THEOLOGY, LANGUAGE AND REALITY IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY *VIA MODERNA*[*]

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Scholasticism and the vernacular at the late-medieval 'Viennese school'

Medieval scholastic books of philosophy and theology were, on the whole, a direct result of academic teaching. Barely comprehensible for anyone without some academic training, they were destined for an exclusively academic public and not intended for general readers. They were written in a medieval, technical Latin and usually took the form of commentaries on Aristotle, the Bible or the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.[1] If this general characterisation is also valid for late medieval scholasticism,[2] then developments at the University of Vienna at the turn to the fifteenth century may indeed be called surprising. A series of theologians dedicated most of their labours to translating theological works into the vernacular or to writing directly in German.[3] This German scholarship was produced partly to meet an existing demand – it was intended for a public outside the university. It started in the 1380s, and reached its peak in the first decades of the fifteenth century.[4]

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[1] On German translations of books used for the teaching of Latin in grammar schools and at the arts faculties, see, e.g., Henkel, *Deutsche Übersetzungen.*

[2] On treatises as a new literary form of presenting academic theology in the fifteenth century, see Hobbins, 'The Schoolman as Public Intellectual', pp. 1308-1337.

[3] For an overview of the authors and the movement, see Hohmann (ed.), *Heinrich von Langenstein,* pp. 267-276; Hohmann, '"Die recht gelehrten maister"', pp. 349-365. For a brief overview on German scholastic literature, see Steer, 'Geistliche Prosa', pp. 306-370. See also the works that paved the way for research into German scholasticism: Stammler, 'Deutsche Scholastik'; Grabmann, *Die scholastische Methode*; Ott (ed.), *Martin Grabmann*; Ruh, *Bonaventura deutsch*; Rupprich, *Das Wiener Schrifttum.* For a recent study on the historical context and German works of the Viennese school see Knapp (ed.), *Die Literatur*, pp. 197-247.

[4] Other classifications include the Latin works, which were destined for making scholastic teaching accessible to a broader public: see Schnell and Weidenhiller,

This literary production in the vernacular at Vienna is commonly known under the name of the 'Viennese school', and its rise was contemporaneous with the foundation and early years of the theological faculty there.[5] Though its character as a school has been questioned because of the diversity of the works produced,[6] the term may serve here as a label for the literary activity destined for a broader public, which was part of a pastoral movement in Viennese academic theology. This movement is usually associated with the three great founders of theology at Vienna, namely Henry of Langenstein (or Henry Heimbuche, Henry of Hessen the elder) (ca. 1325-1397),[7] Henry of Oyta (ca. 1330-1397),[8] and a disciple one generation younger than these two masters, Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl (ca. 1360-1433).[9] Additionally, the term also embraces other authors who can be included in the same tradition, such as Ulrich of Pottenstein (around 1360-1416/1417),[10] Thomas Peuntner (ca. 1390-1439),[11] Johannes Nider O.P.

'Stephan von Landskron', p. 297. However, the different phases of vulgarising Latin and German texts mentioned by Schnell partially overlap.

[5] The use of this term for the late medieval literary production should be distinguished from its use for the more recent developments in Viennese musicology, art history, philosophy, or economics.

[6] See Burger, 'Direkte Zuwendung', p. 104, who in footnote 66 refers to the results of the Ph.D. thesis written by Boch (University of Tübingen, 1994).

[7] Henry of Langenstein is famous for a work in German on the seven deadly sins (*Erchantnuzz der sund*) attributed to him, which is extant in 77 manuscripts; the authorship has been questioned recently because the work is written in a Bavarian dialect which does not correspond to Langenstein's (who came from Hessen). Therefore Langenstein's main influence must be seen from a pastoral perspective in his teaching and Latin writings. This pastoral motivation stimulated the production of the translations and of the vernacular works. See Hohmann, 'Deutsche Texte', p. 220ff. (also for an overview of the German manuscripts attributed to him); Wiesinger, 'Zur Autorschaft'; Hohmann and Kreuzer. 'Heinrich von Langenstein'; Knapp, *Die Literatur*, pp. 107-125.

[8] On Henry of Oyta's provenance, see Flaskamp, 'Der Wiedenbrücker Stiftspropst Heinrich Totting von Oyta'. For an extensive study of his life and works, see Lang, *Heinrich Totting von Oyta*; for a short overview see Knapp, *Die Literatur*, pp. 125-132.

[9] For Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl's works, see Madre, 'Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl', and Madre, *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl*. For his German works and translations of these works, see Hohmann, 'Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl-Redaktor', Baumann, *Aberglaube für Laien*, and Knapp, *Die Literatur*, pp. 147-163.

[10] For information about Pottenstein's life and works and for a bibliography, see Baptist-Hlawatsch and Bodemann, 'Ulrich von Pottenstein'; Baptist-Hlawatsch, *Das katechetische Werk*; Hayer, 'Ulrich von Pottenstein'; Hohmann, '"Die recht gelerten maister"'; Steer, 'Geistliche Prosa'.

[11] Thomas Peuntner was one of the most read German spiritual writers of the time in southern Germany and Austria. For an overview of Thomas Peuntner's life and works and a bibliography, see Schnell, 'Peuntner, Thomas', pp. 538-544, and for an

(†1438),[12] and Stephan Landskron (ca. 1412-1477).[13] Though both of the founding fathers of the Viennese theological faculty were important in their time, recent scholarship on their work has been very limited.[14] The same, in part, is true for their disciple Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, who was an important participant at the Council of Constance as representative of the Austrian court, and the driving force behind the Benedictine reform. A lack of printed editions certainly made inaccessible the work of the later disciples and translators whose names figure mainly among representatives of late medieval German literature, because they have been regarded as having little or no philosophical interest.

For the context of the question of how reality was conceptualised in scholasticism, these writers are of great interest for various reasons. Firstly, in many of their German writings they reflected on the choice of language for doing theology, namely Latin or vernacular German, and therefore on the way in which the conceptualisation of reality should take place in theology. Their bilingual activity offers ample occasion to look for testimonies of scholastic theological and philosophical theories on the relationship between language and reality, which underpinned their choice of language for theology. Secondly, the type of theological and philosophical background attributable to their reflections on language and reality can be related to the history of late medieval schools of thought. With regard to this relation, the first generation of the Viennese theologians (Langenstein, Oyta), who them-

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edition and study of the reception of his booklet on 'How to love God', see Schnell (ed.), *Thomas Peuntner*.

[12] For Johannes Nider, see Hillenbrand, 'Nider, Johannes, O.P.', who gives an overview and additional information on the manuscript tradition mentioned by Kaeppeli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*; see also Williams, 'Schul der Weisheit'; Ehrenschwendtner, 'Johannes Nider' (for further bibliographical information); Knapp, Die Literatur, pp. 163-174; for Nider's German work, the '24 golden harps', see Dahmus, 'Preaching to the Laity', Weinrich, 'Die deutsche Prosa'. Regarding his importance for the Viennese Dominicans, see Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium*, pp. 202-205 and 214-217.

[13] Stephan Landkron's only printed work is his 'Way to Heaven' (*Himmelstraß*). The edition Augsburg 1484 (there are two more), has been reprinted by Jaspers, *Stephan von Landskron*. See also: Boch, 'Katechetische Literatur'. For a brief overview of the life and works of the important reformer of the order of the Augustinian Canonists, see Schnell and Weidenhiller, 'Stephan Landskron'.

[14] Henry Totting of Oyta has undergone something of a revival because of recent interest in his possible influence on Jean Gerson. See, e.g., Meyjes, *Jean Gerson*, p. 323; Burrows, *Jean Gerson*, p. 153. An important step in the reception of Oyta's works has been the small number of editions: Lang (ed.), *Henrici Totting de Oyta quaestio de sacra scriptura*; Schneider (ed.), *Heinrich Totting von Oyta*. As for Langenstein, more editions have been made, though his most important Latin work, his commentary on Genesis, still remains unedited. See the studies of: Hämmerl, *Die Welt*; Kreuzer, *Heinrich von Langenstein*.

selves probably did not produce works in German, needs to be considered because their theological positions laid the ground for the vernacular works of their disciples. Indeed, an examination of the vernacular activity of the 'Viennese school' may also contribute to our understanding of the specific form of scholasticism which was prevalent at the University of Vienna, which is generally characterised (according to the textbook descriptions) as a 'nominalist' or 'moderately nominalist' university.

Two types of German: literal and descriptive

The literary production of the medieval 'Viennese school' can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises works written directly in the vernacular – the most elaborate of which is probably the Catechism of Ulrich of Pottenstein with its enormous size of 1100 large folios (by modern calculation). The second group consists of translations from Latin into vernacular German. Both types of composition have one point in common: they justify their choice of German over Latin, the traditional language of theology and educated discourse. Especially with regard to the translations, the authors distinguished between two possible types of German that could be used: a literal translation with respect to the Latin original or its terminology, and alternatively, a descriptive parsing of content into a native German dialect.

The reasons for choosing literal translations changed over the decades. The earliest Viennese example of a literal translation (*Teusch gentzichleich nach der latein*) is the *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, a liturgical handbook written by Durandus of Mende (1230/31-1296), which was translated in 1384 for Albrecht III, Duke of Austria.[15] The translator saw Latin as the ideal, perfect language and even followed the syntactical order of the Latin in German, which made the text barely comprehensible to a reader who could not read and check the Latin version. This type of translation could be useful for academics or for dukes trained in Latin. Indeed, the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* was accepted as a representative sample of Latin academic work for presentation at court. However, later dukes changed their specifications. They seem to have had less interest in representative works and requested that the translations should be more easily comprehensible so that they themselves could actually read them. Consequently, literal translations ceased to be produced for several decades in Vienna.[16]

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[15] Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, pp. 257-276. On the *Rationale*, see Faupel-Drevs, *Vom rechten Gebrauch*; Gy (ed.), *Guillaume Durand*, and the editions by Buijssen, *Durandus' Rationale*; Davril, *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale*. On the types of German, see also Werbow, 'Die gemeine Teutsch'.

[16] As late as 1478, Nicolaus Wyle defended the Latin-structured literal translation as part of an early humanistic movement in renaissance literature. See Hohmann (ed.),

This initial development needs to be contrasted with a later example of literal translation. About ten years after he had taken up his function as professor of theology and organiser of the enlarged university, Langenstein wrote 'On the discernment of spirits' (*De discretione spirituum*), in Latin at Vienna in 1395 (according to the dates given in the German translation).[17] Its translation dates from a time when the movement towards descriptive translations was already underway.[18] Hence there are some differences from the earlier literal translations. In spite of its literal 'academic' style, the translation of the 'Discernment of spirits' was not intended for the court, but rather for the inhabitants of a monastery. Not only was the destination different compared to earlier translations, but also the justification for the Latin-like German was different. The choice of an 'academic' German was not made in order to improve the German language so that it might come closer to the ideal Latin style. Rather the style of the translation was justified with reference to the contents. According to the translator, such a difficult and subtle subject (the discernment of the spirits was one of the most delicate and intellectually demanding ones in spiritual theology) needed very careful handling. Obviously it was better to remain as closely as possible to the original text in order to avoid theological errors or misleading expressions. The choice of the elaborate German (which to the translator meant a German constructed according to the Latin) put an emphasis on the fact that the text needed a lot of attention in order to be understood: indeed, it should be read again and again.[19] But what was the reason for keeping the structure of the Latin in order to create a German style that was only comprehensible after several readings? At first glance, one would think that the theologians (trained from childhood in Latin rhetoric and grammar, like every academic of the time) were reluctant to leave the 'Latinate' structure of thought behind, which was a source of security in theological argument. Yet, as will be shown later, not only feelings of security were at stake.

Unterscheidung, pp. 258-267. On the humanist movement of translations in Germany, see also Worstbrock, 'Zur Einbürgerung'.

[17] See Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, p. 53. The University of Vienna was founded in 1365, but only in 1384 did it receive permission from Urban V to found a theological faculty. Langenstein was involved in the development of the new statutes. He had left Paris in 1382 and had come to Vienna in 1384, after an interim period in Germany.

[18] This work has been edited by Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*. For fragments of a descriptive translation of the same work at Munich (cgm 5250, 62), see Hohmann and Kreuzer, 'Heinrich von Langenstein', pp. 770-771.

[19] See Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, p. 53: '*Auch is ze merchen, das der tractat gar pesunder vnd tewffer verstentichait ist; vnd daru(e)mb, wer in wil nu(e)thleich versten, der sol in gar oft mit fleiss vberlesen. Wenn di teutzsch genzichleich gemacht ist nach der latein, vnd daru(e)mb ist die teutschz seltzam vnd ist mit grossem fleiss ze merchen.*

The second type of translation was a descriptive transfer of Latin content to a vernacular German ('umbred, umbreden' which corresponds to 'paraphrase' in present-day German). This type of translation was meant to be understood by everybody and seems to have been more successful at Vienna, though initially the translators apologised for using simple rather than educated German by mentioning that they did so on request and that they could have done a more elaborate job.[20] In later translations, no justification was necessary for writing in a comprehensible everyday language, and there was no justification given for German over Latin.[21]

A representative example of the descriptive style of German is the immense catechism in the vernacular by Ulrich of Pottenstein, written over a period of many years (dated before 1416). Pottenstein was a disciple of Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and chaplain to the Ducal Court. In his introduction he noted that he deliberately chose to use everyday language because this was the style used in preaching, and the only one of use to simple people. A German phrase organised on the basis of a Latin structure would be useless. He also noted that it was important to maintain the sense of the original in the resulting German paraphrase. Paraphrase was limited (and governed) by the need to preserve the doctrinal truth in Latin.

So Pottenstein apologised in advance for every conceivable mistake in his choice of German words. He expressly asked to be corrected if a mistake or a misleading expression were found.[22] Of course, one could interpret this kind of apology as a *locus communis*, a safeguard against accusations of heresy, because refusing correction when guilty of error or of making a misleading statement was a heretical posture. Additionally, the risk of making misleading statements was especially hightened by the strong linguistic differences between different German regions. But Pottenstein's apologetic remark is more than a simple apology. It reflects an attitude towards Latin as the original theological language, with which all German theological texts needed to be matched.[23]

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[20] See the introduction to Leopold Stainreuter's translation of Cassiodorus's *Historia tripartite* dated 1385: Heilig, 'Leopold Stainreuter', pp. 261-262.

[21] No reflection on the choice of German can be found in Peuntner's 'Art of dying' dated 1434, nor in his 'book on the love of God'; see the text editions by Rudolf (ed.), *Thomas Peuntners 'Kunst des heilsamen Sterbens'* and Schnell (ed.), *Liebhabung Gottes*. Peuntner's books are addressed to all kinds of lay people and have met with great interest (see Schnell, pp. 260-271). However, around 1500 people turned from translating to writing solely in Latin. For this counter-development and for a critical view on the pedagogical interest of works in the vernacular, see Burger, 'Direkte Zuwendung'.

[22] The preface is edited in Baptist-Hlawatsch, *Das katechetische Werk*, pp. 144-149. The relevant passage is from p. 145, line 79 to p. 146, line 102. For partial editions of Pottenstein's work, see also Hayer, 'Ulrich von Pottenstein'.

[23] For another example from the same period, see the work on preaching written by

The scholastic background of the 'Viennese School'

When Thomas Hohmann examined the introductions to the early translations at Vienna, he deliberately did not raise the question as to whether the attitudes revealed by the translators were connected with a philosophy of language, even though he thought this was an important question.[24] This question of an implicit or explicit philosophy of (theological) language is exactly what is salient with respect to the choice of German. The philosophical background can be examined by means of two related questions. First, can the principle of preserving Latin terminology to avoid theological mistakes be intrinsically related to a specific kind of philosophy or theology of language? And, secondly, can German theological literature in a descriptive style originate from the same line of philosophical and theological thought as that which underpinned the use of a Latinate structure of the sentence to ensure theological purity?

With regard to the philosophical influence on the 'Viennese School', Henry Totting of Oyta was the most important person. It seems as though the main source of both his philosophical conception of the relation of language to reality and the theological source for his account of theological truth was William of Ockham. Ockham's theory of truth as a true proposition, his theory of personal supposition (which always related supposition to singulars), and his distinction between the literal sense of a proposition and the sense intended by the author underwrote the different choices that the 'Viennese school' made with regard to their translation activities. On the one hand, there was the option to search for German words conforming exactly to the Latin wording of a given authoritative text or expression, on the other hand, the possibility to select those German phrases, which corresponded best to how this text had been traditionally interpreted by theologians and ecclesiastic authorities.

In comparison to Oyta, Langenstein's philosophical sources have not yet been clearly identified. His direct knowledge of Ockham is not as explicit as in the case of Henry of Oyta. Langenstein seems to be less influ-

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the chaplain of Friedrich VI of Nürnberg. He also asked to be corrected if his choice of German words did not correspond with the Latin, and he made remarks on the differences in German dialects according to geographical region. See Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, pp. 264-265. These linguistic limits seem to have been the reason why the reception of Pottenstein's work, in spite of what he had wished, did not expand beyond the Austrian-Bavarian area. See Baptist-Hlawatsch, *Das katechetische Werk*, pp. 69-73.

[24] Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, p. 258 note 3: 'Ausgeklammert ist ferner die theologisch-sprachphilosophische Interpretation der Äußerungen zum Übersetzungsproblem, doch sei mit Nachdruck auf die Wichtigkeit einer solchen Untersuchung hingewiesen'.

enced by the logical tradition, which is obvious in the case of Oyta, than by philosophical discussions on physics and by disputes over the relationship between a philosophical conceptualisation of the world and a theological one. In his theological approach, he seems to have been influenced by Augustine, maybe as understood by Henry of Gent.[25] Apart from the friendship which obviously linked these two important Viennese teachers together and which began in their Parisian years, also their theoretical approaches were generally seen as a perfect match.[26] Ockham's logical presuppositions were interpreted in the light of the Augustinian scepticism against unaided human reason. In the context of spiritual renewal and a search for the proper principles of theology as a science in opposition to philosophy, this generated a desire to convey spiritual assistance to people outside the university and at the same time the wish to ensure that the proper Christian view of the world was maintained in vernacular religious teaching.

The hypothesis of this paper is therefore that the nominalist theory of truth formulated by Ockham gave the vernacular production of theological works and translations from Latin into vernacular German at the 'nominalist' University of Vienna at the beginning of the fifteenth century its special Latin-related character, and a philosophical underpinning.

Ockham's theory of truth and literal translations

It is fruitful to consider the Viennese School's choice for literal translation or educated German in the context of William of Ockham's logical theory that there is no truth outside a proposition. Consequently, theology demanded literal translation, for the theological terms of a proposition could only be understood by adhering to the traditional wording and terms, which indeed had been in Latin for more than a thousand years. The way in which Ockham's theory could be interpreted in such a way that it lead to this conclusion is intricate and complicated, and requires some explanation.

William of Ockham had a remarkable influence on fourteenth-century discussions on truth by providing a theory which stood in stark contrast to the medieval definition of truth that is best known in its Thomistic form, namely *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Dismissing any neoplatonic metaphysical mediation between created being, God's intellect and human under-

[25] Langenstein's emphasis on the differences of philosophical and theological concepts of God and creation, which he shows in his commentary on the *Sentences*, reminds one of the constant remarks made in the Genesis commentary attributed to Henry of Gent (ca. 1217-1293). See Macken (ed.), *Lectura ordinaria, passim*.

[26] They were so close that Langenstein's turning against the sufficiency of Aristotle for syllogisms on the trinity in his later years, was commented upon with great surprise. See Shank, *'Unless you believe'*, p. 203.

standing,[27] Ockham developed the following definition: 'True' was a connotative term, which expressed that something could be understood.[28] Truth was accordingly defined as a true proposition.[29] A true proposition was a proposition in which subject and predicate stood for the same thing.[30] Ockham's theory of truth was thus embedded in his theories of universals and of supposition, which can both be regarded as parts of his theory of signs.[31]

There were three types of signs: concepts, which are signs in the mind, spoken words and written words.[32] While spoken or written words are signs invented and voluntarily imposed by human beings, concepts are the first

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[27] Although Ockham had formulated his theory against Duns Scotus and not against Aquinas, there was a Dominican opposition against his statements soon after the *Summa Logicae* was finished, maybe influenced by the followers of Hervaeus Natalis. See, e.g., the studies on Francesco da Prato O.P. and his critique on Ockham: Amerini, 'La quaestio'; Rode (ed.), *Franciscus de Prato*. On the differences between the formula used by Thomas Aquinas and Ockham's definition of truth, see Perler, *Der propositionale Wahrheitsbegriff*, pp. 353-356; on the philosophical positions objected by Ockham, see McCord Adams, 'Ockham on truth'.

[28] Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, eds. Boehner, Gál, and Brown, pars I cap. 10, pp. 36 and 37-38: *Nomen autem connotativum est illud quod significat aliquid primario et aliquid secundario. Et tale nomen proprie habet definitionem exprimentem quid nominis, et frequenter oportet ponere unum illius definitionis in recto et aliud in obliquo ... Immo, qui ponunt quod quaelibet res est substantia vel qualitas, habent ponere quod omnia contenta in aliis praedicamentis a substantia et qualitate sunt nomina connotativa; et etiam quaedam de genere qualitatis sunt connotativa ... Et eodem modo dicendum est de "vero" et "bono", quia "verum", quod ponitur convertibile cum "ente", significat idem quod "intelligibile"....*

[29] *Ibidem*, pars 1 cap. 43, p. 131: *Quid igitur est veritas et falsitas? Dico quod Aristoteles diceret quod veritas et falsitas non sunt res distinctae realiter a propositione vera vel falsa. Ed ideo nisi ista abstracta "veritas" et "falsitas" includant aliqua syncategoremata vel aliquas dictiones aequivalentes, haec est concedenda "veritas est propositio vera et falsitas est propositio falsa."*

[30] *Ibidem*, pars II cap. 2, pp. 249-250: *...videndum est quid ad veritatem propositionum requiritur ... Circa quod dicendum est quod ad veritatem talis propositionis singularis quae non aequivalet multis propositionibus non requiritur quod subiectum et praedicatum sint idem realiter, nec quod praedicatum ex parte rei sit in subiecto vel insit realiter subiecto, nec quod uniatur a parte rei extra animam ipsi subiecto ... sed sufficit et requiritur quod subjectum et praedicatum supponant pro eodem.* H. Berger drew my attention to the fact that Ockham's critique in this passage is probably directed against Walter Burley's theory of a *propositio in re*. On a brief survey of the relationship between Ockham's critique and the development of Burley's theory of universals, see Wöhler (ed.), *Walter Burley*, pp. 71-77 with note 22 (text passages taken from Burley which explain his theory of a *propositio in re*).

[31] On Ockham's theory of the supposition as part of the critique of realism, see Miralbell, *Guillermo de Ockham*, pp. 51-87; on its importance in the range of fourteenth-century theories, see Perler, *Der propositionale Wahrheitsbegriff*.

[32] Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, pars I cap. 36, p. 100.

intentions (i.e. signs naturally engraved in the mind through perception).[33] Concepts are not ontologically connected to the concrete things for which they stand, but were only signs for those things, in the same way that spoken or written words represent concepts. For Ockham, a concept could signify many individual things and therefore be universal while being numerically one.[34] The key to Ockham's theory of universals is that universals are not substances outside the human mind.[35] Instead, a universal is an 'intention' of the soul, or even the act of understanding itself.[36] In a formula, Ockham defined the universal as an 'intention' of the soul, which was such that it could be predicated of many things (*intentio animae nata praedicari de multis*).[37] The fact that *intentiones* were not substances led, in connection with his theory of predication or supposition, to the conclusion that a proposition was not made of substances. Indeed, substances could not be predicated.[38]

One important consequence of this is that these kinds of judgments, which are made with the help of the natural concepts in the mind, do not

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[33] *Ibidem*, pars I cap. 14, p. 49: *Verumtamen sciendum quod universale duplex est. Quoddam est universale naturaliter, quod scilicet naturaliter est signum praedicabile de pluribus, ad modum, proportionaliter, quo fumus naturaliter significat ignem et gemitus infirmi dolorem et risus interiorem laetitiam. Et tale universale non est nisi intentio animae, ita quod nulla substantia extra animam nec aliquod accidens extra animam est tale universale. Et de tali universali loquar in sequentibus capitulis. Aliud est universale per voluntariam institutionem. Et sic vox prolata, quae est vere una qualitas numero, est universalis, quia scilicet est signum voluntarie institutum ad significandum plura. Unde sicut vox dicitur communis, ita potest dici universalis; sed hoc non habet ex natura rei sed ex placito instituentium tantum.*

[34] *Ibidem*, pars I cap. 14, p. 48: *Dicendum est igitur quod quodlibet universale est una res singularis, et ideo non est universale nisi per significationem, quia est signum plurium.*

[35] *Ibidem*, pars I, cap. 15, pp. 50-51: *Quod enim nullum universale sit aliqua substantia extra animam exsistens evidenter probari potest ...* On Ockham's shift from his *fictum*-theory in his commentary on the *Sentences* to his *intellectio*-theory in his later philosophical work, see the still valuable article by Boehner, 'The realistic conceptualism' which also shows that the text of the *Summa Logicae* presents Ockham's final position.

[36] *Ibidem*, pars I cap. 15, p. 53: *Et ideo simpliciter concedendum est quod nullum universale est substantia, qualitercumque consideretur. Sed quodlibet universale est intentio animae, quae secundum unam opinionem probabilem ab actu intelligendi non differt. Unde dicunt quod intellectio qua intelligo hominem est signum naturale hominum, ita naturale sicut gemitus est signum infirmitatis vel tristitiae seu doloris; et est tale signum quod potest stare pro hominibus in propositionibus mentalibus, sicut vox potest stare pro rebus in propositionibus vocalibus.*

[37] *Ibidem*, pars I, cap. 15, p. 53.

[38] *Ibidem*, pars I, cap. 15, p. 53.

reflect the essence of the extramental thing being judged; for Ockham, essences were a matter of metaphysics, not of logic. Concepts and their combinations in propositions only reflected the way in which things were perceived, analysed and made the object of reference. The characteristic background for Ockham's theory of supposition is therefore the combination of this deontologised theory of universals and the important distinction between the order of concepts and the order of reality (a distinction which Ockham took from Scotus, against whom he formulated his own theory).[39] This is not to say that Ockham held that human beings could not formulate true propositions about reality outside the mind.[40] However, he held that in order for them to do so, they needed intuitive cognition to judge whether propositions about contingent realities were true.

This theory of supposition determined the ways in which theological propositions could be interpreted. Since intuitive knowledge of God in this earthly life was only possible for a few extraordinary persons like Moses, St. Paul or the Virgin Mary, knowledge of God, for Ockham, was only possible in two ways: via philosophical knowledge of God based on a conceptual understanding of God, or via theological knowledge based on revelation and tradition. Although, according to Ockham, evident knowledge of God can be part of theology, it is not necessary for doing theology.[41] By believing that everything that has been revealed is true (infused faith), and by acquiring knowledge about revelation (acquired faith), a Christian does have access to theological truth, which is based on the positive contents of religious belief and independent of scientific truth based on evident knowledge.[42] With respect to the possible integration of scientific knowledge into theology, e.g. theories of the eternity of the world, the judgement depended on its coincidence with the Christian faith. In other words, only a very general evident knowledge of God could be gained from the concept of 'God' itself and be integrated into theology. All other, more detailed philosophical knowledge of God and creature could be judged regarding its compatibility with the Christian faith on the grounds of (Christian) revelation and tradi-

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[39] On Scotus's position and Ockham's critique – e.g. that universal signs do not primarily signify natures but individuals – see Tweedale, *Scotus vs. Ockham*, vol. 2, pp. 395-435.

[40] For the structure of species as ontological basis of true sentences and of science in Ockham's theory, see Leppin, *Geglaubte Wahrheit*, pp. 42-64. On Ockham's theory of mental sentences, see Lenz, *Mentale Sätze*.

[41] On a general account of Ockham's theology, see Biard, *Guillaume d'Ockham*.

[42] By basing theological truth on faith, Ockham puts theological knowledge on grounds that no longer belong to the Aristotelian sources of truth – a distinction which had remained unclear in John Duns Scotus, Peter Aureoli and Robert Cowton to whom he refers. That this does not mean an exclusion of scientific knowledge from theology has been made clear by Leppin, *Geglaubte Wahrheit*, pp. 195-203.

tion.[43] In terms of a theory of supposition and truth, knowledge of Christian revelation was necessary to judge whether subject and predicate of a proposition about God or the world belonged to or were compatible with the series of revealed theological sentences and were thus really referring to the Christian God and not to a concept of God different from this tradition.

In spite of its fundamental compatibility with evident knowledge, Ockham's theory also allowed for a different interpretation. Such an interpretation of Ockham's theory of truth for theological speech and the relationship of theology to the other sciences can be illustrated by Langenstein's remarks on the relationship between the philosophical and the theological concept of God.[44] Although he believed that all sciences and arts could contribute to making the Christian faith more easily accessible for pagans, for him the 'God of the philosophers' was not identical with the Christian God. While discussing physics and creation, he drew a corrolary from this non-identity that all positive propositions made by philosophers about God were false. The reason for this falsity was that their concepts of God were formed according to their opinions, and thus that the pagan philosophers' propositions signified an intelligent being they imagined, and not the Christian God. Their suppositions did not stand for the Christian God. 'They did not have a proper complex term which could stand in supposition for God; therefore they did say nothing substantial about God... Secondly it follows that the complex terms about God which the theologians have and those which the philosophers had, do not belong to the same sphere and do not stand for the same thing'.[45]

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[43] On Ockham's sometimes contradictory views about the evidence of natural knowledge of God and on the integration of scientific knowledge into the realm of theology, see Leppin, *Geglaubte Wahrheit*, pp. 152-159 and pp. 195-200.

[44] Langenstein followed nominalist lines in philosophy, with the exception of the doctrine of the trinity. He read on the *Sentences* at Paris starting in Feb./March 1375, a year before Peter of Ailly († 1420) also commented on the *Sentences* and explicitly took up Ockham's definition of truth in his commentary in a question related to the problem of future contingents. See Petrus de Alliaco, *Quaestiones super libros sententiarum cum quibusdam in fine adiunctis*, Straßburg 1490 [reprint Frankfurt 1968], I *Sent.* prol. q. 1 a. 1. Langenstein may have read again on the *Sentences* at Vienna around 1385. We know that his commentary met with interest in Vienna because his student Michael Suchenschatz edited the commentary from the notes of his master and in 1410/1411 composed the text which is quoted here. See Damerau (ed.), *Der Sentenzenkommentar*, pp. VI-VII. Hohmann, 'Initien-register'. A second version of the commentary has been preserved in cod. 144 Alençon and proved to be identical at least in its Christological parts. See Lang, *Die Christologie bei Heinrich von Langenstein*, p. 66ff. On Langenstein's platonic argument in the context of Trinitarian discussions, see Shank, *'Unless you believe'*, p. 132.

[45] Damerau (ed.), *Sentenzenkommentar*, p. 28: *Igitur, non habebant <philosophi> aliquem complexum proprium pro Deo suppositionalem. Igitur, nichil dixerunt de*

Langenstein did not only see the problems for philosophers in formulating correct assertions about God. He also realised that it was extremely dangerous for a theologian to have a wrong concept of God, due to the interrelatedness of the articles of the faith: if one conclusion was false, implicitly all the others would be false as well. Therefore, if a theologian made false assertions about God, he could risk a false understanding of all the articles of the faith.[46]

Thus, in Langenstein's view, the theological enterprise seemed to be both difficult and extremely important. Theology was needed to monitor what was being said about God, and not only about God, but also about his relation to creation. On various occasions, Langenstein stated that it was the business of theology to scrutinise every single science in order to see whether it contained false opinions about creation or the works of God. Theology had the task of preventing others from doing God an injustice.[47] Langenstein's effort against the abuse of astrology may be understood in this light.[48]

One of the consequences of this theological position for the activity of translation into the vernacular was that the theologian, like a good translator comparing terms in different languages, needed to check whether the use of certain theological expressions in a vernacular language were compatible with the traditional definitions of theological terms preserved in Latin and Greek that resulted from the Church's numerous battles against heresy. The concepts used to discuss God and creation needed to be taken from revela-

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Deo penitus ...Secundo sequitur, quod non est eiusdem sphere complexus Dei, quem theologi habent et quem habuerunt philosophi nec supponunt pro eodem.

[46] *Ibidem*, p. 30: *Tertio sequitur, quod theologus habens falsam opinionem de Deo; quantum ad aliquam conclusionem concedit falsum sequi implicite ad omnem articulum fidei ... Quarto apparet ex dictis, quam periculosum est opinari assertive de Deo aliter quam est. Quia si Deus potest facere infinitum corpus, tunc omnes opinantes oppositum, assertive concedunt secundum veritatem falsum sequi ad omnem articulum fidei...* Henry of Langenstein saw the possibility of false assertions about God based on the anthropology of human understanding: depending on the different perceptions of material things, the meaning given to the terms could vary (*ibidem*, p. 30): *Quintum sequitur, terminos materiales non eosdem esse apud omnes homines sed specifice diversos secundum diversitatem oppositionum et cognitionum, quas homines habent de rebus* .... The connection of the articles of faith was part of the theory of theological principles developed at the time. Henry of Langenstein depended on Henry of Oyta, as did Marsilius of Inghen, who expressed the connections most clearly in the prologue to his commentary on the *Sentences* (q. 2 art. 3). See Lang, 'Die Katharinenpredigt', pp. 373-394.

[47] Langenstein expressed his vision of theology as *pater familias* who defines the principles of all scientific disciplines in his sermon on St. Catherine's day. See Lang, 'Katharinenpredigt', pp. 151-152.

[48] See, e.g., Lang, 'Katharinenpredigt', pp. 147-148.

tion and its traditional interpretation as encapsulated by Christian doctrine, since an intuitive knowledge of God was not available in this earthly life. With respect to the formulation of true propositions about God and creation, the truth of a proposition could be judged only if the terms were known in their correct traditional meaning. Therefore, a good knowledge of the theological tradition was necessary in order to know the content of the terms used in theological discourse.

So a philosophical theory of truth as a proposition and the theological necessity of relying on tradition for formulating true theological statements formed the intellectual background for literal translations of Latin theological texts into German. This leaves the second question of whether and how theological literature in a descriptive vernacular style could originate from the same line of philosophical and theological thought as the literal translation. Was there not an implied contradiction between the two attitudes and practices that arose?

The scholastic background of the descriptive type of German

Ockham's definition of truth as a proposition was regarded as a typical feature of a nominalist conceptualisation of the world. It was intrinsically connected to the specific character of his theory of supposition. Ockham knew three kinds of supposition: material, personal and simple supposition. In material supposition, a term stood for a written or spoken term (e.g. 'man' is a noun).[49] In personal supposition, a term stood for what it signified, be it a word, a concept or a thing outside the mind.[50] The third kind of supposition was simple supposition. The theory of simple supposition underwent a major change with respect to its traditional interpretation due to Ockham's interpretation of universals as concepts that where not ontologically connected to the extramental things they stood for (but only had some kind of similarity). Traditionally (i.e. in the thirteenth century) simple supposition was understood as the interpretation of a term in order to signify a general nature or essence. Giving up the idea of general natures existing in extra-

[49] Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, pars I cap. 64, pp. 195-196: *Suppositio simplex est quando terminus supponit pro intentione animae, sed non tenetur significative ... Suppositio materialis est quando terminus non supponit significative, sed supponit vel pro voce vel pro scripto.*

[50] *Ibidem*, pars I cap. 64, p. 195: *Suppositio personalis, universaliter, est illa quando terminus supponit pro suo significato, sive illud significatum sit res extra animam, sive sit vox, sive intentio animae, sive sit scriptum, sive quodcumque aliud imaginabile; ita quod quandocumque subiectum vel praedicatum propositionis supponit pro suo significato, ita quod significative tenetur, semper est suppositio personalis.* See also the conclusions drawn by Perler, *Der propositionale Wahrheitsbegriff*, pp. 349-365.

mental reality, the simple supposition was limited to signifying concepts.[51] If a term stood for its signification, it was always by personal supposition, and thus the term always stood for a single being.[52]

However, this raised a number of difficulties, e.g. in the case of a proposition like 'man is the most worthy of all corporal creatures'. What did the term 'man' stand for if there was no general nature of man existing in the extramental world? The proposition was ambiguous, but for Ockham the only possible interpretation was by means of a personal supposition for each existing single man.[53] In this case, however, the proposition was false in its literal sense, since one man could not be more worthy than another man. What was meant was that all men were more worthy than any other non-human corporeal creature. Ockham solved this difficulty by introducing a distinction between the literal meaning and the intended sense of a proposition. He thought this was important because authoritative propositions were often false in their literal sense (*de virtute sermonis*) and true according to the intended sense (*secundum intentionem ponentium*).[54] Thus, the philosophical premise that there was no universal nature as such outside of the mind that could be signified also caused the set limits to the theory of personal supposition. One needed to know the sense of the proposition as intended by the author, in order to be able to work out its supposition correctly, and so to judge its truth.[55]

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[51] This change in the theory of simple supposition was criticised heavily by the realists. See, e.g., John Permetter de Adorff, a realist professor from the university of Ingolstadt, in his list of errors of the nominalists (dated around 1500). Ehrle S.J., 'Der Sentenzenkommentar', pp. 326-342.

[52] Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, pars I cap. 64, p. 196: *Ex hoc patet falsitas opinionis communiter dicentium quod suppositio simplex est quando terminus supponit pro suo significato, quia suppositio simplex est quando terminus supponit pro intentione animae, quae proprie non est significatum termini, quia terminus talis significat veras res et non intentiones animae.*

[53] *Ibidem*, pars I cap. 66, p. 200: *Ad primum istorum est dicendum quod opinio dicentium quod in ista "homo est dignissima creaturarum" subiectum habet suppositionem simplicem, est simpliciter falsa; immo "homo" habet tantum suppositionem personalem in ista.*

[54] Boehner, Gál, and Brown (eds.), Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, pars I cap. 66, p. 201: *Ideo dicendum est quod 'homo' supponit personaliter, et est de virtute sermonis falsa. Tamen secundum intentionem ponentium eam vera est, quia non intendunt quod homo sit nobilior omni creatura quae non est homo. Et hoc est verum inter creaturas corporales, non autem est verum de substantiis intellectualibus. Et ita est frequenter quod propositiones authenticae et magistrales sunt falsae de virtute sermonis, et verae in sensu in quo fiunt, hoc est, illi intendebant per eas veras propositiones.*

[55] An excellent account of the way in which Ockham dealt with the difference between *virtus sermonis* and *sensus verus* can be found in the following unpublished M.A.-thesis: Berger, 'Zur Sprachlogik', pp. 155-164.

This contextual understanding of ambiguous propositions had special consequences in the context of theology. The basis of all theological theory and teaching was Sacred Scripture, authored by the Holy Spirit. With regard to ambiguous propositions in the Bible, it was therefore necessary to investigate the true intention behind that text. It was clear that the true intention of the text could never be false. This was the reason why in many theological works of the time, one can find a broad understanding of the literal sense, which already included the intention of the Holy Spirit, thereby bringing together all scriptural senses in the literal sense.[56] Ockham, by contrast, had used 'literal sense' as an equivalent of *de virtute sermonis* in its narrow sense, which forced him to introduce the intention of the author as a second category of interpretation in order to cope with ambiguous sentences. By defining the intention behind the biblical text as the 'true' literal sense of the text, the theologians widened the 'literal sense' to signifying the meaning of a proposition after it had been interpreted in the light of the whole Bible and according to the intention of the Holy Spirit. Starting from this general presupposition held by theologians, the debate then focused on whether the biblical text alone was sufficient for a correct interpretation of ambiguous propositions (e.g. by applying cross-references) or whether additional information outside the text (e.g. from the Church Fathers) was needed to ensure that a given interpretation matched the intention of the Holy Spirit and was thus correct. The beginning of the 'Viennese school' coincided with theologians' first systematic efforts to establish a catalogue of steps by which theological truth could be ascertained. Henry of Oyta dealt in great detail with these questions of biblical truth, and he defended a tradition-based interpretation of the biblical text against a self-sufficient reading of the Bible. He based his theological argument on William of Ockham's *Dialogus*, from which Henry copied a large amount of text. This was consistent with his nominalist affiliation.[57]

Henry had explicitly reflected on the status of the biblical text and the fact that the Latin version was a translation from Hebrew or Greek. He recognised that the fact that the Latin translation might give a different signification than the Hebrew original was a potential source of problems, given that truth could not contradict itself.[58] The rule for translation was that it was only necessary to translate the principle sense of the original text (and

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[56] Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Fratres, p. 26: *Ad tertium dicendum quod sensus parabolicus sub litterali continetur: nam per voces significatur aliquid proprie, aliquid figurative... In quo patet quod sensui litterali sacrae Scripturae nunquam potest subesse falsum.*

[57] On Henry of Oyta and Ockham's *Dialogus*, see Decker, 'Ein fundamental-theologischer Traktat', pp. 217-219. On Oyta as follower of Ockham's philosophy, see Schneider (ed.), *Oyta, Quaestiones.*

[58] Lang (ed.), *Quaestio de sacra scriptura*, p. 11.

not all possible senses), which corresponded to the intention of the author.[59] He argued at length that the Latin translation made by Jerome was the true and accurate text.[60] A result of these arguments was a pedagogically conservative characterisation of exegesis: a thorough study of the Fathers and Saints who had interpreted Scripture was the best preparation for the task of explicating the Scriptures.[61]

The implications of this view of interpretation for questions of translation and vernacular German as a theological language were complicated. A theologically correct comprehension did not in the first place imply a correspondence between exegesis and the experience or reasoning of the readers, but a correspondence between exegesis and the knowledge conveyed through revelation and tradition, which were known and transmitted by those trained in (academic) theology. Some previous authoritative knowledge of revelation was a necessary prerequisite for talking about God and creation truthfully. Thus, it was important to know the correct interpretation of any given biblical text.[62]

Given the way in which nominalist theories of truth and authorial intention underpinned the approach to biblical interpretation, we can understand the philosophical significance of the attitude of submission to tradition and authority shown by translators such as Ulrich of Pottenstein. In his Catechism he asked to be corrected if he departed from traditional interpretations or gave a misleading reading of Church teaching. His emphasis on the conditional truth of the German words that gained their authority only because they coincided with the truth handed down by tradition as phrased in Latin can be regarded as a reflection of these philosophical and theological presuppositions. The remark of the 'simple priest' Stephen Peuntner that what he was going to say in German was nothing but a translation of what his professors of theology were teaching reflects a similar mentality.[63]

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[59] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[60] *Ibidem*, p. 19ff.

[61] An excellent example for this kind of fifteenth-century commentary, which adds many former interpretations to the search for the best way of understanding Scripture, is the commentary on the *Sentences* by Marsilius of Inghen. See Hoenen, 'Virtus Sermonis', pp. 159-160. To this attitude correspond the reflections on the origins of theological truth, which were also treated by Marsilius who based his account on Henry of Oyta's. See Lang, 'Die ersten Ansätze', pp. 389-391.

[62] This is a very brief interpretation of the relevant *quaestiones* of Henry of Oyta, which have been edited by Lang (ed.), *Quaestio de sacra scriptura.*

[63] In his prologue to the 'Book on the love of God', Peuntner describes himself as a simple priest and stresses that the contents of the book are not his own invention but a repetition of what he had learned from his teachers (especially Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl); see Schnell (ed.), *Liebhabung Gottes*, p. 291.

Conclusions and some observations regarding the history of late medieval schools of thought

The two different choices, which the authors of the Viennese School made with respect to German as the language of their literary activities, namely the choice between a literal or a descriptive translation, or the choice between an educated or an everyday German, reflect two different attitudes to theological truth and different philosophies of language. The literal translations or the choice for an educated German were an attempt to maintain the revealed or transmitted truth by following closely the structure of the true Latin proposition, especially in difficult matters of theology.

Descriptive translations or the choice for demotic German were an attempt to parse the true meaning of a revealed or canonical text into more readily comprehensible German phrases, especially where practical matters (and not difficult theological doctrines) were concerned. These descriptive formulations could not claim to be true on their own terms, but they claimed to be true only in so far as they corresponded to the true sense of the Latin original. The varieties of German at the time made it necessary to be cautious, and the express wish to be corrected resulted from an awareness of the theological and philosophical issues at stake, rather than a formulaic expression of modesty.

Despite their differences, both literal and descriptive modes of translation assumed that theological truth was guaranteed by the Latin Biblical text and the dogmatic tradition of the church. The truth of theological content was defined by its correspondence to revelation and tradition. A merely philosophical conception of the world was seen as easily leading into error.

Both types of German can be justified by Ockham's philosophical theory. The idea of truth as a proposition (and its association with traditionalism in theology) is in line with producing literal translations and mimicking the Latin word order in theological works. The idea of a pedagogical necessity to express theological matters in an appropriately figurative language to theologically untrained persons finds expression in catechisms and other works in the vernacular which use ordinary language while bearing in mind that the German texts might be in need of correction in order to find better equivalents for the Latin theological expressions.

Although Ockham's influence on the production of the 'Viennese school' seems to suggest a certain degree of uniformity, there will remain some questions that require further investigation. Of special interest is the philosophical background of the 'Viennese school' because the 'Viennese school' was contemporaneous with the foundation of the universities in the German speaking countries and the cementing of scholasticism and its attendant schools of thought due to the institutionalisation in pedagogical practice of different ways of interpreting Aristotle. These methodological differences stood at the basis of the later fifteenth-century division between

the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna*. Vienna belonged to this network of universities predominantly influenced by nominalists in the arts faculties of Paris during the second half of the fourteenth century (as did the University of Heidelberg in its founding years).[64]

A first question to ask is which type of nominalism was influential in Vienna's faculty of theology. Before its foundation, Conrad of Megenberg had been an obstinate enemy of Ockham's physics at St. Stephan's school.[65] Indeed, the scarce manuscripts with works of Ockham in the manuscript libraries of Vienna suggest that little direct knowledge of Ockham was available at the time.[66] Henry Totting of Oyta seems to have acquired his knowledge of Ockham's logic in Prague where he was trained in philosophy, and in Erfurt where he taught philosophy.[67] On the other hand, John Buridan's *Summa logicae* was definitely used at Vienna during the fifteenth century.[68] The Ockhamistic touch, which characterises the first decades of Vienna's theological faculty, seems therefore to be strongly related to the personal influence of Henry of Oyta.

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[64] This is still a very rough picture of what was going on in Paris from the time of the prohibition of the reading of Ockham's works in 1339 until the anti-nominalist polemics at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Though Courtenay argues that there were no schools in the fourteenth century in a strict and institutional sense like there were in the fifteenth century, the evidence of the influence of Ockham and Buridan, e.g., on Ailly, Marsilius of Inghen, and Henry of Langenstein, etc., allow us to talk about the existence of a nominalist 'school of thought' at Paris at least in a very broad sense. Equally rough is the traditional view of Vienna as a 'nominalist' university. Further research into the predominance of commentaries on Aristotle according to Buridan during the fifteenth century is needed to better understand what this classification means with respect to the philosophical, theological and political attitudes put forward at this university. For discussions about the fourteenth-century schools of thought, see Courtenay, 'Was there an Ockhamist School?' and Courtenay, 'Parisian Theology'; on the characteristics of fifteenth-century schools, see Hoenen, 'Via antiqua and via moderna'.

[65] See Courtenay, 'Conrad of Megenberg'.

[66] For example, only a fragment of Ockham's logic is preserved in the monastery of the Dominicans. See Boehner, Gál, and Brown (eds.), Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, p. 32*. The catalogue of the National Library, which integrates the manuscript collection of the ancient university, refers only to Ockham's physics (BPV cod. lat. 5460) and to an excerpt from Ockham's political work on the possessions of Christ (BPV cod. lat. 4613).

[67] Lang, *Heinrich Totting von Oyta*, pp. 9-12.

[68] According to the catalogue, the National Library of Vienna still possesses three fifteenth-century manuscripts of Buridan's *Summa logicae* which belonged to the stock of the university (BPV codd. lat. 5365, 5420, 5466); see Michael, *Johannes Buridan*, II, pp. 511-513. On the manuscript tradition, see Markowski, 'Johannes Buridans Kommentare' .

This historical fact has also systematic relevance. Although the logical theories of language of the various nominalistic authors – Ockham, John Buridan, Albert of Saxony, Marsilius of Inghen – are related, there are significant differences between them. The number of Buridan's commentaries on Aristotle indicates that he was probably the most important philosophical authority in Vienna after the Ockhamistic influence of the founding fathers of the theological faculty. It could be argued that both Buridan's theory of supposition, which includes the possibility of referring to sets of extramental objects and not only to individual objects as in Ockham's case, and also his more radical separation of verbal and mental language might have made a significant difference to the way in which theologians perceived the relationship between the authoritative texts and their translations into vernacular German.[69] Although further research is still required, one may venture the suggestion that the increasing philosophical influence of Buridan at Vienna may have contributed to the fact that in the later years of the 'Viennese school', no justification was needed for writing in German.

A second question concerns the character of a 'school of thought' at the turn to the fifteenth century. The late medieval schools usually show a great affinity with the institutional fact that students were trained in *bursae* which were directed by religious orders or secular priests, though it is known that there were students who changed schools deliberately.[70] Against this background, the presence of Dominicans (such as Johannes Nider) who were realists by training, amongst the authors of the 'Viennese school' may put into question its nominalistic character. However, it is difficult to evaluate this fact.

On the one hand, Johannes Nider's work does not present realist positions of an extreme kind. His primary source was Aquinas, and he permitted some natural access to God by metaphysics, astronomy, and natural philosophy, by strengthening the importance of metaphysics for the cooperation with 'supernatural metaphysics' in order to form the *prima philosophia* which to him was the goal of human reflection. But what would seem to lead to a certain independence from tradition and authority for the knowledge of God, or even to the mystical idea of direct cognition of God, which was held by mystics of his order, did not yield the expected results. On the contrary, Nider maintained the hierarchical order of teaching, which has been described as typical for the prevailing nominalist account of the 'Viennese school', thereby following Henry of Langenstein's theory of the co-

[69] On Buridan's radical positions on language and reality and his difference to Ockham, see Pinborg, 'The Summulae'; Nuchelmans, *Theories of the proposition*, pp. 243-250 (Buridan's theory of signification); a comprehensive presentation of Buridan's theory of language is given by Reina, *Il problema del linguaggio*.

[70] See Meuthen, 'Bursen und Artesfakultäten'.

operation of faculties under the leadership of theology.[71] This could be interpreted as an example of the integrative character of the kind of nominalist theology prevailing at Vienna at the time, but could also serve as an example for the predominance of didactic and pastoral efforts, including patterns of hierarchical teaching,[72] over doctrinal differences at least during the later years of the 'Viennese school', during the 1420s and 1430s. This point could be made stronger by the fact that students were not obliged by the statutes to study with a master of their own order or a secular priest, respectively (though, in the case of Johannes Nider, this was the case). This may have allowed for a greater exchange between the different philosophical traditions and may thus have created a special situation.[73] So the conclusions drawn for the first decades of the activity of the 'Viennese school' cannot easily be generalised as being valid for the rest of the fifteenth century. Further study into prosopographical details and the philosophical and theological activity during the following decades is needed in order to explain possible changes in the theoretical attitude of the representatives of the 'Viennese school', and to allow for a general judgement on the importance and the character of philosophical schools of thought at Vienna during the main part of the fifteenth century.

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[71] Williams, 'Schul der Weisheit', p. 398.

[72] Also with respect to the hierarchical implications of the activity of the 'Viennese school', not all facts are homogeneous, which confirms the critical observations with respect to the diversity of the members of the 'Viennese school' mentioned before. For example, Simon of Ruckersberg was working for the Austrian nobleman Reinprecht II of Walsee and, before 1397, translated for him Gregory's *Moralia in Job* as well as parts of Holcot's *Praelectiones in librum Sapientiae* in a literal style. He justified translations into the vernacular with theological arguments (by referring to the appearance of the tongues of fire during Pentecost). Since we do not know where he was trained as a theologian, it is hard to say whether his anti-hierarchical inclinations stood in direct relationship to the developments at Vienna. We only know that at several stages of his later activity as a member of the clergy of St. Stephen's at Vienna he came into conflict with the theological authorities of the university, e.g. Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl, because of his outrageous preaching, which could be a hint in favour of Simon's opposition to a more cautious and hierarchical style of theology practiced in the 'Viennese school'. On Simon of Ruckersberg, see Honemann, 'Simon von Ruckersberg'. A partial transcription from the introduction according to the manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. 2° 1147, 1^{ra}-3^{rb} is given by Hohmann (ed.), *Unterscheidung*, pp. 271-272. See also Honemann, 'Simon von Ruckersburg'. For the problems between Simon and the theological faculty, see Uiblein, *Die Akten*, vol. I, pp. 24-29, 31, 39, 41 and vol. II, p. 433.

[73] Frank, *Hausstudium*, pp. 105-113.