

DOES UNITY ENTAIL DISTINCTION?  
GODINUS AND SCOTUS  
ON THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

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It is often taken for granted that medieval metaphysicians discuss the problem of individuation on the level of the transcendental attributes of being as such.<sup>1</sup> In reality, however, this is a major event. It not only imposes constraints on traditional metaphysical concepts like being, essence, form, unity and plurality, actuality and potentiality or – as will be important below – possibility. But it also forces explanations as to the principle of individuation to cover in a unified account all levels of reality, material and immaterial, created and uncreated.<sup>2</sup>

A unified account of individuation is the main point at issue in the magisterial dispute that William of Peter of Godin and John Duns Scotus held in Paris on the question whether matter is the principle of individuation. Debating the *ratio essentialis individuationis*, the cen-

1. See e.g. THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Responsio ad magistrum Ioannem de Vercellis de 108 articulis*, c. 108: "(...) unumquodque enim secundum quod habet esse, habet unitatem et individuationem"; *De Spir. Creat.*, art. 9, ad 3.

2. See G. PINI, "The Individuation of Angels from Bonaventure to Duns Scotus," in: T. HOFFMANN (ed.), *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, Leiden/Boston 2012, pp. 79-115. If Aquinas's refusal to allow for the angel's multiplication under a species was indeed a watershed in the medieval debate, it was especially objectionable because it abandoned a unified principle of explanation, by reason of which "the individuation of angels was ... singled out as posing a specific difficulty," having "a deep metaphysical structure different from that of the substances of our everyday experience." (p. 82) Accordingly, the Franciscan objection that Aquinas's position posits a limit on God's omnipotence, although inaccurate in itself, reflects a deeper concern: "What is troubling in Aquinas's position is that angels are given such an exalted status that they are actually set apart from any other creature because of the way they are individuated." (p. 96) Furthermore relevant for the present contribution is the context described in the chapter on the specific difference of angels in L. ULLRICH, *Fragen der Schöpfungslehre nach Jakob von Metz O.P. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung zu Sentenzenkommentaren aus der Dominikanerschule um 1300*, Leipzig 1966, pp. 262-85; and more generally T.W. KÖHLER, *Der Begriff der Einheit und ihr ontologisches Prinzip nach dem Sentenzenkommentar des Jakob von Metz O.P.*, Rome 1971.

tral issue turns out to be whether a thing's unity entails distinction from other things. If the common nature is indifferent to singularity and universality, as Scotus holds – following Avicenna and Henry of Ghent –, and numerical plurality is compatible with the common nature's less than numerical unity, then numerical multiplication under one species is a possibility for any common nature as such, and hence cannot be denied of angelic nature. On the contrary, if it is not by the same feature that something is one and that it is distinct from others, as Godinus claims, distinctness from others has to be explained differently according to the diverse genera of things. Numerical multiplication under one species is not a possibility for every common nature as such, but requires a real potentiality resulting from the essential features of a given nature – a condition that is not satisfied in the case of angelic nature. The dispute whether unity entails distinction hence opposes possibility to potentiality as rival explanations of numerical multiplication under one species.

The following contribution provides evidence for the claim that the magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus negotiates a unified account of individuation on the level of the transcendental attributes of being. The debate on what causes that something is *hoc signatum*, this signate something, hereby turns into a debate on transcendental unity. Godinus and Scotus agree that only the level of transcendental unity is fully explicative of created and uncreated individuation. Such mutual understanding, however, only gives sharper contrast to their doctrinal differences. Godinus insists that multiplication under one species is a regional phenomenon confined to material beings, and argues that a unified account of individuation is not just compatible with, but indeed requires regional explanations – which Scotus rejects.

### 1. THE INDIVIDUATION OF ANGELS AND RATIONAL SOULS

The disputed question *Utrum materia sit principium individuationis* contained in the Ms. Erfurt, Bibliotheca Amploniana 2° 369, is the literary representation of a 'magisterial dispute' between the Dominican master William of Peter Godinus and the Franciscan master John

Duns Scotus, held presumably in 1304/05 at the University of Paris.<sup>3</sup> The magisterial dispute – and its textual representation – is organized in a way different from the standard structure of a medieval *quaestio disputata*.<sup>4</sup> After four initial objections to the thesis presented by the title of the question, series of answers and further objections alternate with each other. A somewhat opaque text is the result, in which it is not *prima facie* evident who is talking where at every point in the text – which induced the scribe to identify the different sections by adding the names ‘Guilelmus Petri’ and ‘Scotus’ in the margin.

The text is central to the philosophical projects of Godinus and Scotus. William of Peter Godinus authored the *Lectura Thomasina*, a Sentences-commentary in search of thomistic orthodoxy 25 years after the death of the great Dominican master. Since Aquinas’s doctrine of individuation by matter was heavily attacked in both the condemnations of 1277 and by the *Correctorium fratris Thomae* of the Franciscan master William of La Mare, its defence is a central concern of the Dominican *correctoria* from which the *Lectura Thomasina* draws. And since the problem of individuation is one of the main points of crystallization of Duns Scotus’s new metaphysics, the magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus on the question whether matter is the principle of individuation stages a confrontation between the doctrines of Aquinas and Scotus, additionally informed by doctrinal developments of the 1280’s and 1290’s, in particular the debate between Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome and the *Korrektorienstreit*.<sup>5</sup>

3. Cf. C. STROICK, “Eine Pariser Disputation vom Jahre 1306: Die Verteidigung des thomistischen Individuationsprinzips gegen Johannes Duns Scotus durch Guilelmus Petri de Godino OP,” in: W.P. ECKERT (ed.), *Thomas von Aquino: Interpretation und Rezeption. Studien und Texte*, Mainz 1974, pp. 559-608. Anton Vos suggests the year 1306 in his *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus*, Edinburg 2006, pp. 93-96; Tim Noone suggests 1304/5 in his “Scotus’s Critique of the Thomistic Theory of Individuation and the Dating of the ‘Quaestiones Super Libros Metaphysicorum’, VII, q. 13,” in: L. SILEO (ed.), *Via Scoti. Methodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti*, Rome 1995, pp. 391-406.

4. On the various techniques of disputation in the medieval university, cf. O. WEIJERS, *In Search of the Truth. A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times*, Turnhout 2013, pp. 119-176.

5. For a useful overview of the debate in this period; see M. PICKAVÉ, “The Controversy over the Principle of Individuation in *Quodlibeta* (1277- ca. 1320): A Forest Map,” in: C. SCHABEL (ed.), *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century*, Leiden/Boston 2007, pp. 17-79. The magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus contains discussions of the relation between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae* and of the relevant articles condemned in 1277, witnessing its adherence to the Parisian milieu at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The individuation of angels and rational souls is the classical problem in any explanation of matter as the principle of individuation and hence is at the center of the discussion in the magisterial dispute. In the present contribution, I will deal with the problem of the individuation of angels and rational souls only under the aspect of a unified explanation; it is important to see, however, that the magisterial dispute has many textual parallels in other known works of our protagonists.

In all three versions of his commentaries on the second book of the *Sentences*, Duns Scotus inserts an objection regarding the rational soul into the question on the individuation of angels under one species.<sup>6</sup> The objection, as originally formulated in the *Lectura*, goes against Scotus's recourse to the rational soul in discarding the correlation between formal and specific difference in the case of angels: since separate souls differ by their forms, but not specifically, the correlation does not hold. But souls differ by their inclination towards bodies, the objection states. Scotus answers the objection by a denial that souls differ by their inclination towards bodies, since the soul is determined in itself prior to its inclination to the body and differs from other souls in this prior determination.<sup>7</sup> In the *Ordinatio* and the *Reportatio*, this argument is confirmed by two additional observations: that the relation is not part of the formal aspect of the soul as something absolute, and that the inclination already presupposes a soul's being this soul and hence is not the ground for the soul's being a this.<sup>8</sup>

6. For Scotus's doctrine of the principle of individuation see esp. S.D. DUMONT, "The Question on Individuation in Scotus's *Quaestiones super Metaphysicam*," in: *Via Scoti*, pp. 193-227; T.B. NOONE, "Scotus's Critique of the Thomistic Theory of Individuation," in: L. SILEO (ed.), *Via Scoti*, pp. 391-406; T.B. NOONE, "Individuation in Scotus," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995), pp. 527-542; G. PINI, "Scotus on Individuation," in: *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 5 (2005), pp. 50-69.

7. IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Lectura*, II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 7, nn. 213-215, ed. Vat., p. 297: "Dices quod differunt per inclinationem ad corpora. Contra: ista inclinatio non est primum ens, neque substantia, nec dicitur ad se, igitur sequitur naturam quae dicitur ad se; et non erit de ratione alicuius naturae quae dicitur ad se; ergo illa natura erit prior: in illo priore distinguitur ab omni eo quod non est 'ipsum'. Igitur non per inclinationem ad corpus distinguitur anima ab anima."

8. Cf. IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 7, nn. 231-233, ed. Vat., p. 502: "Quod si dicas quod animae habent inclinationem ad diversa corpora et ita habent aptitudinem perficiendi materiam, et ideo per diversas habitudines distinguuntur; contra: ista inclinatio non est entitas absoluta, quia non potest aliquid inclinari ad se; igitur praesupponit aliquam entitatem absolutam et distinctam, et ita in illo priore distinguitur haec anima ab illa. Ergo animae sine huiusmodi habitudinibus, ut sine formali ratione distinguendi, distinguuntur. Confirmatur, quia ista aptitudo non potest esse de formali ratione animae, quia

The same position is found in Scotus's final list of objections on the individuation of rational souls in the magisterial dispute with Godinus. The argument that the soul is determined in itself prior to its inclination to the body and differs from other souls in this prior determination, is presented in the second objection:

Second, it is demonstrated that, if the soul is produced prior by nature, it is something singular and actual before it is unified, for creation terminates in an existent singular; therefore, what is produced prior by nature is prior this existent singular.<sup>9</sup>

The argument that the relation is not part of the formal aspect of the soul as something absolute, is presented in the fourth objection:

Fourth, it is demonstrated that the relation of the soul to the body is not the cause for it that it is this, for this does not pertain to the relation as such, since a relation does not turn the foundation into something absolute; but the singular being of the soul is absolute being.<sup>10</sup>

est respectus; respectus autem non est de formali ratione alicuius absoluti. Item, quia est haec anima, ideo habet hanc inclinationem, et non e converso (quia forma est finis materiae, et non e converso); igitur haec inclinatio non est ratio essendi hanc animam, sed praesupponit eam." IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Reportatio Parisiensis*, II, d. 3, q. 1, ed. Paris, p. 581: "Item, animae intellectivae separatae distinguuntur et sunt quidditates separatae a materia, sicut angeli. Dicitur quod non est simile, quia illae animae habent aptitudinem ad perficiendum corpora, non sic angeli. Contra istud: ista aptitudo non est de prima ratione animae, quia non est nisi respectus ad corpus, et probatum est prius quod respectus non est de formali intellectu absoluti formaliter, licet ille respectus non esset res alia; igitur possibile est in intellectu concipere quidditatem animae sine isto respectu. In illo priori, quaero quo distinguitur haec anima ab alia? Non illo respectu, certum est; igitur, etc. Item, non quia haec aptitudo est, haec forma est, sed e contra, quia forma est finis materiae II Physicorum, igitur prius natura est haec forma, quam haec aptitudo; non est igitur haec per aptitudinem."

9. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis* (Ms. Erfurt, Bibl. Ampl., Cod. Nr. 2° 369, ff. 71vb-75rb; in C. STROICK, "Eine Pariser Disputation vom Jahre 1306: Die Verteidigung des thomistischen Individuationsprinzips gegen Johannes Duns Scotus durch Guilelmus Petri de Godino OP," p. 604, ll. 26-29: "Secundo probatur quod, si anima prius natura producitur, prius est quid singulare et actu quam uniat, nam creatio terminatur ad singulare existens, ergo quod prius natura producitur, prius est hoc singulare existens." The edition by Stroick contains some errors; in the following, quotations are silently corrected against the Erfurt-manuscript.

10. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 604, ll. 39 ff.: "Quarto probatur quod habitudo animae ad corpus non est ei causa quod sit haec, nam hoc non convenit habitudini, inquantum est relatio, quia relatio non dat fundamento esse aliquid absolutum, sed esse singulare animae est esse absolutum."

Finally, the argument that the inclination already presupposes a soul's being this soul and hence is not the ground for the soul's being a this corroborates the fourth objection: "Furthermore, the soul does not have a relation to the body, because it is a soul, but because it is this soul."<sup>11</sup>

The same constellation presents itself in the list of objections by Scotus which opens the magisterial dispute:

It was said that matter is not the principle of individuation, since the rational soul is without matter and still there are many within one species. Neither does it count, if it were said that the soul is multiplied not in itself, but from the inclination and the relation towards matter. For nothing is distinguished by something preceding which it is preconceived to be in itself. But the soul is understood to be created before its union (to the body), for what is not, is not unifiable. Therefore, etc. Furthermore, nothing is distinguished by something posterior to the distinct, since the cause precedes the effect. But the relation of the soul to the body is posterior to the soul in itself. Therefore, etc. Furthermore, no accident is the cause of the distinction of its subject, but rather the other way around. But such a relation of the soul to the body is in the soul as in the subject. Therefore, etc.<sup>12</sup>

The magisterial dispute hence registers Godinus's answer to the objection which in all versions of Scotus's *Sentences*-commentary is Scotus's answer to an objection in favour of Aquinas's position. Under scrutiny is the assumption, shared by Godinus and Scotus alike, that rational souls are numerically multiplied under one species. How is this possible, since a rational soul is immaterial? Godinus defends the position that the rational soul is not multiplied in itself, but by the inclination and relation towards the body. Since the soul is created a part of the entire composite, it is ordered towards the being of the whole, which

11. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 605, ll. 1-2: "Praeterea, anima non habet habitudinem ad corpus, quia anima, sed quia haec anima."

12. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 581, ll. 1-11: "Dicebatur quod non, quia anima rationalis caret materia, et tamen multae sunt unius speciei. Nec valet, si dicatur quod multiplicatur non in se, sed ex inclinatione vel habitudine ad materiam, quia nihil distinguitur per illud, ante quod praecognoscitur in se esse; sed anima intelligitur creari ante unionem, quia quod non est, non est unibile; ergo etc. Praeterea, nihil distinguitur per aliquid posterius distincto, quia causa praecedat effectum. Sed habitudo animae ad corpus est posterior ipsa anima in se, ergo etc. Praeterea, nullum accidens est causa distinctionis sui subiecti, sed potius econverso. Sed huiusmodi habitudo animae ad corpus est in anima ut in subiecto, ergo etc."

is the terminus of the creation. The relation to the body is not some reality added to the soul, but an essential inclination that comes to rest in the union with the body. Two aspects of Godinus's position in the magisterial dispute can be traced back to his *Lectura Thomasina*: on the one hand, the distinction between the efficient cause of individuation and its internal cause (matter and quantity with dimensions),<sup>13</sup> on the other hand, the assertion that the soul is not created in itself, but in relation to the body: "although the soul is a simple form, it is not created nor does it receive being but in the body, and from the body it has individuated being."<sup>14</sup> The most important feature of his stance on individuation, however, has its source in Quidort, who systematically distinguishes between the principle of individuation and the principle of the multiplication of individuals under one species.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. IN SEARCH FOR A UNIFIED ACCOUNT

If the magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus negotiates a unified account of individuation on the level of the transcendental attributes of being, this is because Godinus and Scotus agree that only

13. GUILLELMUS PETRI DE GODINO, *Lect. Thom.*, II, d. 2, q. 9 (G 31va): "Hiis praemissis quando quaeritur quid est causa individuationis istius compositi singularis, dico quod, si loquaris de causa extrinseca, sic agens est causa individuationis. Si autem loquaris de causa intrinseca, tunc distinguo, quia vel loqueris de causa per se vel de causa sine qua non. Si primo modo, sic dico quod materia individui, quae habet rationem primi subiecti, est causa individuationis. Sed quia materia non intelligitur distincta a materia, nisi ut est sub quantitate dimensioniva, ideo concomitative est individuatō a quantitate sicut a causa sine qua non." This text is part of a larger quotation taken from the *Correctorium Sciendum* (ed. Glorieux, pp. 124-125); thanks to Andrea Colli for sharing his transcription of the *Lectura Thomasina* with me. See also the contribution of Fabrizio Amerini to this volume.

14. GUILLELMUS, *Lect Thom.*, II, d. 2, q. 9, ad 1 (G 31va): "Quamvis anima sit forma simplex, non tamen creatur, nec recipit esse nisi in corpore et a corpore habet esse individuatū." For Godinus's position in the *Lectura thomasina* see L. ULLRICH, *Fragen der Schöpfungslehre nach Jakob von Metz O.P.*, p. 283.

15. See IOHANNES PARISIENSIS, *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 3, ed. J.-P. MÜLLER, Rome 1964, p. 67, l. 207-p. 68, l. 208: "Aliud est principium individuationis et aliud principium multiplicationis individuorum sub una specie"; "Quaestio de causa individuationis," ed. J.-P. MÜLLER, in: J.-P. MÜLLER – H. KOHLENBERGER (hrsg.), *Virtus politica. Festgabe zum 75. Geburtstag von Alfons Hufnagel*, Stuttgart 1974, pp. 343-356, here pp. 348-349: "Ideo nulli opinioni praeiudicando, videtur ad praesens opinio secundo recitata superius esse probabilior, scilicet quod materia sit principium individuationis et quantitas principium multiplicationis sub una specie." See M. PICKAVÉ, "The Controversy over the Principle of Individuation in Quodlibeta (1277- ca. 1320): A Forest Map," pp. 66-67.

the level of transcendental unity is fully explicative of created and uncreated individuation. Debating on the *ratio essentialis individuationis*, the central issue will be whether unity entails distinction from others. Godinus and Scotus disagree as to the extent in which a unified account of individuation is compatible with regional explanations; hence, their dispute whether unity entails distinction will oppose possibility to potentiality as rival explanations of numerical multiplication under one species.

We take the definition of an individual in Scotus's mature account in his commentary on the seventh book of the *Metaphysics* as a starting point: The individual is numerically one, not divisible in subjective parts and numerically distinguished from everything else. The question accordingly is, what in the individual is repugnant to its being divided into subjective parts. It must be some positive feature, but neither matter nor form nor actual being qualify, for each of them is communicable. Scotus himself resorts to the *haecceitas* as an individual or singular difference.<sup>16</sup>

The same account of individuation we find in Scotus's contribution to the dispute with Godinus. In answer to the objection that matter does not qualify as an explanation of individuation, since it is as indistinct as form, Godinus distinguishes a twofold cause of individuation: the agent, whose action necessarily terminates in some signate this, and the receiving subject, by which the received form acquires unity and singularity. Although matter does not have the first cause of individuation from itself, but from the agent, it has the second from itself as the first foundation of nature, unlike the form.

Scotus takes Godinus's answer as an occasion to specify the *ratio essentialis individuationis*. Godinus conceives here of a twofold *causative ratio individuationis*, one common to matter and form, i.e. being

16. IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *In VII Metaph.*, q. 13, nn. 115-120 (Opera phil. IV, pp. 257-259): "Notandum quod individuum, sive unum numero, dicitur illud quod non est divisibile in multa, et distinguitur ab omni alio secundum numerum. Prima pars sic intelligitur: quod sibi repugnat divisio in partes subiectivas. Haec repugnantia non potest esse nisi per aliquid quod inest individuo. (...) Sic ergo, supponendo conclusionem probatam, quaerimus quid sit illud in individuo per quod sibi repugnat divisio in partes subiectivas tales, scilicet quarum quaelibet sit ipsum. (...) Non materia, nec forma, nec esse actu, si differt a forma, propter argumenta facta superius. Contra etiam omnia ista est: quia quodlibet istorum est communicabile. Ergo de ipso est quaerendum: per quid sit hoc, vel per quid repugnat sibi dividi in partes subiectivas."

the *terminus* of action, and the other proper to matter, i.e. not being received in something else. But the singularity under discussion, Scotus objects, is that something is one by itself among beings, for which it is repugnant to be divided into subjective parts. And this repugnance can have only one cause. If, on the one hand, the cause of this repugnance is common to matter and form, then matter is not the principle of individuation, which is what Scotus wants to prove. If, on the other hand, the cause of this repugnance is matter's not being received in something else, this is not an adequate determination of the *ratio essentialis individuationis*. For to all matter it pertains not to be received in something else. Hence, this is a vague concept of individuation. But the issue is not vague individuation, but by which something is this signate thing. It is not because it is unreceivable in a certain way, that it is this matter, but the other way around. Hence, not being received in something else is not an adequate determination of the *ratio essentialis individuationis* as that by which something is this signate thing. According to a proper determination of the *ratio essentialis individuationis*, therefore, matter is not the principle of individuation.<sup>17</sup>

In his response to Scotus's objections, Godinus readily accepts the challenge to formulate a unified account of individuation, as an explanation why something is "this signate something." But such a unified account, he insists, is compatible with a differentiation of causes. In fact, Godinus assigns distinct causes to the various aspects of Scotus's definition of the individual, i.e. being this signate something, and being (potentially or actually) distinct from other things – in this way, he saves the difference between the individuation of material and immaterial beings:

17. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 596, ll. 5-19: "Item, de ratione essentiali individuationis dictum est quod duplex est causa vel ratio individuationis, una communis materiae et formae, quia sicut terminus actionis, alia est propria materiae, quae est non esse receptum in alio. Contra: singularitas, de qua quaerimus, est illa quae est aliquid per se unum in entibus, cui repugnat dividi in partes subiectivas. Istius repugnantiae non potest esse nisi una causa, ergo si esse terminum creationis est causa istius repugnantiae, habeo propositum. Si autem ponatur alia propria causa, scilicet non esse receptum in alio, contra: nos non quaerimus de individuatione vaga, sed de qua aliquid est hoc signatum. Omni autem materiae competit non recipi in alio et hoc est vagum, quaero ergo, per quid haec materia est hac receptione non recepta, et non potest reddi ratio nisi quia haec negatio praecedat affirmationem, ergo non est haec materia, quia non est recepta hac receptione, sed potius e converso, quia haec materia non recepta hac receptione."

As to the manifold cause of individuation, one has to say that, although according to the same genus of cause and for one effect there has to be one cause per se, nevertheless there can be many causes according to a diverse genus of being. Therefore, the cause for this, that this is this, is the efficient cause, the action of which necessarily terminates in a this, for every operation is a this. *Therefore, this is the universal cause to be a this, whether material or immaterial.* But the cause that it can be a this, distinct from everything else that has the same definition, is matter, such as it is in potency towards many forms of the same definition. But the cause, why they are actually distinct, is formally the quantity.<sup>18</sup>

Godinus replies here to the basic worry raised by Aquinas's account for the individuation of angels: The same 'deep metaphysical structure' explains why material and immaterial beings are a signate this, namely the individual operation of the efficient cause necessarily terminating in an individual effect. To that extent one can already speak of a unified account of individuation. But although this account ranges over material and immaterial beings, it does not cover uncreated being. Furthermore, what Scotus requires the principle of individuation to explain, i.e. that by the same feature something is not divisible in subjective parts and numerically distinguished from everything else, Godinus assigns to different causes. The argument by means of which Scotus dismissed additional causes for individuation, i.e. that unreceivability amounts to vague individuation, is rejected by Godinus on the ground that such vagueness is implied in any universal explanation: "If vague is taken as to be common, then it is necessary that the '*ratio (essentialis individuationis)*' be large and common."<sup>19</sup> Not to be received in

18. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 599, ll. 24-32: "Ad secundum de multiplici causa individuationis dicendum quod, licet secundum idem genus causae et unius effectus oporteat esse unam causam per se, tamen plures esse possunt secundum diversum genus causae. Unde causa huius, quod hoc sit hoc, est efficiens, cuius actio necessario terminatur ad hoc, quia quaelibet operatio est haec. Unde haec est causa universaliter essendi hoc, sive sit materiale sive immateriale. Sed causa quod possit esse hoc distinctum ab omni alio eiusdem rationis, est materia ut in potentia ad plures formas eiusdem rationis; sed causa, qua actu sunt distincta, est formaliter quantitas."

19. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 599, ll. 34-45: "Ad tertium de individuatione vaga dicendum quod, si vagum accipitur pro communi, tunc necesse est quod ratio sit larga et communis. Unde illud quod est praecisa ratio Socratis et Platonis, quod sint albi, est albedo; unde vanum est dicere quod Socrates sit albus albedine hac, quia haec, ita quod ly haec dicat rationem per se esse, sed hoc non convenit ei, quia

something else is essential to matter, since it is the first foundation of nature, without which nothing has the possibility to exist in nature – note the regular connection between matter and a mere potentiality for distinctness. Individual matter is unreceivable because it is matter, not because it is this matter.

### 3. TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

As we have seen, Godinus differentiates between a thing's individuation and its distinctness, in order to explain multiplication under one species. In the case of material physical beings, matter is the first root and cause of a thing's distinctness under a common nature. But for the actualization of its being distinct from others, matter is in need of quantity. Hence, matter and quantity are *per se* causes of distinction of material physical beings, although under different aspects.

Underlying this account of the multiplication of material substances under one species is a more sophisticated distribution of the one and the many, which is in itself a transcendental account of the relation between being and unity. Godinus's full argument runs as follows:

One has to know that a thing has from something else that it is 'this signate something', and from something else that it is a numerically undivided one that is divided from others and multipliable under a common nature. <i.> For it has its being 'this signate something' from the fact that it is the terminus of the action of the agent; for this has the aspect of what is produced *per se*. (...) <ii.> But a thing does not have that it is something undivided <but> from the unity of its nature or from the unity of its natural principles. <iii.> But that things can be many under one common nature, this a thing has from the nature of matter, which has by itself

*haec, sed quia albedo. A simili dicendum de materia quae est non recepta hac receptione, non quia haec materia, sed quia materia; hoc enim convenit ei per essentiam, et ideo huic vel illi materiae convenit irreceptibilitas, quia sunt materia. Ad illud quod additur 'quaero, per quid haec materia etc.' et quare materiae convenit irreceptibilitas, dicendum quod quia convenit ei esse primum fundamentum naturae, ita quod nihil est possibile esse in natura sine ea. Istam igitur negationem hanc materiam esse non receptam hac receptione praecedit haec affirmatio, scilicet quia est materia."*

the possibility to have many dispositions to forms of the same definition. (...) <iv.> That things are actually many, this is on account of quantity or dimensions, by which it is actually having parts. (...) The individual, in order to be something actually distinct from others, is formally from quantity, although by way of origin it stems from the disposition to it. For although quantity gives matter to have parts, nevertheless that matter is in potency to this or that form, this matter has from itself, just like by itself it is united to the form.<sup>20</sup>

The basic claim is a differentiation of four aspects active in individuating any actually existing material substance as such. Its being a 'signate this' stems from its maker as an external cause; its unity as being undivided in itself from an internal cause, from its nature if it is simple or from its natural principles if it is composed; its being potentially distinct stems from matter; and its being actually distinct from quantity and dimensions. That is to say, after a primary distinction between external and internal causes of individuation, a further distinction explains multiplication under one species as confined to material beings.

Scotus accuses this account of individuation of resorting to heterogeneous principles of explanation: the cause of individuation is made to differ in the case of things simple and composite. As to the uncomposed individual, insofar as it is an undivided one in itself, its cause of individuality is the unity of its nature; for composite things, it would rather be the unity of their principles according to the principle of

20. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 587, l. 26 - p. 588, l. 5: "Sed sciendum quod ab alio habet res quod sit hoc aliquid signatum, et ab alio quod sit unum numero indivisum et ab alio divisum et multiplicabile sub natura communi. Habet enim quod sit hoc aliquid signatum ex hoc quod est terminus actionis agentis, hoc enim habet ratio producti per se. (...) Sed res non habet, quod sit indivisum quid, <nisi> ab unitate suae naturae vel ab unitate principiorum naturalium. Sed quod possint esse multa sub una communi natura, hoc habet a natura materiae, quae de se est possibilis habere dispositiones plures ad formas eiusdem rationis. (...) Quod autem sit actu multa, hoc est per quantitatem vel dimensiones, per quas fit habens actu partes. (...) Ideo individuum ad hoc, quod sit quid distinctum ab aliis actu, est formaliter a quantitate, licet radicaliter sit ab habilitate ad hoc. Licet enim quantitas det materiae habere partem et partem, tamen quod est in potentia materia ad hanc formam et ad illam, hoc habet materia a seipsa, sicut de se unitur formae." In this division of causes, William of Peter Godinus might rely on Peter of Auvergne; see E. HOCEDEZ, "Une Question inédite de Pierre d'Auvergne sur l'individuation," in: *Revue Néoscholastique de Philosophie* 41 (1934), pp. 355-86; p. 384: "Unde dicendum est quod substantia speciei est hoc aliquid in quantum est terminus huius generationis huius agentis" and broader the differentiation of causes for being a *hoc aliquid*, and potential and actual individuation.

matter. Scotus consistently insists upon a unified account of individuation and requires the same feature to explain that something is undivided in itself and divided from others, in the case of simple and of composite things alike. He refers to the unity of human nature to back this claim. If what causes man as a composite being to be indivisible in itself differed from what distinguishes him from others, man would be individuated by an accidental principle (i.e., quantity governed by matter). But Socrates is in himself one, not by his quantity, but by his essential principles. And by his essence too, he is connumerable with Plato. That means, Scotus concludes, that what causes man to be indivisible in itself does not differ from what distinguishes him from others. Since to be distinct from something is caused by the same feature as to be connumerable with it, man is distinct from others by his essential principles, and not by quantity.<sup>21</sup>

A principle of individuation has to explain why something by its very essence is undivided in itself and divided from others; it cannot rely on regional principles to answer a problem on the level of being as such. This transition to the metaphysical level is particularly important, since it forces both Godinus and Scotus to a fully unified account of individuality applicable to created and uncreated being. Accordingly, the opponents are required to take issue with each other's deepest metaphysical commitments. What are these? I take the most basic difference to be that, according to Scotus, numerical multiplication of a common nature is a matter of sheer possibility, whereas for Godinus, it requires a real potentiality. As a consequence, Scotus will argue that any common nature as such is indifferent to singularity and universality, which implies that every species is fundamentally compatible with its instantiation by many individuals. Godinus, on the contrary, will dismiss this stance as simply the result of a mental abstraction. One can readily describe everything on the transcendental

21. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 590, ll. 38-44: "Secundo contra hoc quod dicitur quod individuum, prout dicit quid unum indivisum in se, causa individuationis est unitas naturae in simplicibus, in compositis autem est unitas principiorum, sed principaliter materiae. Contra: per idem est aliquid in se unum et connumerabile aliis. Sed ut ponitur Socrates, non per quantitatem, sed per principia essentialia est unum in se, ergo per suam essentiam est connumerabilis Platoni. Sed per idem est aliquid distinctum ab alio, per quod est connumerabile illi."

level as something one in itself and distinct from others, but in order to account for multiplication under one species, one has to argue from the essential features of the particular nature thus instantiated.

#### 4. LEVELS OF UNITY

Now that the search for a unified account of individuation has entered its properly transcendental phase in the magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus, and the question whether unity entails distinction from others is amenable to a transcendental clarification, Godinus is challenged to explain why transcendental multitude does not account for multiplication under one species. Godinus introduces the distinction between transcendental and categorical unity to argue that numerical multiplication of a common nature requires a real potentiality. Scotus instead recurs to the distinction between a major and minor unity to reduce the numerical multiplication of a common nature to a matter of sheer possibility.

Although Godinus can and will concede that transcendental unity is compatible with distinction from others, he derives the multiplication under one species from the essential features of the particular nature that is instantiated. Hence, Godinus differentiates between transcendental and quantitative unity and insists that actual numerical plurality formally requires quantity.

One has to say that 'the one' is taken in a twofold sense. <i.> In one way, such as it is convertible with being. Thus everything by the feature that it is one is connumerated with everything else that is not itself, be it created or uncreated. Thus, speaking in this way it is said truthfully that God makes three like Peter, Gabriel and a donkey; thus, it is inessential for these three numerated to be of one or many definitions, to be in the same or in different categories. <ii.> In another way, 'the one' is the principle of number. And in this way, according to Aristotle it follows the division of the continuum and every number is composed from such unities.

If, therefore, it is said that Socrates and Plato are connumerated with each other by their proper essences, one has to say that if they are considered as being absolute entities, it is true; but if they are considered as belonging to

the same species and genus, it is false; for they are only connumerable in this way or distinct by matter in regard of origin, but actually and formally by quantity and primarily.<sup>22</sup>

The argument is intricate and can be construed as conceding on the transcendental level what it rejects on a categorial level, namely that unity entails distinction from others. On the one hand, Godinus recognizes that on the level of transcendental unity, every being is by its essence undivided in itself and divided from others; he emphasizes that this principle of individuality applies to created and uncreated being alike. On the other hand, Godinus argues that transcendental multitude is not an adequate explanation of numerical multiplication under one species, since the latter is bound to quantity. As absolute entities, individual essences of one species can be numbered. But it is not on account of their essences that they are numbered under one species. Even matter as an essential constituent of these essences is not sufficient to explain numerical plurification under one species in a formal sense as something actually the case, but only quantity does. Hence, it is not by the same feature, i.e. its essence, that something is undivided in itself and divided from others.

Scotus rejects Godinus's answer by dismissing the recourse to quantity as inconclusive, and claims that the singularity to be discussed must also explain God's individuality – what Godinus had already conceded to him: the principle of individuality must apply to created and uncreated being alike. Scotus infers that the principle of individuation should not be limited to quantitative unity, but be discussed on the transcategorical level proper.

22. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 592, l. 33 - p. 593, l. 4: "Ad secundum dicendum quod unum accipitur dupliciter: uno modo, ut convertitur cum ente. Sic unumquodque per illud quod est unum, est connumerabile cuicumque alteri quod non est ipsum, sive sit creatum sive non creatum. Unde sic loquendo vere dicitur: Deus fecit tres ut Petrum, Gabrielem et asinum, sic etiam numeratis accidit esse eiusdem rationis vel diversae, sive in eodem genere vel diverso. Alio modo ut est principium numeri, et sic secundum Philosophum sequitur divisionem continui, et omnis numerus compositus est ex talibus unis. Cum ergo dicitur quod Socrates et Plato connumerantur sibi per essentias suas, dicendum quod, si talia considerantur ut sunt entia absoluta, verum est, sed si considerentur ut sunt eiusdem rationis specie vel genere, falsum est, non enim sunt connumerabilia sic vel distincta per materiam nisi originaliter, sed actu et formaliter per quantitatem et primo." For the distinction between transcendental and categorial unity in the *Lectura Thomasina* see T.W. KÖHLER, *Der Begriff der Einheit*, pp. 180-4.

Against the response on the one that is convertible with being and the other one, I counter: When we investigate singularity, we do not investigate quantity, for that proposition is understood to be true in God, in whom there is no continuous quantity; hence it should not be limited to unity in the continuum, for in every category we find the singular just as the universal. You also concede that Socrates and Plato are two by a transcendental unity apart from quantitative unity. From which I argue thus: Just like the same quiddity constitutes something as quidditatively one in itself and quidditatively different from others, in the same way the same thing is a singular in itself and by the same feature it is distinct from every other singular. In these things, therefore, there is not only quidditative unity, but also singular unity; and therefore, in the same way as quiddity relates to quiddity, singularity relates to singularity.<sup>23</sup>

Scotus insists that the principle of individuation should not be limited to quantitative unity, but be discussed on the transcategorical level, in order to explain individuation or singularity on the level of uncreated being. Numerical unity and the less than numerical unity, properly called quidditative unity, present the same structure: the same feature accounts for something being one in itself and distinct from others. Hence, unity indeed entails distinction from others.

The question to what extent a unified account of individuation allows for regional differentiation involves different doctrines of unity; Scotus replaces the traditional distinction between transcendental and quantitative unity by the distinction between numerical and a less than numerical unity.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, as we will see now, the debate on the

23. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 597, ll. 3-13: "Contra responsionem de uno quod convertitur cum ente et alio uno; contra: cum quaerimus de singulari, non quaerimus de quantitativo, quia propositio illa intelligitur esse vera in Deo, in quo non est quantitas continua, ergo non debet arctari ad unitatem in continuis, in omni enim genere invenitur singulare sicut universale. Concedis etiam Socratem et Platonem esse duo unitate transcendente praeter unitatem quantitativam. Ex quo sic arguo: sicut eadem quidditas est constituens unum in se quidditative et differens ab alia quidditative, sic idem est in se singulare et per idem est distinctum ab alio singulari. In his ergo non solum est unitas quidditativa, sed etiam singularis, et ideo sicut quidditas ad quidditatem sic singularitas ad singularitatem."

24. For the Scotistic theory of transcendental unity, which surpasses the traditional distinction between numerical and transcendental unity and introduces a gradation of unities (among which the difference between *unitas maior et minor*) instead, see my study *Transzendente Einheit*, Leiden/Boston 2015. Since Scotus has defended different explanations of transcendental unity in different phases of his work, it is notable that the discussion in the magisterial dispute matches the later doctrine of transcendental unity in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

principle of individuation is about levels of unity. Whereas Godinus dismisses the position that unity could explain its opposite, i.e. the distinction underlying multitude, Scotus argues that unity on the specific level is compatible with distinction on the numerical level.

Thus, Godinus assumes that something one is distinguished from something else by different features and under different aspects; and this difference in aspects is important, for the distinction between transcendental and numerical unity relies on it. On the one hand, if we take Socrates as a singular being that possesses one nature, abstracting from everything added that contracts this nature, we can say that he is distinguished by the intellect from every other nature, created or uncreated. According to such an understanding of Socrates's unity, it is inessential whether that from which he is distinguished shares the same definition or not. This is what constitutes transcendental unity, which is found in every category; and the multitude opposed to it is taken in a large sense. On the other hand, if we take Socrates as something distinct from something else that shares the same definition, our intellect necessarily involves quantity in this definition. On account of quantitative unity, he is one and undivided in himself and divided from everything else that has quantity by its matter. The multitude that is opposed to this unity, is called number in a strict sense, which follows the division of the continuum. Now, division primarily and essentially belongs to quantity, and since the name 'individuum' is taken from the privation of division, one cannot omit quantity in the explanation of individuality.<sup>25</sup>

With the concept of a less than numerical unity, Scotus attacks his opponent's claim that by the feature by which something is one and indistinct, others cannot be distinguished. Aristotle had distinguished

25. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 600, l. 39 - p. 601, l.7: "Ad decimum de uno dicendum quod non est inconveniens unum distingui ab alio per aliud et aliud, et hoc secundum aliam et aliam rationem. Socrates igitur ut est quoddam singulare habens unam naturam secluso omni addito contrahente, per intellectum distinguitur ab omni alia natura, sive creata sive increata. Unde sic accipiendo unitatem Socratis accidit ei ut ea a quibus distinguitur, sint alterius rationis vel unius ab ipso, et sic dicitur unum unitate transcendente, et invenitur in omni genere. Multitudo etiam ei opposita accipitur large. Sed Socrates, prout accipitur ut quoddam distinctum ab alio eiusdem rationis, sic includitur in eius ratione quantitas, per cuius unitatem dicitur unum et indivisum in se et divisum ab alio habente aliquam quantitatem. Multitudo autem opposita isti unitati dicitur proprie numerus, qui sequitur divisionem continui. Divisio autem per se et primo competit quantitati. Nomen autem individui sumitur a privatione divisionis."

different modes of unity in the fifth book of his *Metaphysics*: specific, generic, and numerical unity. If one sticks to one mode, e.g. specific or numerical unity, the claim is true: such an identical aspect does not distinguish. But if unity is taken according to different modes, the claim is false, for the same feature, e.g. specific unity, allows things to be numerically plurified. This compatibility of specific unity and numerical plurality is endorsed with reference to Avicenna, according to whom the form is one by a quidditative or specific unity, which abstracts from singularity. Hence, Scotus argues: The multitude that is opposed to numerical unity is compatible with a less than numerical unity. But numerical plurality opposes numerical unity, which is a higher degree of unity than specific unity, which is taken from merely the form by itself. Therefore, Scotus concludes, numerical multitude is compatible with specific unity.<sup>26</sup>

According to Godinus, however, this refutation does not live up to his argument. His argument claimed that the one insofar it is one can by itself only be the formal cause of something one, for otherwise, the same according to which it is the same would be the cause of its opposite. Therefore, the specific form, since it is by itself one and indivisible, cannot be the cause of multiplication, unless by something added.<sup>27</sup> Scotus's refutation of this argument, Godinus claims, is unsound. Whether one takes unity according to the same mode or different modes, the proposition is true that the one insofar as it is one is not the cause of multitude. Since the genus is not the cause of its distinction in species, the species which is one in an even more univocal and real

26. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 602, l. 40 - p. 603, l. 7: "Primo arguebatur sic: per quod aliquid est unum et indistinctum, non possunt alia distingui. Dicendum quod secundum Philosophum quinto Metaphysicae unum dicitur specie, genere et numero. Si unum accipiatur uniformiter, scilicet vel specie tantum vel numero tantum etc., maior vera est. Si autem difformiter, falsa est, nam per illud quod est unum specie, possunt aliqua plurificari numero. Sed forma secundum Avicennam est una unitate quidditativa vel specifica, quae abstrahit a singularitate. Unde econtra sic arguitur: multitudo opposita maiori unitati stat cum minori unitate. Sed pluralitas numeralis opponitur unitati numerali, quae est maior quam unitas specifica, quae est a sola forma per se, ergo multitudo numeralis stat cum unitate specifica."

27. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 605, ll. 18-22: "Ad primum de uno et indistincto dicendum quod diminute rationem accipit, nam ratio in hoc stabat quod unum in quantum unum non potest esse causa formalis de se nisi unius, idem enim secundum idem esset causa oppositi, ergo forma specifica, cum sit de se una et indivisibilis, non potest esse causa multiplicationis nisi ex adiuncto."

sense, i.e. as the common nature in individuals that are distinct under it, cannot be the reason for their being distinguished under it. Hence Godinus concludes: to be plural or not under one species, does not belong to the concept of specific nature, insofar as it is a form or nature, but belongs to the concept of this nature or that nature, as far as they are this or that nature, e.g. a material form received in something else or an immaterial and irreceptable form that is subsistent by itself.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

What does it mean to address the principle of individuation on the level of the transcendental attributes of being as such? A transcendental account facilitates a unified explanation of the individuation of created and uncreated being, yet metaphysical abstraction threatens to replace real differences by mere logical distinctions. In the magisterial dispute between Godinus and Scotus, which negotiates a unified account of individuation, both opponents ultimately differ on the issue whether unity entails distinction from others. Their respective answers result in a fundamental opposition between possibility and potentiality: Whereas Scotus claims that numerical instantiation under one species is possible for any common nature as such,<sup>29</sup> Godinus binds such possibility to the real potentiality of matter towards a plurality of forms.<sup>30</sup> Their accounts of the principle of individuation vary accordingly.

28. *Quaestio disputata utrum materia sit principium individuationis*, p. 606, ll. 8-13): "Unde dicendum quod nec esse plura sive posse esse nec non esse sive non posse esse plura sub eadem specie, non est de ratione naturae specificae, secundum quod forma in quantum huiusmodi vel natura, sed posse esse vel esse unum vel plura vel non esse, est de ratione huius naturae vel illius, secundum quod sunt talis et talis naturae, ut puta forma materialis recepta in alio et forma per se subsistens immaterialis irreceptibilis."

29. IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ord.* II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 7, n. 237, pp. 504-505: "Dico igitur quod omnis natura quae non est de se actus purus, potest – secundum illam realitatem secundum quam est natura – esse potentialis ad realitatem illam qua est haec natura, et per consequens potest esse 'haec'; et sicut de se non includit aliquam entitatem quasi singularem, ita non repugnant sibi quotcumque tales entitates, et ita potest in quotcumque talibus inveniri. In eo tamen quod est ex se necesse-esse, est determinatio in natura ad esse 'hoc', quia quidquid potest esse in natura, est ibi – ita quod determinatio non potest esse per aliquid extrinsecum ad singularitatem, si possibilitas sit in natura de se ad infinitatem; secus est in omni natura possibili, ubi potest cadere multiplicatio."

30. See notes 18 and 20.