

JOHN WYCLIF AND AUGUSTINIAN REALISM

The fourteenth-century Oxford schoolman John Wyclif was by all accounts one of the most ardent metaphysical realists of his generation. He wrote extensively on questions of logic and metaphysics in the years prior to his inception as a doctor of theology in 1372, though metaphysics continued to play a major part in his theological writings up until his death in 1384. Yet even the earlier writings devoted to logic and metaphysics often had a distinctly theological character. Theology and metaphysics were always of one piece for Wyclif, a fact that was continually manifested in varying circumstances throughout his career.

While the importance of Wyclif's metaphysics was long downplayed by many of his Protestant admirers who regarded this as so much medieval baggage, incidental to the mainstay of his thought, scholars of the last seventy years have sought to correct this appraisal, rightly recognizing the significant place held by metaphysics in so many of Wyclif's works, and the role his realism played in the formulation of theological doctrines. These recent scholars, though, have not always given the proper attention due the thoroughly theological quality which characterizes Wyclif's realism itself, and thus have not always captured the full range and power of his metaphysics.¹

More specifically, while Wyclif's place within the Augustinian metaphysical tradition has been acknowledged, what has not been sufficiently examined is Wyclif's steadfast adherence to one particular component of Augustinian realism: the relationship between *affectus* and *aspectus*, that is, the sanctity of the believer on the one hand, and the

¹ See S. H. THOMSON's *The Philosophical Basis of Wyclif's Theology*, in *The Journal of Religion* 11/1(1931) 86-116. More recently: G. LEFF, *The Place of Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology*, in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. A. HUDSON and M. WILKS. Oxford 1987, p. 217-232; LEFF, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* II. Manchester 1967, 494-558; J. A. ROBSON, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools*. Cambridge 1961; A. KENNY, *Wyclif*. Oxford 1985; KENNY, *The Realism of De Universalibus*, in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. A. KENNY. Oxford 1986, p. 17-29. THOMSON, LEFF and ROBSON have spoken to the manner in which they believe Wyclif's realism had effected some of his theological positions, but KENNY has been the best at presenting the depth of Wyclif's commitment to metaphysical realism itself, especially in direct opposition to nominalism.

comprehension of the eternal exemplars existing in the Word, on the other.² Believing that the disposition of the individual must be oriented toward the highest good, Christ the Word, if one's perception is to be clear, Wyclif grounds adherence to the Catholic faith in the directing of one's attention away from the temporal realm and towards the intelligible. When this vital component of the Augustinian tradition to which Wyclif was indebted is not given ample consideration, however, the central place which Wyclif accords metaphysics within the entirety of Christian life and doctrine will be obscured. For in the centuries-long struggle against both scepticism and heresy Wyclif stood within a tradition embodied by Robert Grosseteste, Anselm of Canterbury, and Augustine himself, all of whom Wyclif consistently appealed to, and all of whom considered belief in eternal exemplars to be indispensable in successfully completing the Christian pilgrimage.

THE STRUCTURE OF WYCLIF'S REALISM

Realism, a belief in universals existing *ex parte rei*, was long understood to be a bulwark against the threats posed by scepticism in its various incarnations, whether those encountered by Augustine at the end of the fourth century or by Wyclif at the end of the fourteenth. Augustine, troubled by the philosophers of the New Academy who had argued that genuine certainty was unattainable, found in Neo-Platonism a criterion for that certitude which he so earnestly sought. Augustine found himself in agreement with Plato who believed that two realms existed, the intelligible realm of truth and the sensible one which to some degree reflects it.³ Plato, he notes, had spoken of ideas, those eternal and immutable principles or exemplars, which Augustine the Neo-Platonist located within

² Wyclif's general debt to Augustine himself, and the medieval Augustinian tradition as a whole, can hardly be missed especially given Wyclif's numerous citations of his predecessors throughout so many of his works. For notable discussions of his Augustinian metaphysics see ROBSON, o.c., p. 141-152; THOMSON, o.c., 104-110; LEFF, *Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition*, in *Medievalia et Humanistica: In Honor of S. Harrison Thomson*. Cleveland 1970, p. 29-39. While these scholars have certainly recognized Wyclif's equation of Christian orthodoxy and Augustinian realism, the devotional, even soteriological, aspects of the tradition which Wyclif adopts do not receive the same attention.

³ *Contra Academicos* III, 17, 37. CCL 29, 57: "... Platonem sensisse duos esse mundos, unum intellegibilem, in quo ipsa veritas habitaret, istum autem sensibilem, quem manifestum est nos uisu tactuque sentire; itaque illum uerum, hunc ueri similem et ad illius imaginem factum..."

the mind of God.⁴ And this eternal plane of forms supplied Augustine with the foundation upon which to render sure judgments as he discovered the unchanging truth which surpassed his own mutable mind.⁵

Despite the predominance of realist metaphysics at Oxford in the late fourteenth century, Wyclif perceived a very real threat to orthodoxy in the nominalism which he still encountered. Distressed by these *doctores signorum* as he called them, Wyclif consistently condemned a system which, by its very nature, could so readily engender a formidable brand of scepticism. Because nominalism restricted the sphere of knowledge to that of the singular thing (*cognitio rei particularis*), granting an existence to universals only within the human intellect (*in mente*), it opened the door for the type of speculation which could undermine confidence in the reliability of both God and Holy Scripture. Indeed, the excesses of such speculations had caused no small stir, at times meeting with official condemnation.⁶ In the face of what he clearly considered to be a challenge to the Catholic faith, Wyclif did not, however, appeal to the more moderate realist metaphysics prevalent in his own day. Rather, he drew upon an older Augustinian realist tradition which was distinctly theological in character, owing more to Neo-Platonism than to Aristotelianism.

⁴ *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46,2. CCL 44/a,73: "... atque has rationes rerum principales appellat ideas Plato, non solum ideae, sed ipsae verae sunt, quia aeternae sunt et eiusdem modi atque incommutabiles manent". Ib. 71: "Sunt namque ideae principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae divina intelligentia continentur".

⁵ *Confessiones* VII,17,23. CCL 27,107: "Quaerens enim, unde approbarem pulchritudinem corporum siue caelestium siue terrestrium et quid mihi praesto esset integre de mutabilibus iudicanti et dicenti: 'Hoc ita esset debet, illud non ita', hoc ergo quaerens, unde iudicarem, cum ita iudicarem, inueneram incommutabilem et ueram ueritatis aeternitatem supra mentem commutabilem".

⁶ On matters of fourteenth-century scepticism consider the condemnations of 1346 and 1347 found in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* II,1 ed. by H. DENIFLE. Paris 1889-1897. For discussions see D. TRAPP, *Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century*, in *Augustiniana* 6(1956) 146-274; TRAPP, *Moderns and Modernists in MS Fribourg Cordeliers* 26 in *Augustinianum* 5(1965) 241-270; L. KENNEDY, *Philosophical Scepticism in England in the Mid-Fourteenth Century*, in *Vivarium* 21/1(1983) 35-57; KENNEDY, *Theology the Handmaiden of Logic. A Sentence Commentary used by Gregory of Rimini and John Hiltalingen*, in *Augustiniana* 33(1983) 142-164; W. J. COURTENAY, *John Mirecourt and Gregory of Rimini on Whether God Can Undo the Past*, in *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 60(1973) 147-174; COURTENAY, *The Critique of Natural Causality in the Mutakallimun and Nominalism*, in *Harvard Theological Review* 66(1973) 77-94. I believe that KENNEDY (contra COURTENAY) is correct in insisting on the severity of the threat posed by nominalist speculation. Certainly it was considered quite dangerous at the time given the condemnations which resulted. Wyclif's negative reaction to nominalism and its perceived dangers are discussed throughout this paper.

For Wyclif God is the first truth, beyond every genus, neither a universal nor a singular, but the transcendent truth which is their cause. Thus before we might know anything it is necessary to know God's existence. And drawing upon Anselm, Wyclif affirms that everything which is true is so in respect to that one truth which is God.⁷ Just as his Christian realist predecessors had done, Wyclif locates the eternal exemplars within the divine intellect. He even believed that Aristotle had been mistaken in his contention that Plato understood ideas to be substances existing separately from God and individuals; for such things would surely be monstrous.⁸ Wyclif's own doctrine of universals resembles, though is not identical to, that of Grosseteste who had posited different levels of universals, the highest of which is comprised of the uncreated reasons or exemplars existing in the divine mind from eternity, which Plato, Grosseteste notes, had called ideas.⁹ Wyclif considered there to exist three grades of universals. The first and highest is the eternal exemplar, the universal of causation, as God is the most universal cause. The second is similar to the Aristotelian universal whereby natures are communicated to the many particulars. The third consists of the representations formed in the mind, as in the case of terms, either written or vocal, which are signs of the prior universals, though they are only

⁷ *De logica* II,i. ed. M. DZIEWICKI. London 1893; reprint, New York, 1966, p.7: "Verumptamen necesse est deum esse primam veritatem ... illa enim veritas est transcendens cuicunque noscenti ... Illam enim veritatem primo omnium noscimus quo ad tempus, sed confuse quo ad causam; quia ipsa primarie movet ad eius noticiam ... Est ergo prima veritas extra omne genus, cum nec sit universale nec singulare, sed omnia talia causat". *Tractatus de universalibus*, ii. ed. I. MUELLER. Oxford 1985, p. 116: "Et sic intelligendus est Anselmus in libro suo *De veritate* ponendo omne verum una eademque veritate verum, quae indubie est Deus". See ANSELM, *De veritate* xiii, in *Opera Omnia* I, ed. F.S. SCHMITT. Edinburgh 1946-61, p. 196-199.

⁸ *De universalibus* ii, 60: "Sed Dominus Albertus, Sanctus Thomas et alii glossantes Aristotelem cum favore dicunt quod Aristoteles aequivocavit cum Platone, intellegendo eum dixisse quod ideae sunt substantiae per se entes, separatae a Deo et individuus. Quod non est intelligibile, cum talia monstruosissime superfluerent". See ARISTOTLE, *Posterior Analytics* I,22,83a.

⁹ GROSSETESTE presents different levels of universals beginning with the exemplar forms. See *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, I,7. ed. P. ROSSI. Florence: 1981, p. 139: "Cognitiones enim rerum creandarum que fuerunt in causa prima eternaliter sunt rationes rerum creandarum et cause formales exemplares, et ipse sunt etiam creatrices. Et he sunt quas vocavit Plato ydeas et mundum archetypum...". For the other types see ib. 140-141: The second type is incorruptible and exists in *luce creata, que est intelligentia*; the third is composed of *rationes causales specierum terrestrium*; and the fourth is the *res in sua causa formali*.

equivocally called universals just as a portrait might be called the person himself.¹⁰

The first and highest of these universals, the eternal ideas, which, he recalls, Grosseteste had called co-creators, depend upon nothing other than God for their existence and apart from them no person could rightly know anything at all.¹¹ Still one must recognize, Wyclif warns, that while the eternal truths may be called God it is only in respect to their cause just as Scripture calls God the light or the resurrection. For such truths are, formally speaking, distinct from each other and from God; a distinction he believes Augustine had also made in his famous *Quaestio XLVI*.¹² The most striking feature of the system Wyclif proposes is the considerable role assigned to these universals, their vital place in the divine order. These are the eternal laws, the eternal truths, by means of which there is

¹⁰ *De universalibus* I, 15-16: "Primum est universale causatione, ut Deus est causa universalissima et post eum res universales creatae secundum ordinem, quo originatur a Deo. Secundus est universale communicatione, ut puta res communicata multis suppositis, ut natura humana et aliae naturae generales et specificeae. Tertium est universale repraesentatione, ut signa priorum universalium, quae aequivoce dicuntur universalis sicut homo pictus aequivoce dicitur homo". *De logica* I,i, 8: "Iam consequenter dicendum est de universalibus, supponendo primo quod tripliciter dicitur universale: primum est universale causacione, ut Deus, sol, luna etc.; secundum est universale comunicacione, ut natura humana, sive angelica. etc.; et dicuntur universalis comunicacione, quia sunt universales naturae, communicate pluribus suppositis. Et sic natura humana comunicatur omnibus individuis speciei humane ... Tercium est universale representacione; sicut isti termini, homo, animal, lapis, sive sint termini scripti, sive termini vocales, sive intenciones in anima cum illis convertibiles."

¹¹ *De logica* II,ii, 32: "Omnes enim manieres universalium vocantur ydee, vel forma exemplares ... Et prime sunt idee eterne, et vocantur a Lincolniensi concreatrices rei, nec ponunt aliud nisi deum esse ... Ideo sunt cause principiantes et numerantes, hoc est, mensurantes esse rei; et illas oportet cognoscere cognoscendo res. Quis, rogo, cognosceret hominem debite, nisi precognoscendo quod est causabilis a deo secundum debitam habitudinem ad alias partes mundi? et illa causabilitas est ydea primi modi." *De universalibus*, 363: "... quia sancti dicunt concorditer quod ideae sunt causae exemplares ideatorum. Et Lincolniensis dicit, *I Posteriorum*, quod sunt cum Deo concreatrices effectuum". See GROSSETESTE, *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, I,7, 139.

¹² *De ente librorum duorum* I,iii,i. ed. M. DZIEWICKI. London 1909; reprint, New York 1966, p. 6: "Unde in predicacione secundum causam concedunt doctores quod quilibet talis veritas est deus, sicut scriptura vocat deum illuminationem, resurrectionem, et quolibet talia; cum sit omnia in omnibus. Et tamen, loquendo formaliter, non dubium quin distinguuntur ab invicem et a deo, ut patet per Augustinum *de ydeis* 83 *questionum* questione 46". Dziewicki notes that the standard scholastic position considered universals *in se* identical with God while objectively different. See *De ente librorum duorum*, o.c., 5, n. 1. Compare AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 15, a. 2. Ottawa: 1941-45, p. 111b: "Dicendum quod idea non nominat divinam essentiam in quantum est essentia, sed in quantum est similitudo vel ratio huius vel illius rei".

an ascension to God; just as the Psalmist declares: all God's ways are truth. In fact, there is no doubt that they are exceedingly useful to God since God is first the Lord of universals before that of individuals. Among created entities they are the most necessary, and it may even be said that God himself rejoices in them.¹³

HOLY SCRIPTURE AND UNIVERSALS

As early as 1360, some twelve years prior to the time he incepted as a doctor of theology, Wyclif considered knowledge of universals to be an essential element in understanding the logic of the Bible.¹⁴ And by the time of his inception in 1372 one finds him proclaiming that Christ's faithful may seek refuge from the bombast of the sophists, the carnal wisdom of the worldly, and the wiles of the heretics by turning to the study of logic where one will find a true understanding of universals *ex parte rei*.¹⁵ For Wyclif, though, Scripture itself is eternal, consisting of

¹³ *De ente librorum duorum* I,iii,i, 5-6: "Vie autem domini sunt leges eterne per quas ascenditur in deum, ut patet Psalm. 118: *omnes vie tue veritas* ... Non ergo dubium quin deus eternaliter letatur in veritatibus que eternaliter sunt in circuitu suo...". *De universalibus* xi, 247: "Ad quantum patet, cum universalia regulariter faciunt quod debent, quod multum deservunt Deo suo, cum prius sit dominus eorum quam individuorum". Ib. 251: "... sunt mundo nedum utilia, sed inter creaturas summe necessaria". In reference to these passages, KENNY, *The Realism of the De Universalibus*. p. 28 notes that Wyclif's adherence to a system of universals "sometimes takes on an almost mystical tone". I would argue that it is in fact quite mystical, and rather than being occasional actually forms the constitutive element of his metaphysics.

¹⁴ *De logica* I, proemium, 1: "Motus sum per quosdam legis dei amicos certum tractatum ad declarandam logicam sacre scripture compilare. Nam videns multos ad logicam transeuntes, qui per illam proposuerant legem dei melius cognovisse, et propter insipidam terminorum mixtionem gentilium in omni probacione proposicionum propter vacuitatem operis eam deserentes, propono ad acuendum mentes fidelium ponere probaciones proposicionum que debent elici ex scripturis". This early work (1360), which is a presentation of rules and forms of logic, details the three different levels of universals (see n.10) knowledge of which Wyclif already considered necessary for a proper understanding of Scripture.

¹⁵ *Fasciculi Zizaniorum magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*, ed. W. W. SHIRLEY. London 1858, p. 453: "Tres sunt nidi in quibus ego cum aliis pullis Christi adhuc volare nescientibus nutrior, in silva Scripturae pabulo veritatis; quibus protegitur contra versutias haeticorum, contra ampullosas argutias sophistarum, et contra animalem sapientiam mundanorum. Et primus nidus in parte logicus est, quomodo cognoscimus universalia ex parte rei ... Secundus nidus est altior, naturalis, ... et sic intelligimus Scripturam esse veram et de virtute sermonis ... Tertius nidus altissimus est metaphysicus, quo cognoscimus aeternitatem Dei ex ejus immensitate coassistente omni tempore praeterito, vel futuro; et per consequens omnia quae fuerunt vel erunt esse Deo praesentia".

different levels, the first of which is the Book of Life. The second consists of the truths which are inscribed in it according to their intelligible being. Both of these levels, he says, are absolutely necessary, though they do not essentially differ from one another. At the lowest level is the parchment itself, the codex, which corresponds to the lowest grade of universal, here called Scripture only in an equivocal sense. This most inferior class is but a likeness of the eternal exemplar, comprised of sensible signs which recall to mind the first and highest truth.¹⁶

Wyclif explicitly follows Grosseteste in speaking of truth as the conformity of the word to the thing which it signifies. And as such conformity applies even more to the silent inner word than the outer spoken one, the supreme example of this would be the Word of God.¹⁷ Since, for Wyclif, the words on the page are only signs of Scripture's eternal content, viz. the Word, one must transcend the sensible realm, ascending the ontological ladder to the eternal truth. This cannot be accomplished apart from the Word, eternally spoken by God, and from whom all creation proceeds. Christ the Word is the most perfect realization of Scripture, the First Principle and true light, without whose illumination

¹⁶ *De veritate sacrae scripturae* I,vi. ed. R. BUDDENSIEG. London 1905-07; reprint, New York 1966, p. 108-109: "unde solebam ponere quinque gradus scripture sacre: primus est liber vite, de quo Apoc. vicesimo et vicesimo uno, secundus est veritates libro vite inscripte secundum esse earum intelligibile, et utraque istarum scripturarum est absolute necessaria, non differens essentialiter ... tercio sumitur scriptura pro veritatibus credendis in genere, que secundum existenciam vel effectum inscribuntur libro vite. quarto sumitur scriptura pro veritate credenda, ut inscribitur libro hominis naturalis ut anima ... sed quinto modo sumitur scriptura sacra pro codicibus, vocibus aut aliis artificialibus, que sunt signa memorandi veritatem priorem...". Ib. 111: "unde ista scriptura sensibilis in vocibus vel codicibus non est scriptura sacra nisi equivoce, sicut homo pictus vel ymaginatus dicitur homo propter similitudinem ad verum hominem". For discussions of Wyclif's doctrine of the metaphysical composition of the Bible see: B. SMALLEY, *The Bible and Eternity: John Wyclif's Dilemma*, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27(1964) 73-89; LEFF, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 511-516; KENNY, *Wyclif*, p. 56-67; M. TRESKO, *John Wyclif's Metaphysics of Scriptural Integrity in the De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, in *Dionysius* 13(1989) 153-196.

¹⁷ *De ente librorum duorum* I,iii,iii, 19: "Set pro intellectu Scripture notandum secundum Lyncolnensem, in libro suo *De Veritate*, quod omnis veritas est adequacio vel conformitas sermonis ad rem quam significat; et cum verior sit illa res, verbum, sermo, dictio, vel locutio, que intus silet, quam que foris sonat ... Cum ergo Deus necessario eternaliter dicit se, patet quod verbum suum, dictio, vel locutio qua dicit se, sit non solum adequatum vel conforme, set ipsa summa adequacio vel conformitas in abstracto; et per consequens prima veritas.". See GROSSETESTE, *De veritate in Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste*, ed. L. BAUR. Münster 1912, p. 134: "Sed cum verior sit sermo, qui intus silet, quam qui foris sonat ... Ipse igitur Sermo Patris secundum hanc definitionem veritatis maxime veritas est".

it would be impossible to understand anything at all.¹⁸ In a passage reminiscent of Augustine's *De magistro*, Wyclif speaks of Christ as the true interior doctor shining forth in the mind and disclosing the truth. In the comprehension of Scripture it is especially necessary that the soul be purified through the virtues, for as Grosseteste observed, the earthly master and his exterior signs are simply instruments in the work of the true interior doctor. Thus, following Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, Wyclif declares that the disciple of Scripture must pray in order that he would understand.¹⁹ To gain a sure grasp of the content of Scripture one must be directed upwards from the lower levels of sense impressions by the very guide who is the substance of that intelligible content. Therefore, Wyclif chastises his nominalist opponents, these *moderni doctores*, who so foolishly contend that first principles are known through the knowledge of terms, when in fact such knowledge of truth actually precedes that of terms. One must begin with faith, for it is God who leads us to assent to the truth without prior evidence through the infusion of faith.²⁰ Terms, contrary to the nominalist doctrine, are essentially founded in the principles of things and not in signs. Thus terms are only the signs which reflect the real predication which takes place apart from the vicissitudes of

¹⁸ *De veritate sacrae scripturae* I,x, 212: "sed verbum dei est principium primo notum, igitur conclusio. est enim principium ex confessione propria, cum Judeis querentibus, quis esset, respondit: principium, qui et loquor vobis, Joh. octavo; nec dubium, quin tunc sit primum principium". Ib. I,ix, 202: "cum enim Cristus sit lux vera, que illuminat omnem hominem, patet quod impossibile est, sensum hominis illuminari, ut quidquam cognoscat, nisi per eum primo irradiantem..."

¹⁹ Ib. I,ix, 202: "ex quo patet quod alie quatuor vie noscendi scripturam non sunt nisi vie ad istam et specialiter mundicia animi per virtutes. ideo dicit Lincolniensis primo Posteriorum in prologo, quod magister et signa eius non sunt nisi instrumenta quedam per accidens movencia, sed est interius verus doctor, qui mentem illuminat et veritatem ostendit. et sic vere dicit Augustinus tercio De Doctrina Christiana, tricesimo septimo, quod precipuum et maxime necessarium est discipulis scripture sacre, quod orent ut intelligant". See GROSSETESTE, *Commentarius Posteriorum Analyticorum libros* I,1, 94: "... si verius dicamus, nec qui exterius sonat docet nec littera scripture exterius visa docet, sed solum movent hec duo et excitant; sed verus doctor est qui interius mentem illuminat et veritatem ostendit". See also AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina Christiana* III,37,56. CCL 32,116; AUGUSTINE, *De Magistro* XIV,46. CCL 29,202-203.

²⁰ *De veritate sacrae scripturae* I,x, 214-215: "ideo neccese est in omni noticia nostra a fide incipere, quia magistro primo credere, qui est fides. unde videtur michi, modernos doctores leviter loqui, qui dicunt, prima principia cognosci a nobis ex noticia terminorum ... cum ergo noticia veritatis huiusmodi precedit noticiam quamlibet terminorum, quomodo originaretur ex ea? ille igitur, qui primo movet ad assensum sine priori evidencia, infundit fidem, tam actum quam habitum, sicut et ipse est prima fides, que creditur et sic est principium et finis fidei creatae".

human formulations.²¹ God, not man, establishes the truth *ex parte rei*, joining together subject and predicate to form a real proposition.²² In the matter of Scripture, as with all universals, one must press beyond the sensible realm of representations, from the transient to the eternal, all the while illuminated by Christ, the Word, the First Principle. Scripture has its own logic, but that logic is ultimately grounded in the logic of Christ to which the understanding of every Christian must be conformed.²³

Since the Word is both the First Principle of creation and of Holy Scripture, Wyclif could gather together in one sentence pagan and Christian alike, stating that Aristotle, Porphyry, Boethius, and Gilbert de la Porrée all understood the true nature of universals, and that all of their views were in agreement with Scripture.²⁴ It seemed likely to Wyclif that Plato correctly conceived of the eternal ideas in accordance with the Christian Scriptures.²⁵ After all, Wyclif recollects, had not Augustine himself said that in the books of the Platonists he had found the meaning of the first chapter of St. John's gospel?²⁶ Wyclif was careful, though, to reconcile eternal exemplars with the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, siding with Moses and all true Christian philosophers in rejecting the Plotinian system of eternal emanation, and speaking of a sudden

²¹ *De universalibus* i, 49: "Ex istis colligi potest: Cum nec impositio nec imponibilitas termini sit causa quare res extra magis aut minus convenient - quod convenientia et differentia specifica rerum fundantur essentialiter in rerum principiis et non in signis, ut praedicatio signorum vel eorum praedicabilitas non est causa convenientiae rerum exterarum sed econtra..."

²² Ib. 21: "Ille autem, qui sciret fundare quod veritas ex parte rei, quam Deus componit ex subiecto et praedicato, sit realis propositio..."

²³ *De veritate sacrae scripturae* II,xvi, 20: "et patet, quomodo ex conformitate sensus cristiani ad sensum Cristi oportet intelligere scripturam, quia aliter non poterit esse sacra, et sic necesse est, cristianum conformare logicam suam logice Cristi..."

²⁴ *De universalibus* i, 43: "Ex istis facile est videre sensum Aristotelis, Porphyrii, Gilberti, Boethii et aliorum loquentium compendiose et vere de virtute sermonis, de universalibus et de omnibus non dissonant a Scriptura".

²⁵ Ib. ii, 60-61: "Probabilius tamen videtur mihi quod Plato sane sensit de ideis cum Scripture nostra sacra, sicut de eo Augustinus testatur, *Octoginta trium quaestionum*, quaestione 47, et Eustratius, ubi supra".

²⁶ *De Trinitate* iii. ed. A.D. BRECK. Boulder, CO 1962, p. 26: "Narrat enim beatus Augustinus VII *Confess.*, cap. 9, ubi verisimile est quod non mentiretur, quod invenit in libris Platonis translatis ex greco in latinum totam sententiam beati Johannis in primo capitulo evangelii sui..." AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* VII,9,13. CCL 27,101: "... procurasti mihi per quendam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam Platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos, et ibi legi non quidem his verbis, sed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus suaderi rationibus, quod in principio erat verbum..."

creation instead when pure intelligible being entered into actual existence.²⁷ He finds that such a reconciliation is quite plausible; for just as Scripture testifies to creation *ex nihilo* so it also affirms the reality of universals. When that "extraordinary philosopher and prophet Moses" spoke of the creation of the beasts of the earth having been fashioned in their genus and species, he did not mean by genus and species a term or human concept, but rather universal natures communicated to many particulars.²⁸ To say, however, as the nominalists do, that genus and species are simply categories devised by human minds would mean that such things could not have existed prior to their human establishment, and that would clearly contradict Sacred Scripture.²⁹ Human signs, human formulations, would take precedence over God's truth.

Indeed, an ignorance of universals is the reason for so many of the errors of these modern doctors of signs.³⁰ Nominalism, for Wyclif, is in the end not simply an incorrect metaphysic; it is heresy precisely because it opposes Scripture, subverting the divine composition of creation and destroying all genuine certainty as it refuses to ground the order of knowledge in the order of being. If knowledge is not so grounded,

²⁷ *De universalibus* xii, 293: "Ideo nulla res, quam Christiani vocant creaturam, potest existere, nisi per viam creationis producat in esse. Illa enim productio a puro esse intelligibili ad existentiam non potest poni aeterna. Ideo oportet quod sit subita. Et mensuram illius ponimus primum instans mundi". *De dominio divino* I,xiii. ed. R. L. POOLE. London 1890; reprint, New York 1966, p. 102-103: "Quidam enim, ut Moyses et puriores philosophi nostre fidei, ponunt pro dando instanti temporis mundum totaliter incepisse ... Lapsus autem in parte philosophanicum opinatur quod, sicut eternaliter Verbum emanat a sui principio, sic et mundus. Unde sicut, pede eternaliter infixio in pulvere mansisset vestigium eternaliter concausatum, sic Deus eterna causancia insidet universo. Et ista creditur fuisse sententia Porphyrii, Averrois, Avicenne, Aristotelis, et Platonis, cum suis sequacibus".

²⁸ *De universalibus* ii, 69: "Nam quando ille eximius philosophus et propheta Moyses dixit, *Genesis* 1: 'producat terra animam viventem in genere suo, iumenta, reptilia et bestias terrae secundum species suas', non intellexit terminum vel conceptum humanum per 'genus' et 'speciem', sed naturas universales communicatas multis suppositis, ut loquitur commentator. Et ita de aliis dictis Scripturae sacrae." *De dominio divino* II,i, 176-177: "Tercio confirmatur idem ex testimonio Scripture, que, ubicumque loquitur de genere vel specie, intelligit non conceptus in anima vel res secunde impositionis, sed res extra intentas principaliter a natura: ut Gen. i. 12 dicitur quod Deus produxit terre nascencia secundum genus et species suas..."

²⁹ *De universalibus* xv, 353-354: "... nec valet dicere quod institutio humana constituit genus et speciem, tum quia tunc non foret genus et species ante institutionem humanam - quod est contra Scripturam sacram..."

³⁰ *De logica* II,ii, 33: "Et propter ignoranciam talium universalium lapsi sunt moderni in multos errores...". *De apostasia* xiv. ed. M. DZIEWICKI. London 1889; reprint, New York 1966, p. 186-187: "Ponunt enim doctores signorum, quod non est dare universalialia ex parte rei; ideo pro gloriandis dictis philosophorum invenerunt hos terminos..."

however, then scepticism inevitably results since all such judgment depends upon the apprehension of particulars, transitory and subject to corruption, unable to provide enduring criteria upon which to trust in either the created universe or the truths of the faith.

THE VISION OF ETERNAL EXEMPLARS

In their rejection of exemplars the *doctores signorum* had inverted creation, bypassing the Word in favor of words. Yet exemplars exhibit their full meaning only in so far as they are understood to be causal principles existing in the Word. Christ, in respect to the exemplars, is *omnia in omnibus*. Christ the Word, the second person of the Trinity, is the essential foundation in whose being all creation subsists, just as the Bible said: *Quod factum est in ipso vita erat*.³¹ This is less a philosophical tenet than a central facet of the Creed: the Word of God, eternally begotten of the Father, through whom all things were made. Like Grosseteste, Wyclif states that as all creation proceeds from the Word of God every being is true to the extent that it conforms to the Word which, eternally spoken by God, is the first truth, perfectly conformed to God.³² And a thing, as Grosseteste observed, is always comprehended more certainly and purely in its exemplar state than in its temporal instantiation. The divine mind is the very brightest light; the eternal reasons of creatures are most lucid as they subsist in it, and may not be comprehended apart from the support of the eternal Word.³³

³¹ *De dominio divino* I,vi, 39: "Tunc enim cognoscemus quomodo Christus secundum rationes exemplares est *omnia in omnibus* illapsus, ut dicit apostolus, I Cor. xv. 28. Ipse autem est fundamentum essenciale, quod secundum esse vitale adintra est omnia, iuxta illud Ioh. i. 3, 4, *Quod factum est ipso vita erat*".

³² *De ente librorum duorum* I,iii,iii, 19: "Et cum deus non solum dicit se, set omnia alia, cuiuslibet alterius rei modus essendi conformiter ad verbum eternum ipsam dicens, est eius veritas". Ib. 22: "Ideo certum est quod a verbo vel cogitatione dei procedunt omnis creature ... Cum ergo omne ens sit conforme illi verbo, vel secundum esse primum (ut omnes creatura) vel secundum esse secundum (ut omnis defectus) patet quod omnis entitas est veritas". See GROSSETESTE, *De veritate*, 137: "Cum autem, ut praedictum est, veritas cuiuscunque est eius conformitas rationi suae in aeterno Verbo, patet, quod omnis certa veritas non nisi in lumine veritatis summae conspicitur".

³³ GROSSETESTE, *De veritate*, 142: "Sed cum duplex sit rei cognitio, una in se, altera in exemplari, vel similitudine sua, cum similitudo vel exemplar lucidioris est essentiae, quam ipsa res, cuius similitudo, nobilior et clarior et apertior ... Ac per hoc, cum divina essentia sit lux lucidissima, omnis cognitio eius per similitudines, quam per se ipsam obscurior, in rationibus vero aeternis creaturarum in mente divina lucidissimis, quae sunt creaturarum exemplar lucidissimum, omnis creaturae cognitio certior et purior et manifestor est, quam in se ipsa". Ib. 141-142: "Nec scitur vere aliquid creatum esse, nisi

Wyclif too believed that the proper perception of a given creature depends upon an intuition of the exemplar, invoking Grosseteste's testimony that these ideas are so necessary for wisdom, and even beatitude, that without them intuition of a created thing would be impossible.³⁴ The Word maintains a unity with all creatures which is epitomized by the existence of their exemplars in the Word. And the contemplation of such exemplars is the province of theology. A true understanding of universals consistently belongs to the Christian metaphysician: thus, once more appealing to Grosseteste, Wyclif affirms that Christ is the subject matter of theology as distinct from the metaphysics of the pagans. Offering a variation on Grosseteste's words, Wyclif finds four notable unities in Christ, the first being the unity of essence with the Father; the second his unity of person achieved in the Incarnation; the third the general unity by which all creatures share a common nature. However, the fourth is "the unity of the exemplar by which every exemplar reason, and consequently every entity, is essentially the Word himself. And therefore a theologian is not ashamed to concede, along with the Apostle, that he knows nothing except the Lord Jesus Christ." In contrast to the *mundani philosophi* who start from the existence of the creature, the theologian begins with the intelligible and then proceeds through the faith of Christ to the existence of the creature. Theological knowledge, therefore, cannot be brought to a conclusion before it is perfected in heaven, where at last all things will be seen in the Word.³⁵ Indeed, intuition of the ideas as God himself knows

in mente videatur ab aeterno Verbo supportari".

³⁴ *De universalibus* xv, 363-364: "Et Lincolniensis dicit, *I Posteriorum*, quod sunt cum Deo concreatrices effectum ... Addit etiam quod idea est tam necessaria ad sapientiam et beatitudinem quod nemo possit uti vel intueri creaturam nisi proportionaliter se habeat ad ideam...". See GROSSETESTE, *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros* I,7, 139-140.

³⁵ *De dominio divino* II,v, 198: "Tercio patet cum fide quod dominus Iesus Christus sit subiectum theologie distincte metaphisica ethnicorum. Illud declarat dominus Lincolniensis in suo Exameron, capitulo septimo, ponens primo quod in Christo sunt quatuor notabiles unitates. Prima est unitas essencie cum sua Origine atque Dono; de qua Ioh. x. 30. *Ego et Pater unum sumus*. Secunda est unitas persone ... Sed tertia est unitas generalis, qua omnis natura corporalis vel spiritualis est idem Christo. Et quarta est unitas exemplaris qua omnis ratio exemplaris, et per consequens omne ens, est essentialiter ipsum Verbum. Et sic non verecundatur theologus concedere se nichil scire, cum apostolo, nisi dominum Iesum Christum, qui subiectum primum dignitate, adequacione sue sciencie, cum non potest scire aliquid nisi ipsum. Theologus autem incipit ab esse intelligibili, procedendo per fidem Christi ad existenciam creature. Unde non perficitur sciencia theologia antequam perficiatur in patria, quando servato eodem ordine in Verbo videbuntur omnia. Econtra autem mundani philosophi incipiunt ab existencia creature, et ascendunt ad eius esse intelligibile". Grosseteste actually speaks of a three-fold unity which Wyclif refers to as such in another passage very similar to the above. See ib. I,vi,

them is possible only for those who have been thoroughly purified, the blessed.³⁶ This is the end to which man is naturally ordained, that happiness which consists in the contemplation of the truths of the faith, the final reward that is the clear vision in heaven.³⁷ The extent to which the creature exists within its genus is incomplete, its own being dependent upon the divine essence which we hope to intuit in final beatitude. Consequently, the *viator* may not fully comprehend God during this pilgrimage in which we see only through a glass darkly. Still, to know anything of creation is at some level to know something of God; for every being signifies God just as an accident signifies its subject.³⁸ Lastly, one should bear in mind that in reserving a clear vision for the state of final beatitude Wyclif cannot thereby be charged with ontologism, a question which often looms in such discussions of exemplars.

42-43. See GROSSETESTE, *Hexameron* I,i. ed. R. DALES and S. GIEBEN. London 1982, p. 49: "Unde et hec sapientia sacratissima, que theologia nominatur, subiectum habet circa quod versatur. Istud subiectum a quibusdam putatur Christus integer, Verbum videlicet incarnatum cum corpore suo quod est ecclesia ... videntur aggregari aliquo modo iste unitates sive uniones, videlicet qua Verbum incarnatum est unus Christus, unus videlicet in persona Deus et homo, et qua ipse est unus in natura cum ecclesia per assumptam humunam naturam, et insuper qua ecclesia reunitur ei per condignam assumptionem, in sacramaneto eucariste ... Ex quibus tribus unionibus videtur aggregari unum quo dicitur Christus integer unus".

³⁶ *De universalibus* xv, 364: "... stricte loquendo de intuitione, intueri ideam nisi sit beatus, scilicet intueri ideam plene secundum omnes veritates de illa nobiles ut puta quod a Deo cognoscitur ... Nam, primo, patet quod nemo potest sic plene intueri aliquid, nisi sit Beatus et intuitive cognoscat omnia".

³⁷ *De trinitate* i, 9: "Sed natura nihil ordinat nisi quod naturaliter potest esse, igitur potest esse quod viator cognoscat naturaliter huiusmodi veritates. Assumptum est ex hoc, quod finis ad quem naturaliter ordinatur homo est felicitas que consistit in contemplatione fidei veritatum. Unde secundum theologum loco fidei meritorie in via succedet clara visio pro premio fidei existenti in patria".

³⁸ *De dominio divino* I,vi, 39-40: "Quotlibet sunt talia dicta Scripture que sonant quod nulla creatura habet in proprio genere nisi incompletum et equivocum dependens esse respectu divine essencie quam speramus beatifice intueri ... Et secundum istam maneriem videndi loquitur evangelium Ioh. i, 18, *Deum nemo vidit unquam*, supple, nullus pure viator pro viacionis tempore. Et de prima manerie videndi loquitur apostolus, I Cor. xiii. 12, *Videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate; tunc autem facie ad faciem* ... sic nemo potest noscere creaturam nisi sub aliquo gradu noverit Deum suum, cum omne ens ipsum signat, ut accidens fundamentum."

THE MEANS TO ASCENT

If such an eternal realm of exemplars does exist, the contemplation of which is the ultimate goal of the *viator*, then it would seem that it is one's moral obligation to seek it, to ascend to it. The questions which continually resound are how this is done, and why many people do not do it. Augustine believed that eternal exemplars could be perceived by the soul, though only on the condition that the soul itself be pure, adhering to that vision in love.³⁹ In the perception of universals one pays attention to the Truth which presides over the mind, that teacher who dwells within, namely Christ, the immutable power and eternal wisdom of God.⁴⁰ The mind was created for the sake of contemplating the highest beauty, though some may lapse into a perversity whereby the mind is converted to carnal things rather than to God. Unless this disorder is corrected, however, one will never be fit for the kingdom of heaven.⁴¹

Grosseteste also believed that the exemplars could be contemplated following a process of *purgatio* whereby the purified intellect is able to fix its gaze upon these principles, permitting the truest and clearest understanding of not only created things but the first light itself.⁴²

³⁹ *De diversis questionibus* 83, q. 46,2. CCL 44/a,73: "Sed anima rationalis inter eas res, quae sunt a deo conditae, omnia superat et deo proxima est, quando pura est; eique in quantum caritate cohaeserit...". Gilson is careful to absolve Augustine of the charge of ontologism, noting that mystical and natural knowledge must be distinguished so that when Augustine speaks of seeing the divine ideas this is understood to pertain to mystical knowledge. See E. GILSON, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin* 3rd ed. Paris 1949, 125-130. Augustine recounts a fleeting ecstatic experience cut short by the weight of his own carnal habits (*Confessiones* VII,17,23. CCL 27,107).

⁴⁰ *De magistro* XI,38. CCL 29,195-196: "De uniuersis autem, quae intellegimus, non loquentem, qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus ueritatem, uerbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem, qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis dei uirtus atque sempiterna sapientia...".

⁴¹ *De vera religione* XXXIII,62. CCL 32,228: "Sed animus peruerse, cui ad contemplandam summam pulchritudinem mens, non oculus factus est. Ille autem uult mentem conuertere ad corpora, oculus ad deum. Quaerit enim intellegere carnalia et uidere spiritualia, quod fieri non potest". Ib. XXXIV,63, 228: "Quare ista peruersitas corrigenda est, quia nisi fecerit quod sursum est deorsum et quod deorsum est sursum, regno caelorum aptus non erit".

⁴² *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros* I,7, 139-140: "Ad hoc dicendum quod universalis sunt principia cognoscendi et apud intellectum purum et separatim a phantasmatis, possibilem contemplari lucem primam, quae est causa prima, sunt principia cognoscendi rationes rerum increatae ab eterno existentes in causa prima. Cognitiones enim rerum creandarum quae fuerunt in causa prima eternaliter sunt rationes rerum creandarum et cause formales exemplares et ipse sunt etiam creatrices. Et haec sunt quas vocauit Plato ideae et mundum archetypum, et haec sunt secundum genera et species et principia tam

Nevertheless, the vision of the soul can be clouded over by the weight of the corrupted body and its wanton affections since the *affectus animae* and the *aspectus animae* cannot be separated.⁴³ If the affection of the soul is converted to the body and the incitements of the flesh it will drag the faculty of vision along with it into darkness and idleness.⁴⁴ And while it must be admitted that even the impure know what they know in the divine light, only the pure in heart, the perfectly cleansed, may see the highest truth, the very light of the truth, in itself.⁴⁵

Wyclif located the problems of his own age in this very confusion of affections and likewise found its remedy in a turning away from the sensible, temporal realm to the eternal. The hearts of some are so fixed on this sensible realm, on the signs themselves, that they fail to apprehend the superior truth as it is manifested in nature. This inordinate affection for these singular and transitory entities has in great part corrupted the Christian religion since the intellect is not then disposed to understand the truths of the faith.⁴⁶ Wyclif notes that St. Anselm was well aware that there are some whose reason is immersed in the fleeting images of the temporal domain to such an extent that they cannot rightly comprehend

essendi quam cognoscendi, quia, cum intellectus purus potest in his defigere intuitum, in istis verissime et manifestissime cognoscit res creatas, et non solum res creatas, sed ipsam lucem primam in qua cognoscit cetera”.

⁴³ Ib. I,14, 215-216: “Causa autem quare obnubilatur visus anime per molem corporis corrupti est quod affectus et aspectus anime non sunt divisi...”. For a discussion of this question see R.W. SOUTHERN, *Richard Dales and the Editing of Robert Grosseteste*, in *Aspectus and Affectus: Essays and Editions in Grosseteste and Medieval Intellectual Life in Honor of Richard C. Dales*, ed. G. FREIBERGS. New York 1993, p. 3-14.

⁴⁴ *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros I*,14, 216: “Cum igitur amor et affectus anime convertitur ad corpus et ad illecebras corporales necessario trahit secum aspectum et avertit eum a suo lumine ... Aspectus autem mentis a suo lumine aversus necessario convertitur in tenebras et otium...”.

⁴⁵ *De veritate*, 138: “Mundicordes vero et perfecte purgati ipsam lucem veritatis in se conspiciunt, quod immundi facere nequeunt.- Nemo est igitur, qui verum aliquid novit, qui non aut scienter aut ignoranter etiam ipsam summam veritatem aliquo modo novit. Iam igitur patet, quomodo soli mundicordes summam vident veritatem et quomodo nec etiam immundi penitus eius visione frustrantur”. For an excellent treatment of the entire issue of Grosseteste’s theory of knowledge see J. MCEVOY, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*. Oxford 1982, p. 320-368. I concur with MCEVOY, o.c., p. 324-327 that Grosseteste is not guilty of ontologism since he considered the process of purgation completed only after death. A full vision granted in this present life is reserved for just rare instances of Christian mystical experience.

⁴⁶ *De ente librorum duorum I*,iv,i, 29: “Sed animus sic arguendum est tante fixus in sensibilibus obcecantibus intellectum, quod non sufficit apprehendere veritatem superiorem in natura. Et revera, sicut affectio inordinata circa proprietates singularium corruerat pro magna parte veram religionem Christianam, sic indisposuit intellectum ad concipiendum veritates fidei”.

how the many might share a common universal. Even some of the pagan philosophers had understood this, the gaze of their intellect, having been elevated beyond vain images. Notwithstanding, Christian theologians have spoken more clearly and with greater facility concerning universals than had earlier pagans.⁴⁷

Anselm held that there exist forms or models within the divine intellect according to which creation was fashioned so that even when a thing had not yet been made it could not rightly be said to be nothing in respect to the reason of God, its maker.⁴⁸ Knowledge of God, the creator, is itself grounded in the recognition of universals, finding its most illustrative example in the *Proslogion*, a proof for the existence of God which depends upon an acknowledgment of the reality of universals, a recognition of the existence of absolute forms of truth, justice and beauty.⁴⁹ Wyclif adopts a similar course, stating that the quest for a deeper understanding of God may actually be attained through universals as the pilgrim relinquishes the transient in favor of the eternal. Nothing is loved except that it be known and, therefore, true knowledge concerning God leads the mind into the love of God. While pagans have at times grasped some knowledge concerning God from creation it remains

⁴⁷ *De universalibus* iii, 78: "Et conformem sensum habent philosophi, quorum acies intellectus ultra imaginabilia elevatur. Unde Anselmus, *De incarnatione verbi*, capitulo 1: Ille, inquit, cuius ratio est in imaginationibus corporalium adeo involuta quod non 'intelligit quomodo plures homines in specie sunt unus'...". Ib. 79: "Theologi tamen nostri locuti sunt planius et facilius de universalibus quam priores philosophi...". See ANSELM, *De incarnatione verbi* i, in *Opera Omnia* II, 10.

⁴⁸ *Monologion* ix, in *Opera Omnia* I, 24: "... nisi in facientis ratione praecedat aliquod rei faciendae quasi exemplum, sive aptius dicitur forma, vel similitudo, aut regula. Patet itaque, quoniam priusquam fierent universa, erat in ratione summae naturae, quid aut qualia aut quomodo futura essent. Quare cum ea quae facta sunt, clarum sit nihil fuisse, antequam fierent, quantum ad hoc quia non erant quod nunc sunt, nec erat ex quo fierent: non tamen nihil erant quantum ad rationem facientis, per quam et secundum quam fierent".

⁴⁹ *Proslogion* ii, in *Opera Omnia* I, 101-102: "Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit ... Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re". *Proslogion* v, in *Opera Omnia* I, 104: "Quid igitur es, domine deus, quo nil maius valet cogitari? Sed quid es nisi id quod summum omnium solum existens per seipsum, omnis alia fecit de nihilo? ... Tu es itaque iustus, verax, beatus, et quidquid melius est esse quam non esse". That the faith Anselm required for the validity of his proof was a belief in real universals see R.W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*. Cambridge 1990, p. 134-137.

insufficient. One ascends to God with greater certainty through exemplars, the intelligible being of created things. The one who puts away sensible objects and likenesses will attain the beloved.⁵⁰

As universals are a means to the knowledge and love of God, so they are indispensable in understanding the very nature of God as Trinity, which stands at the heart of Catholic orthodoxy. One ought never, said Anselm, enter into the density of divine questions unless first grounded in a faith which admits the reality of universals. He lamented, therefore, that some, such as the nominalist Roscelin of Compiègne, had no reverence for the Sacred Page; they are "heretical dialecticians who consider universal substances to be nothing except an emission of sound." It is no wonder that Roscelin had been condemned for tri-theism (Soissons, 1092). For one who cannot admit that many human beings may exist in the one species humanity will hardly grasp how it is that a plurality of persons, each one of which is perfectly God, may be one God.⁵¹ As Anselm had refuted Roscelin, so Wyclif, recalling the controversy surrounding Joachim of Fiore's Trinitarian doctrine, contends that the doctors of the church were able to rightly decide this case, having been well instructed in the truths of universals.⁵² If Joachim did believe the Trinity was not a proper unity,

⁵⁰ *De mandatis divinis* xi. ed. J. LOSERTH and F.D. MATTHEW. London 1922; reprint, New York 1966, p. 96: "Sed cum nihil amatur nisi cognitum, patet quod ordo vere noticie de Deo inducit rationem in eius amorem, et licet a creaturis capiant philosophi evidenter noticiam de Deo, ut patet Sapiencie XIII, 1 et Rom. I, 20, compendiosior tamen est via cercior a qua secundum rationes exemplares vel esse intelligibile creaturarum in Deum ascenditur. Ille ergo qui dimissis sensibilibus simulacrisque eorum et fantasmatis secundum partem superiorem animi in fontale subiectum omnium istorum suspenditur, statim habet quem diligit..."

⁵¹ *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* i, in *Opera Omnia* II, 9: "Nemo ergo se temere immergat in condensa divinarum quaestionum, nisi prius in soliditate fidei conquista morum et sapientiae gravitate, ne per multiplicia sophismatum diverticula incauta levitate discurens, aliqua tenaci illaqueetur falsitate. Cumque omnes ut cautissime ad sacrae paginae quaestiones accedant sint commonendi: illi utique nostri temporis dialectici, immo dialecticae heretici, qui non nisi flatum vocis putant esse universales substantias..." Ib. 10: "Qui enim nondum intelligit quomodo plures homines in specie sint unus homo: qualiter in illa secretissima et altissima natura comprehendet quomodo plures personae, quarum singula quaeque perfectus deus, sint unus deus?" Anselm relates Roscelin's argument that maintaining three persons of the same substance would lead to the proposition that the Father and the Holy Spirit must have become incarnate with the Son. See ib. 4: "Cum adhuc in Becci monasterio abbas essem, praesumpta est a quodam clerico in Francia talis assertio: 'Si, inquit, in deo tres personae sunt una tantum res et non sunt tres res unaquaeque per se separatim, sicut tres angeli aut tres animae, ita tamen ut voluntate et potentia omnino sint idem: ergo pater et spiritus sanctus cum filio est incarnatus'."

⁵² *De universalibus* xi, 240: "Unde ex aeterna ordinatione Spiritus Sancti fuit quod fideles doctores Ecclesiae, congregati ad tractandum dissensiones inter Abbatem Ioachim et Magistrum Petrum Lombardum, ad tantum instructi sunt in veritatibus universalium..."

then it stemmed from an ignorance of universals which led him into falsehood and heresy.⁵³ Thus to those who would say that the mind cannot grasp how the one might be common to many, Wyclif is in agreement with Anselm and boldly declares with Augustine, he says, that such a person will not be disposed to believe in the Trinity.⁵⁴ Undoubtedly, lack of such understanding so often proceeds from an unwillingness to assume the disposition of humility in matters of truth which are, for Wyclif, nothing other than the substance of orthodoxy. Following the words of the Apostle Paul, a true philosopher begins by believing in the principles of faith, though secondarily he might draw from creatures, with the assistance of faith, a knowledge of the Trinity and conceptions of God. Yet some, ceasing to give thanks to God, have fallen into sin due to their own arrogance. Pretending to be wise they are found wanting in humility, itself the foundation of wisdom.⁵⁵ A true philosopher, a true metaphysician has made Christ the beginning and end of all inquiry, such that the very principles of faith are bound to the exemplars which subsist in the Eternal Word, apart from which nothing can be known.

Convinced that disbelief in universals finds its cause not only in ignorance, but arrogance and absorption in the sensible world, Wyclif follows Augustine's lead that sin consists in preferring the lesser good to

For the 1215 condemnation see *Enchiridion Symbolorum* ed. H. DENZINGER. Rome 1967, 803.

⁵³ *De universalibus* xi, 263-264: "Unde dixit Ioachim 'quod nulla res est' Trinitas, licet 'Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus sint una essentia', una substantia vel natura, quam unitatem 'non,' dixit, 'esse veram et propriam, sed quasi collectivam et similitudinariam,' sicut 'multi homines sunt unus populus.' Quod si Ioachim ita dixit, non dubium quin ex ignorantia universalium dixit falsissimum et summe haeticum". Speaking to the above passage, ROBSON, o.c., p. 152-153 notes that for Wyclif realism was "almost a test of orthodoxy". I would say that for Wyclif it was absolutely indispensable.

⁵⁴ *De trinitate* xii, 130: "Et si dicatur quod mens non capit unum commune esse multa, audacter dico cum Augustino quod quicumque hoc non capit non est dispositus ad credendum trinitatem". In regard to the Trinity, LEFF, *Wyclif and the Augustinian Tradition*, p. 30 notes that Wyclif's exemplarism allowed him to move from the nature of the soul to the nature of God given that the forms of all creatures find their archetype in God.

⁵⁵ *De trinitate* iii, 29: "Ex quibus verbis Apostoli [Rom. 1: 17-22] patent quattuor per ordinem: primo quod oportet philosophum inniti principiis fidei in credendo tamquam mitem disciplinam. Secundo quod contingit philosophum ex creaturis naturaliter cognoscere cum iuvamine fidei trinitatem et nociones dei, et credo quod Apostolus non excludit ab allis lumen naturale per quod sic cognoscerent. Tercio quod gravatum est peccatum eorum in hoc quod ex superba presumptione cessaverunt gratias agere deo. Quarto, quod ex presumptione redarguerunt sibi ipsis cum non solum inciderunt in ignorantiam sed pretenderunt se esse sapientes, cum tamen defecerunt in humilitate que est fundamentum sapientie, ut patet Isaie XLI de timore Dei".

the greater, going as far as to say that a defect in the ordered love of universals is the cause of all covetousness and actual sin.⁵⁶ It is clear to Wyclif that the sin of the present age is due to error concerning universals which proceeds from a disorder in both affection and perception. Yet it is only proper that universals should be revered, since the universal, which is naturally prior to its inferior temporal instantiation, sustains the inferior order and is actually more valued by God.⁵⁷ A more lucid apprehension of eternal truths is, however, constantly in danger of being compromised as the soul is dragged down into the temporal realm comprised of fleeting particulars, inferior truths. This, Wyclif believed, was the chief transgression of the nominalists, the *doctores signorum*. Instead, one ought conform one's own will to the divine will and love the superior truth more than the inferior. After all, Holy Scripture itself exhorts us: *Veritatem tantum et pacem diligite*. For in this we follow God as the prophet testifies: *Ecce, veritatem dilexisti*.⁵⁸ The superior, beloved truth is known only in part now as the *viator* directs his gaze and affections from the transient realm towards the eternal, intelligible plane of exemplars subsisting in the Eternal Word; and at the last it is grasped in the divine light where both knowledge and love are perfect.

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to shed some additional light on the metaphysical realism of John Wyclif, emphasizing its genuine theological character in keeping with Wyclif's debt to a long-standing Augustinian realist tradition. In addition, there is the hope that something of the

⁵⁶ *De universalibus* iii, 77: "Ex istis patet - ut estimo - quod omnis invidia vel actuale peccatum causatur ex defectu ordinatae dilectionis universalium, ut docet Augustinus, *Epistola* 22, nam omne tale peccatum consistit in voluntate praeponente minus bonum magis bono. Sed generaliter bona universaliora sunt meliora". See AUGUSTINE, *Liber de gratia Novi Testamenti ad Honoratum* xxi, 74. CSEL 44/45, 221-222: "Unde non altum sapiat sed timeat; eoque timore casto inhaereat deo, qui eam a propria immunditia qua inordinate bona inferiora dilexit..."

⁵⁷ *De universalibus* iii, 77-78: "Sic igitur indubie error intellectus et affectus circa universalia est causa totius peccati regnantis in saeculo. Quod autem bona universaliora sint bonis privatis meliora patet ex hoc quod universalius est prius natura suo inferiori, gratia cuius sustentandi est inferius ordinatum, ut prius naturaliter et plus appetitum a Deo est hominem esse simpliciter, quam est illum hominem esse, et sic de ceteris".

⁵⁸ *Ib.* 78: "Ideo debeo, conformando voluntatem meam voluntati divinae, plus diligere veritatem superiorem quam inferiorem. Et ideo salubriter monet Propheta, *Zachariae* 8: 'Veritatem tantum et pacem diligite,' quia in hoc sequimur Deum, de quo Propheta, *Psalmus* 50, testatur: 'Ecce,' inquit, 'veritatem dilexisti'."

compelling nature of this question which loomed so large for Wyclif might be communicated to readers of the present day. For, while immersed in the philosophical questions that filled the lecture halls of the late medieval schools, Wyclif, like so many of his colleagues, saw all such questions through the eyes of faith. Reading Wyclif in this light should lead to a greater appreciation of his earnest desire to grow in the knowledge and love of God so often expressed in his discussions of metaphysics.

Exemplars existing within the Word, which is in perfect conformity to the first person of the Trinity from which it proceeds, establish the basis of all knowledge. Wyclif held that a steadfast adherence to exemplars was an integral part of orthodoxy, a bedrock which secured the church against the shifting sands of scepticism. While the nominalist begins with a knowledge of the *res particularis* and proceeds to form general categories which enjoy an existence only as concepts within the human intellect, the realist begins with the exemplars subsisting in the divine intellect and then grounds all subsequent knowledge in these eternal principles. The one begins with the created, the other with the creator.

In the eyes of Wyclif nominalism destroyed the means of ascent to God through universals, precisely because it undermined the very way in which God is known and, therefore, loved. Exemplars are essential in the quest for beatitude and, in turn, are fully comprehended only when the beatific state is attained. The Word in whom the exemplars subsist, and from whom creation derives its being, is none other than Christ the Word. He is the content of, indeed the very form of, Scripture; the one who provides the illumination of the *viator* by which he ascends to the beloved. Sacred Scripture, along with the testimony of the saints, assured Wyclif that the means to a clear vision (*aspectus*) of the eternal truths lay in the humility and charity (*affectus*) of the one who would strive to behold them.

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