Those conventions may be thought of as dispositional or habitual in nature; they are related to what is called "linguistic competence." Now just as in the practical realm one may acquire diverse habits in such a way that on a given occasion one is disposed to adopt diverse courses of action, even though only one course is in fact adopted and so only one habit exercised on that occasion, so too with language. The user of an equivocal term has acquired diverse linguistic habits governing the use of that term, but not all such habits need to be exercised every time the term is used. The distinction that is required in order to make out Ockham's claim, then, is the distinction between dispositional and occurrent imposition or subordination, like the distinction between dispositional and occurrent knowledge and belief.

It is clear in all of this that mental language is an important part of Ockham's explanation of the mechanism by which conventional terms can come to be equivocal in one of the first two modes. Equivocation occurs in those cases in which the subordination

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secundario significato, sed tantum in propositione ubi comparatur alicui verificabili de suo secundario significato. Et ideo tantum talis propositio est distinguenda penes secundum modum aequivocationis."

[36] Lines 10–12: "Est autem primo sciendum quod sola vox vel aliud signum ad placitum institutum est aequivocum vel univocum, et ideo intentio animae vel conceptus non est aequivocus nec univocus proprie loquendo."

[37] Ibid., ll. 25–34: "Tale autem aequivocum est duplex. Unum est aequivocum a casu, quando scilicet vox pluribus conceptibus subordinatur, et ita uni ac si non subordinaretur alteri et ita significat unum ac si non significaret alius, sicut est de hoc nomine 'Sortes', quod imponitur pluribus hominibus. Aliud est aequivocum a consilio, quando vox primo imponitur alicui vel aliquibus et subordinatur uni conceptui et postea propter aliquam similitudinem primi significati ad aliquid aliud vel propter aliquam aliam rationem imponitur illi alteri, ita quod non imponeretur illi alteri nisi quia primo imponebatur alii, sicut est de hoc nomine 'homo'."

[38] Ibid., ll. 13–15: "Est autem vox illa aequivoca quae significans plura non est signum subordinatum uni conceptui, sed est signum unum pluribus conceptibus seu intentionibus animae subordinatum."

relation is one-many. Since there is no higher language to which mental language is subordinated, these kinds of equivocation cannot occur in mental language.

There is perhaps another argument for this same conclusion, an argument that does not depend on Ockham's defining the first two modes of equivocation in terms of imposition and so banishing them from mental language, as it were by *fiat*. These two modes exhaust the ways in which a term can be equivocal in virtue of "diverse signification": either the diverse significations of such a term are independent or they are not. Now since concepts are "natural likenesses" of the things they signify,[39] a concept that had a "diverse signification"—for instance, one that signified both canines and the constellation called "the Dog," or one that signified both human beings and their images—would be a natural likeness of all the things it signifies. It is hard to see how such a concept could possibly be called equivocal; rather it would be simply a *broader* concept than the concepts that signify only dogs or only the constellation "the Dog," only men or only their images. Somewhat similarly, a disjunctive term in spoken language (e.g., the term "instrument for writing or drawing with ink, or else a fenced enclosure for animals") must be sharply distinguished from a term signifying the two disjuncts equivocally (e.g., "pen").

The first two modes of equivocation fit the general definition in terms of "diverse signification" that Ockham rejects at the beginning of *Summa logicae*, III-4, 2. The third mode, however, does not fit, and it is this that leads Ockham to adopt his alternative general definition in terms of supposition. In effect Ockham defines the third mode of equivocation (equivocation by context) in such a way that a term is equivocal in this mode if and only if it is equivocal (that is, can supposit for diverse things in such a way that it can supposit for one and not the other) but not in either of the first two modes (that is, not in virtue of diverse signification or imposition). This happens when a term that is not given diverse impositions occurs in a *context* together with other words that may affect its supposition in a way that produces equivocation.[40] Ockham gives examples and rules for two main kinds of such contexts: (1) those that allow a term to supposit either simply or materially, or both, in addition to suppositing personally, and (2) tense and modal contexts, which produce what other authors called "ampliation."[41]

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[39] There are notorious difficulties in explicating this similarity between concepts and their significates. But these difficulties do not affect the argument. The point is merely that concepts always signify the same things (in the second mode of signification distinguished in *Summa logicae*, I, 33).

[40] *Summa logicae*, III-4, 4, ll. 2–8: "Circa tertium modum aequivocationis est primo sciendum quod tunc est tertius modus aequivocationis quando dictio non accipitur pro diversis significatis, sed ex hoc solum quod alicui comparatur quod non plus pertinent ad primarium significatum quam ad secundarium. Et iste modus non accidit ex hoc quod vox potest significare diversa, sicut contingit in duobus primis modis, sed ex hoc quod eadem vox potest supponere pro diversis." The first sentence of this passage presents obvious difficulties both of syntax and of interpretation. Ought one to understand "est aequivocatio" after "sed"? Again, if, as the first halves of both sentences say, the equivocal term is not taken with diverse significations, then why does the second half of the first sentence refer to primary and secondary significates?

[41] See Alfonso Maierù, *Terminologia logica della tarda scolastica* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1972), chap. 2. In *Summa logicae*, III-4, 4, ll. 106–12, Ockham also allows a third kind of context to produce this mode of equivocation. ("Alia regula est quod quando eadem dictio potest esse diversorum casuum, generum vel numerorum vel aliorum accidentium grammaticalium, illa propositio est distinguenda penes tertium modum aequivocationis. Sicut ista 'isti asini sunt episcopi', eo quod li episcopi potest esse nominativi casus vel genitivi. Verumtamen in tali paralogismo potest frequenter assignari primus modus aequivocationis; sed quando hoc habeat fieri et quando non, propter brevitatem omitto.")

The rules governing the first kind of context[42] I have elsewhere called collectively "Ockham's Rule of Supposition."[43] They are presented also in summary fashion in *Summa logicae*, I, 65:

This rule, therefore, can be given, that when a term able to have the above three kinds of supposition [namely, personal, simple, and material] is matched with an extreme common to incomplex or complex [expressions], whether spoken or written, the term can always have material or personal supposition, and such a sentence is to be distinguished. When it is matched with an extreme signifying an intention of the soul, it is to be distinguished insofar as it can have simple or personal supposition. But when it is matched with an extreme common to all the above, then it is to be distinguished insofar as it can have simple, material, or personal supposition.[44]

The rules governing the second kind of context are these:

The fourth rule is that when a common term supposits personally and is a subject with respect to a verb about the past, the sentence is to be distinguished insofar as the subject term can supposit for things that are or for things that were. Thus this is to be distinguished "Some boy was old," insofar as "boy" can supposit for him who is a boy, and then [the sentence] is equivalent to "Someone who now is a boy was old," or it can supposit for him who was a boy, and then the sense is "Someone who was a boy was old." . . .

The fifth rule is that when a common term suppositing personally is a subject with respect to a verb about the future, the sentence is to be distinguished according to the third mode of equivocation, insofar as the subject can supposit for things that are or for things that will be.

The sixth rule is that when a common term suppositing personally is a subject with respect to a verb about the possible or about the contingent, the sentence is to be distinguished insofar as the subject term can stand for things that are or for things that can be or for things that are contingent.[45]

The rules for these two kinds of contexts present a problem for Trentman's third claim. For sentences of the kinds governed by these rules will certainly occur in mental

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[42] *Summa logicae*, III-4, 4, ll. 10–86.

[43] Spade, "Ockham's Rule of Supposition."

[44] Lines 43–51: "Potest igitur dari ista regula quod quando terminus potens habere praedictam triplicem suppositionem comparatur extremo, communi incomplexis vel complexis, sive prolatis sive scriptis, semper terminus potest habere suppositionem materialem vel personalem; et est talis propositio distinguenda. Quando vero comparatur extremo significanti intentionem animae, est distinguenda, eo quod potest habere suppositionem simplicem vel personalem. Quando autem comparatur extremo communi omnibus praedictis, tunc est distinguenda, eo quod potest habere suppositionem personalem, simplicem vel materialem." See also the passages from Ockham's *Expositio in Sophisticos elenchos Aristotelis* quoted by Philotheus Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth," in his *Collected Articles on Ockham*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1958), pp. 232–67, nn. 19, 24–26.

[45] *Summa logicae*, III-4, ll. 4, 87–105: "Quarta regula est quando terminus communis supponit personaliter et subicitur respectu verbi de praeterito, illa propositio est distinguenda, eo quod terminus subiectus potest supponere pro his quae sunt vel pro his quae fuerunt. Sicut haec est distinguenda 'aliquis puer fuit senex', eo quod li puer potest supponere pro eo qui est puer, et tunc aequivalet isti 'aliquis, qui modo est puer, fuit senex'; vel potest supponere pro eo qui fuit puer, et tunc est sensus 'aliquis, qui fuit puer, fuit senex'. . . . Quinta regula est quod quando terminus communis supponens personaliter subicitur respectu verbi de futuro, illa propositio est distinguenda penes tertium modum aequivocationis, eo quod subiectum potest supponere pro his quae sunt vel pro his quae erunt. Sexta regula est quod quando terminus communis supponens personaliter subicitur respectu verbi de possibili vel de contingenti, illa propositio est distinguenda, eo quod terminus subiectus potest stare pro his quae sunt vel pro his quae possunt esse vel pro his quae contingunt esse." See also *Summa logicae*, I, 72, ll. 37–112; and II, 7.

language.[46] If the rules continue to apply there, they will introduce equivocation into mental language.

Indeed, Ockham explicitly allows this. In *Summa logicae*, III-4, 4, he says:

And it must be noted that this third mode of equivocation can be found in a purely mental sentence, although the first two modes have no place except among signs instituted by convention. Hence the mental sentence 'Man is a species' can be distinguished insofar as the subject can supposit significatively [i.e., personally] or for itself [i.e., simply]. And the same thing must be said in similar cases.[47]

Again in *Summa logicae*, I, 64, he says:

Now just as such a diversity of supposition can apply to a spoken or written term, so too it can apply to a mental term, because an intention can supposit for that which it signifies, for itself, for an utterance and for an inscription.[48]

If this claim is allowed to stand, it would of course refute Trentman's third claim. But it probably ought not to be allowed to stand. Ockham's statements here should not be regarded as his "better doctrine."

In effect, Ockham's rules provide that sentences producing the third mode of equivocation have *alternative* sets of truth conditions. When such a sentence is disambiguated in one way, it is true under one set of circumstances, and when it is disambiguated in another way, it is true under another set of circumstances. Either set of truth conditions may be applied without the other.[49] It is easy to see how this kind of situation might arise in spoken or written language. There the sentence might simply be subordinated to more than one mental sentence, although the equivocal term in that sentence is subordinated to only a single concept?[50] But it is much harder to see how such a situation could arise in mental language. One can of course have a mental sentence that is true under one set of circumstances *or* under another. But that is to have simply one *disjunctive* set of truth conditions, not *alternative* sets any one of which may be applied without the other.

In order to allow the third mode of equivocation in mental language, one would have to suppose that the truth or falsehood of some mental sentences is not determined solely by the ingredients and structures of the sentences themselves, on the one hand, and by

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[46] Indeed, Ockham explictly says that tense is a feature of mental verbs. See *Summa logicae*, I, 3, ll. 69–72, 81–82; also *Quodlibet* 5, q. 8, 3rd conclusion, fols. 76vb–77ra.

[47] Lines 113–18: "Et est notandum quod iste tertius modus aequivocationis potest reperiri in propositione pure mentali, quamvis duo primi modi non habeant locum nisi in signis ad placitum institutis. Unde ista propositio mentalis 'homo est species' distingui potest, eo quod subiectum potest supponere significative vel pro se ipso. Et sic de consimilibus est dicendum." Professor Calvin Normore first called this passage to my attention.

[48] Lines 56–59: "Sicut autem talis diversitas suppositionis potest competere termino vocali et scripto, ita etiam potest competere termino mentali, quia intentio potest supponere pro illo quod significat et pro se ipsa et pro voce et pro scripto."

[49] This also holds for the first two modes of equivocation, and indeed for the three modes of amphiboly as well (see *Summa logicae*, III-4, 5–7). The arguments in this and the following paragraphs may also be applied *mutatis mutandis* against the possibility of there being any kind of equivocation or amphiboly in mental language.

[50] This would require that the subordination relation be able to map a whole conventional expression into something other than the sum of the mappings of its parts.

the arrangement of things in the world, on the other. Rather, a third factor is also required: some factor that determines, in cases where there are alternatives, the things for which the terms in the sentences are to supposit. What could such a factor be?

The only suggestion I have to offer is to suppose some *kind of distinction* between a dispositional and an occurrent assigning of supposition, to parallel the distinction between dispositional and occurrent subordination or imposition sketched above. On this view, then, a mental sentence involving equivocation in the third mode would be one the user of which has acquired a disposition to assign the equivocal term in the sentence one set of supposita, and also a disposition to assign it another set of supposita. On any given occasion either one of these sets may be actually assigned without the other. An analogous trick will not allow equivocation in the first two modes into mental language, because concepts signify naturally and always signify the same things.[51] But, as far as I know, Ockham nowhere clearly says that concepts *supposit* naturally and always for the same things. Indeed, in the passages quoted above, he explicitly denies it.[52]

It is not clear to me what it would be like to "assign" supposition to a concept in the manner required by this theory. Perhaps the notion simply makes no sense. In any case one ought not to be too eager to embrace such a theory in order to save Ockham's statements about the third mode of equivocation in mental language. For in addition to making out just how such equivocation can occur there at all, there are at least two other difficulties.

First, Ockham's rules governing the third mode of equivocation contain certain peculiar biases. The "Rule of Supposition," for instance, contains a bias in favor of personal supposition.[53] And the rules for tenses and modality contain a bias in favor of the present assertoric.[54] But why should this be so? This kind of situation looks suspiciously like the *second* mode of equivocation (by analogy), which does not occur in

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[51] See the argument above, in the text to which n. 39 is appended.

[52] In *Summa logicae*, I, 1, ll. 19–21, he does say that a concept or intention of the soul is "nata" (apt by nature) to be a part of a mental sentence and "nata" to supposit there for what it naturally signifies ("Terminus conceptus est intentio seu passio animae aliquid naturaliter significans vel consignificans, nata esse pars propositionis mentalis, et pro eodem nata supponere"). But it is not clear how strongly "nata" is to be taken here. On the view sketched above, I can see no way to avoid making the dispositions to assign a certain supposition innate. If they are not innate, Ockham's ontology and psychology seem to allow no other way for the dispositions to be acquired naturally. Hence if they are not innate, then mental language, at least at the level of supposition (and so of truth), is not after all the universal language of thought, the same for everyone. Rather, it is to some extent conventional. This is certainly an unorthodox interpretation, although I can find no text to rule it out definitively. Moreover, once a degree of conventionality is allowed into mental language, it is hard to see how Ockham can confine the third mode of equivocation there to the several limited contexts allowed in III-4, 4. Why could one not, in a spirit of perversity, acquire a disposition to make the concept 'man' supposit in certain mental sentences only for asses? In order to avoid such consequences, it seems one would have to hold that the dispositions to assign supposition are innate.

[53] A term may supposit personally in any context, but simply or materially only in certain special circumstances. See above, n. 44.

[54] A term may supposit in any context for the things of which it may be truly predicted by means of a present-tensed assertoric coupla. It may supposit for the things of which it may be truly predicated by means of a past- or future-tensed or modal copula only in certain special circumstances (see *Summa logicae*, I, 72, ll. 37–112). Note that these rules appear to make sense only in the context of personal supposition. (Note the restrictions to personal supposition in the texts in n. 45, above.) Ockham does not appear to have taken account of tensed or modal sentences with terms in simple or material supposition (e.g., "Man was a species").

mental language.[55] There is nothing in the theory of the third mode of equivocation, as Ockham develops it, to explain such biases.[56]

More serious, however, is the second difficulty. It does not concern tense and modality, but rather the claim that concepts or mental terms may have simple or material supposition. Since concepts signify just what is conceived by them—that is, just what they are thoughts of—and since in general it is only in personal supposition that terms supposit for what they signify, it follows that if mental terms may have simple or material supposition, we do not always know what we are asserting in a mental sentence. If, for instance, in the mental sentence 'Man is a species' the subject has simple supposition so that the sentence asserts truly that the concept 'man' is a species, nevertheless that is not what we think when we formulate that sentence. For the subject concept 'man' signifies—and so is a thought of—men, not itself. Therefore, if mental language is to be the language of thought, so that to say in mental language that p is just to entertain the thought that p, then all supposition in mental language must be personal. There is no place there for simple or material supposition, despite what Ockham says.[57] Spoken or written sentences in which terms are equivocal with respect to personal, simple, and material supposition are then subordinated to several mental sentences at once, with distinct concepts in the place of equivocal spoken or written terms. Thus the spoken sentence "Man is a species" is subordinated to two mental sentences, one with the concept /man' as subject and the other with the concept *of* that concept as subject.

This, then, is the theory I think Ockham *ought* to have had. It seems to me that the very notion of mental language requires that there be only personal supposition there,

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[55] For the second mode, we have the rule (*Summa logicae*, III-4, 3, ll. 23–26): "A term always, wherever it occurs, can stand for its primary significate. On the other hand, it cannot always stand for its secondary significate, but only in a sentence where it is matched with some term truly predicable of its secondary significate." (For the Latin, see n. 35 above.) Walter Burleigh in fact treats tensed sentences, for which he gives rules essentially the same as Ockham's, as involving equivocation in the second mode. See the rules in his *De puritate artis logicae tractatus longior with a Revised Edition of the Tractatus brevior*, ed. Philotheus Boehner (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1955), p. 49, ll. 23–31, and the remarks in "Walter Burley's *Quaestiones in librum Perihermeneias*," ed. Stephen F. Brown, *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974), para. 5.31–5.35. He also explicitly says that it is the second mode that is involved in his "Rule of Supposition." See *De puritate*, p. 10, ll. 21–25: "Sed tamen huiusmodi propositiones: 'Homo est species', 'Homo est disyllabum', sunt muliplices penes secundum modum aequivocationis, ex eo quod ille terminus 'homo' potest habere suppositionem personalem vel simpliciem vel materialem." In "Ockham's Rule of Supposition," p. 65, n. 7, I wrote that "it is hard to see how Burley thinks that the sentences he mentions are equivocal in this mode." I no longer find it so hard to see; the second mode is the only one of the three in which the kind of bias involved in these rules is given a theoretical rationale.

[56] Recall the difficulties we had with Ockham's definition of that third mode. See above, n. 40.

[57] I have used related considerations to make a somewhat different point in my "Some Epistemological Implications of the Burley-Ockham Dispute," *Franciscan Studies* 35 (1975):212–22, at sec. 3.

[58] *Summulae dialecticae*, tract. 7, as quoted by Sten Ebbesen, "The Summulae, Tractatus VII: De fallaciis," in *The Logic of John Buridan*, ed. Jan Pinborg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1976), pp. 139–60, at p. 156: "Sciendum est ergo, ut mihi videtur, quod suppositio materialis non est nisi ratione vocis significativae: nullus enim terminus in propositione mentali supponit materialiter, sed semper personaliter, quia non utimur terminis mentalibus ad placitum, sicut vocibus et scripturis, numquam enim eadem oratio mentalis diversas significationes vel acceptiones habet: eaedem enim omnibus passiones animae sunt et etiam res quarum ipsae sunt similitudines, ut habetur primo Peri Hermeneias. Unde ego dico quod propositio mentalis correspondens huic propositioni prout est vera 'homo est species' non est propositio in qua subicitur conceptus specificus hominum, sed est propositio in qua subicitur conceptus quo concipitur conceptus specificus hominum, et ille iam supponit non pro se, sed pro conceptu specifico hominum; ex quo satis patet quod praedicti paralogismi secundum talem mutationem suppositionum pertinet ad fallacias in dictione." Ebbesen's paper contains much interesting information on Buridan's theory of equivocation.

contrary to what Ockham says. John Buridan realized this,[58] as did Peter of Ailly.[59] It seems to me also that Ockham ought not to have allowed equivocation in mental language in the case of tensed and modal sentences. Such a doctrine requires very dubious and perhaps untenable philosophical assumptions, as we have seen. Once again, Buridan has a view that seems preferable. Whereas Ockham holds that tensed and modal contexts *allow* a term to supposit equivocally for *alternative* sets of supposita, Buridan maintains that such contexts *make* a term supposit for the *union* of those sets.[60]

IV.   We have seen that Ockham's theory of mental language runs into difficulties with respect to all three of Trentman's claims; in this regard at least Ockham appears not to have realized all the consequences of what he was saying. While it is perhaps philosophically acceptable to restrict the grammatical features of mental language to those that affect truth conditions, it is not acceptable to identify the grammatical features of mental language, as Ockham does, with *exactly* those that affect truth conditions. Ockham then still owes us a satisfactory account of mental grammar. Furthermore, although he recognizes that there can be no synonymy in mental language, Ockham appears to have forgotten this when he allowed mental names to be distinguished into concrete and abstract. Finally, although Ockham explicitly allows the "third mode" of equivocation in mental language, there appears to be no coherent and plausible way to make this out. Such equivocation with respect to simple and material supposition is simply out of place in a language that is to be the language of thought, while with respect to tense and modality it involves a tampering with mental supposition in ways that are not very plausible or even very clear.

All this indicates that Ockham's notion of mental language was not very thoroughly worked out. However interesting, suggestive, or even important we may find the theory today, it was perhaps not the center and focus of Ockham's own logical thought to the extent that it has been of much of our own thinking about Ockham.[61]

Indiana University

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[59] *Conceptus et insolubilia* (Paris: Pierre le Dru for Durland Gerlier, [ca. 1495], Copinger 391), fol. 5vb: "Infertur etiam quod quia terminus mentalis proprie dictus in propositione mentali semper naturaliter accipitur pro re quam ultimate significat naturaliter proprie, ideo semper supponit pro suo significato ultimato, semper personaliter supponit et numquam materialiter." Peter of Mantua even appears to have said that all supposition is personal in any language (including spoken or written language?), although his reasoning is a bit obscure. See Peter (Alboinus) of Mantua, *Logica* (Venice: Simon Bevilaqua, 1 Dec. 1492, Goff P-501), fol. 2rb: "Et quia nulla est suppositio nisi personalis, ideo potest dici pro regula quod omnis terminus supponens supponit personaliter."

[60] Thus whereas for Ockham the sentence "*B* will be *A*" is true in one sense if and only if what is now *B* will be *A*, and true in another sense if and only if what will be *B* will be *A*, for Buridan the sentence "*B* will be *A*" is true (*simpliciter*) if and only if what is or will be *B* will be *A*. See *Iohannis Buridani Tractatus de consequentiis*, ed. Hubert Hubien (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1976), I, 8, 11. 363–69: "Notandum est quod propositio de subiecto ampliato per praedicatum expondenda est per disiunctionem in subiecto temporis praesentis ad tempus vel tempora ad quod vel ad quae fit ampliatio, ut 'B erit A' 'quod est vel erit B erit A', et 'homo est mortuus' 'qui est vel fuit homo est mortuus', et 'antichristus potest esse homo' 'qui est vel potest esse antichristus potest esse homo', et 'rosa intelligitur' 'quod est vel fuit vel erit vel potest esse rosa intelligitur'." See also *Johannes Buridanus: Sophismata*, ed. T. K. Scott (Stuttgart: Fromman-Holzboog, 1977), Ca. 5; trans. in T. K. Scott, *John Buridan: Sophisms on Meaning and Truth* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966), pp. 144–57.

[61] See above, n. 7.