

# Singular Terms and Singular Concepts: From Buridan to the Early Sixteenth Century

E.J. ASHWORTH

*Summary:* This article considers medieval treatments of proper names and demonstrative phrases in relation to the question of when and how we are able to form singular concepts. The logical and grammatical background provided by the authoritative texts of Porphyry and Priscian is examined, but the main focus is on John Buridan and his successors at Paris, from John Dorp to Domingo de Soto. Buridan is linked to contemporary philosophers of language through his suggestion that, although the name 'Aristotle' is a genuine proper name only for those who have the appropriate singular concept caused by acquaintance with Aristotle, it can be properly treated as a singular term by subsequent users because of their beliefs about the original imposition of the name.

A singular term is a word or phrase that signifies exactly one individual thing, and a singular concept is the supposed mental correlate of such a term. For medieval authors, the two main types of singular term were proper names and demonstrative phrases, such as 'this man'.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I shall attempt to clarify these notions by taking up four related issues. First, I shall look briefly at the medieval doctrine of signification, the central semantic notion. In particular, I intend to explain why it was that concepts were agreed to be central to language use. Second, I shall look at two authoritative texts in grammar and logic that provided both the background and the starting point for all medieval discussions of singular terms. These texts are Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*. Third, I shall consider the special contribution of John Buridan, who, partly because of his doctrine of singular

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1. Cf. e.g. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. ix vb, "Voco autem singulare vagum ut 'hic homo', 'hoc veniens', et voco singulare determinatum sicut 'Sortes' vel 'Plato'." Cf. Buridan, *Summulae de Praedicabilibus*, pp. 31-33. Soto, *Summule*, f. viii va: "duplex est singulare .... singulare determinatum, quod grammatici dicunt nomen proprium .... et singulare vagum, quod est nomen commune cum signo demonstrativo, ut 'hic homo', 'hoc ens', etcetera."

concepts, was the first medieval thinker to have anything novel to say about singular terms. I draw some parallels between his views and those of some contemporaries working in philosophy of language. Finally, I shall discuss the transmission of his views to early sixteenth-century Paris and Spain. In this context, I shall pay particular attention to two authors. The earlier of the two is John Dorp, who got his BA and MA at Paris in 1393, and who may have written his influential commentary on Buridan's *Summule* at that time, though he did not leave Paris until 1405.<sup>2</sup> His commentary was printed a number of times in Paris, Lyon, and Venice at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The later author is Domingo de Soto (1494-1560), who taught in Paris from 1517-1519 before returning to Spain. I shall focus on the second edition of his *Summule*, printed in 1539/40, because this was the version that was reprinted several times, and that most successfully introduced Spaniards to earlier Parisian teachings.<sup>4</sup> I shall also refer to his later commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories* (1543).<sup>5</sup>

One issue I shall not discuss is that of fictional names. Medieval logicians were concerned with problems of reference to dead persons, or to fictional entities such as chimeras, but I have yet to come across any discussion of fictional singular terms such as Frodo Baggins.

## 1. Signification

I remarked above that for medieval authors the central semantic notion was that of signification. However, as Paul Spade has pointed out, we must not confuse signification when presented as what Spade calls "a psychologico-causal property of terms" with meaning.<sup>6</sup> The meaning of a term is not an entity to which the term is related in some way, but one

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2. See Bos 2000.

3. The commentary was printed in 1487, 1489, 1490, 1493, 1495, 1499, 1504; see Bos 2000.

4. I would like to thank Angel D'Ors for providing me with photographs of the second edition. The readily-available facsimile edition says that it is the second edition on the title page, but on f. 16 r, it announces itself as the third edition: see Soto, *Summulae*, Salamanca, 1554-1555. This third edition omits some phrases found in the second edition.

5. I use the facsimile edition of the 1587 edition: see bibliography.

6. Spade 1982: 188.

can say that an utterance signifies or makes known an entity, whether conceptual or real, universal or particular. Moreover, meaning is not transitive, but signification is. Lambert of Lagny (or Auxerre) wrote: “An utterance that is a sign of a sign – i.e., of a concept – will be a sign of the thing signified – i.e., of the thing; it is, however, a sign of the concept directly but a sign of the thing indirectly”.<sup>7</sup> This is not to deny that medieval thinkers had a general notion of meaning. They did talk about sense (*sensus*), about the thought or content (*sententia*) of a phrase, and about the force of a word (*vis verbi*), and they often used the word ‘significatio’ itself along with its cognates quite widely. When they were discussing indexicals, especially personal pronouns and demonstratives, they drew a distinction between a term’s general signification or what Kaplan has called ‘character’ and its particular signification, that is, its ‘content’ or contribution to what is actually said on a particular occasion of use.<sup>8</sup>

If we take signification in a narrow sense, as a technical notion, we find that there were two not entirely compatible approaches, each based on a sentence from Aristotle, and each emphasizing the role of concepts, whether the hearer’s or the speaker’s. According to the first approach, based on *De interpretatione* 16b19-21, to signify is to generate or establish an understanding (*significare est intellectum constituere*).<sup>9</sup> This definition places emphasis not on the speaker, but on the hearer. Given this emphasis, it is possible to regard groans and perhaps also animal sounds as significant. So long as the hearer can acquire some understanding through hearing, the utterance is significant even if the speaker is incapable of rational, abstract thought, and even if the speaker has no intention of conveying a message. The second approach tied the significative power of an utterance to its making known a concept. The crucial text here is *De interpretatione* 16a3-4, read as saying “Spoken words are signs of concepts”.<sup>10</sup> This supports the view that it is the speaker’s intellectual capacity and intentions that are crucial to sig-

7. Kretzmann and Stump 1988: 105. Lambert, *Logica*, p. 206: “Vox que est signum signi, scilicet intellectus, erit signum significati, scilicet rei, sed immediate est signum intellectus, mediate autem signum rei.”

8. Kaplan 1989: 500-507.

9. Arist. *Int.* 2.16b19-21 *Translatio Boethii, Aristoteles Latinus* 2.1: 7.14-16: “Ipsa quidem secundum se dicta verba nomina sunt et significant aliquid – constituit enim qui dicit intellectum, et qui audit quiescit.”

10. Arist. *Int.* 1.16a-3-4 *Translatio Boethii, Aristoteles Latinus* 2.1: 5.4-6: “Sunt ergo ea quae sunt in voce earum quae sunt in anima passionum notae.”

nificant utterance. Animal noises and groans reveal specific passions and sensory states such as fear and pain, but they are not linked to concepts, and are not properly part of language.

Aristotle, as interpreted by medieval commentators, had gone on to say that concepts were similitudes or signs of things,<sup>11</sup> and this raised the question of what is meant by ‘thing’. In other words, what is it that we understand when an utterance such as ‘man’ or ‘animal’ establishes an understanding? The usual assumption from Boethius at least until the end of the thirteenth century was that the understanding is of some kind of universal, an essence or common nature, and when logicians asked whether spoken words primarily signified concepts or things, the issue was whether concepts or common natures should be taken as the primary significates of an utterance. For those who believed that there are both universal things or common natures, and individual things or particulars, the primary significate of a word was not a concept but the common nature represented by the concept, and the secondary significate was the thing having that nature. For Aquinas, who did not want to give common natures any kind of intermediary existence independent of both concepts and actual things, the significate (*significatum*) of a term was the intellect’s conception of the thing signified, and the thing signified (*res significata*) was the property or the nature as it characterized individual external objects.<sup>12</sup> So long as common natures played a role in the signification of common nouns, no matter what that role was, there was a strong temptation to speak as if there are individual natures that play a similar role in the signification of singular terms. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there are many references to individual forms, and such terms as Socrateity (*Socrateitas*) and Platonicity (*Platonitas*) were frequently used, even by Aquinas.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the insistence, especially by Aquinas, that the intellect cannot grasp individuals as such made the explanation of how we can understand

11. Arist. *Int.* 1.16a6.8 *Translatio Boethii, Aristoteles Latinus* 2.1: 6.8-9: “*eaedam omnibus passiones animae sunt, et quorum hae similitudines, res etiam eaedem.*”

12. Matters were complicated by Aquinas’s development of a distinction between the intelligible species and the *verbum*: see Pini 2001.

13. For references to Boethius and to logicians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see Gracia 1984: 91, 118 n.53, 119 n. 54, 202, 245 n.18. Aquinas, *De Potentia*, 8.3c: “*Distinctivum enim et constitutivum hypostasis potest intelligi dupliciter. Uno modo quo distinguitur et constituitur formaliter, sicut homo humanitate et Socrates Socrateitate. Alio modo ....*”

Socrates more complicated. There did not seem to be a concept of Socrateity that corresponded to the form spoken of.

The terms of the debate were to change completely in the fourteenth century, first with the insistence of Scotus, like others before him, that individuals can be grasped by the intellect, but more especially with the rise of nominalism, the doctrine that all that exists are individual things, and that only concepts can be common or universal. The question whether words primarily signify concepts or things was now construed as the question: does a word signify an individual thing in the world directly, or does it signify first the concept that is a necessary condition for signification? Buridan and his near contemporary William Ockham differed on this issue. Buridan held that words first signify concepts, because only then can we explain why terms such as 'being' and 'one', which have the same extension, nonetheless differ in signification.<sup>14</sup> Ockham preferred to say that words signify only individual things and are subordinated to concepts without signifying them.<sup>15</sup> Both thinkers are noteworthy for their insistence that the concept itself was a sign that plays a crucial intermediary role in language production and understanding and that concepts are the terms of a fully-fledged mental language.<sup>16</sup> Since for something to be a sign is for it to represent or make known something beyond itself, concepts are necessarily representative. However one construes the notion of representation here (and any crude pictorial theory can be ruled out), it is clear that representation was taken to involve some level of generality, and so there is an obvious problem where singular concepts are concerned. Yet, if we do use genuine singular terms, singular concepts must be admitted, given Buridan's claim that a spoken term cannot be called universal or singular unless it corresponds to a universal or singular concept.<sup>17</sup> As we shall see below, Buridan introduces an extra condition for the singular concept, while allowing it to have a certain kind of generality.

14. Buridan, *Sophismata*, p. 25.

15. Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, pp. 7-8.

16. For full discussion, see Biard 1989 and Panaccio 1999.

17. Buridan, *Quaestiones de Anima* III.8, p. 78: "Sed tu quaeres: Nonne hoc nomen 'Aristoteles' est nomen singulare et individuum? Et ego dico quod nomen vocale non debet dici universale vel singulare nisi ex eo quod sibi correspondet conceptus universalis vel singularis." For a larger excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text III.

## 2. Logical and Grammatical Background

Let us now turn to the logical and grammatical background and the two authoritative texts I mentioned. In logic, discussions of singular terms were frequently related to a passage from Porphyry's *Isagoge*.<sup>18</sup> In the version used by medieval logicians, Porphyry writes: "Individual is said of one particular alone. Socrates is said to be individual, and this white [thing], and this approaching [person], and son of Sophroniscus, if Socrates be his only son. Such things are said to be individuals, since each of them consists of properties whose collection will never be the same in another."<sup>19</sup> The last sentence of Porphyry's text ties the ontological notion of an individual to a collection of properties,<sup>20</sup> and as a corollary, it can be taken to tie the notion of an individual term to a descriptive phrase. However, there was fairly general agreement that a collection of properties could not constitute an individual,<sup>21</sup> and there seems to have been no attempt to make the description of these properties into a definition of the individual, or to see them as providing the primary signification of singular terms.

The main part of Porphyry's text offered medieval logicians the basis for a classification of three types of singular term.<sup>22</sup> First, there is the *individuum determinatum*, represented by the proper name 'Socrates'.

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18. Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 7.19-23, *Aristoteles Latinus* I.6: 13-14: "... individuum autem de uno solo particulari (individuum autem dicitur Socrates et hoc-album et hic-veniens, ut Sophronisci filius, si solus ei sit Socrates filius). Individua ergo dicuntur huiusmodi quoniam ex proprietatibus consistit unumquodque eorum quorum collectio nunquam in alio eadem erit ...."
19. Burley, *Liber Universalium*, sig. b iii va: "Individuum autem dicitur de uno solo particulari. Individuum autem dicitur Sortes et hoc album et hic veniens et Sophroni<s>ci filius, si solus sit Sortes ei filius. Individua vero dicuntur huiusmodi quoniam ex proprietatibus consistit unumquodque eorum quorum nunquam in alio erit eadem collectio."
20. A standardized list of seven was given: see Burley, *Liber Universalium*, sig. b iii va: "unde versus: forma, figura, locus, tempus, cum nomine, sanguis, Patria sunt septem que non habet unus et alter."
21. Burley, *Liber Universalium*, sig. b iii vb: "nec intendit hic auctor dicere quod huiusmodi proprietates sunt constitutive individui substantie, sed insunt illi subiective non sicut partes sed sicut accidentia. Intelligendum etiam quod unum individuum substantie non distinguitur ab alio solum per huiusmodi proprietates accidentis, sed formaliter per suam formam et materialiter per suam materiam."
22. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. e 1 va: "Et isto modo secundum Porphirium triplex ponitur individuum, scilicet individuum vagum, individuum ex suppositione, et individuum determinatum."

Everyone realized that different people could have the same name, but it is important to note that ‘Socrates’ said of two different people was a standard example of an equivocal term, a word with two unrelated significations. For each individual named ‘Socrates’, there had to be a specific semantic convention associating that individual with that name-type. John Buridan remarked that even if there were a thousand other people called John, all entirely similar to him, the name ‘John’ as bestowed on Buridan would signify only Buridan and no one else.<sup>23</sup>

The second type of singular term is the *individuum vagum*, represented by the phrases ‘hoc album’ and ‘hic veniens’. In other contexts, especially commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories* 2a11-13, the *individuum vagum* was represented by such phrases as ‘aliquis homo’,<sup>24</sup> but in all the texts we are concerned with, the presence of the demonstrative pronoun is crucial. The word ‘vagum’ is used partly because the same phrase will have a different reference when uttered in different contexts,<sup>25</sup> but mainly because the identification of the individual in question is indeterminate, though to a varying extent.<sup>26</sup> ‘This being’ and ‘this body’ are highly indeterminate, ‘this animal’ is less indeterminate, and ‘this man’ is even less indeterminate, but it still lacks the precision of

23. Buridan, *Summulae de Praedicabilibus*, p. 34: “Sciens autem modum significationis et impositionis huius termini individualis ‘Johannes’ ad significandum me non potest opinari quod secundum illam impositionem significaret alium. Et si de facto essent mille alii omnino similes mihi, nullus tamen secundum illam impositionem diceretur Johannes. Repugnat enim termino singulari ex modo suae significationis quod supponat pro alio, nisi secundum aliam impositionem.”

24. Soto, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, p. 71b; *In Categorias*, p. 151a-b. He assigned this usage to the “antiqui”: *Summule*, f. xviii vb.

25. Buridan, *Summulae de Praedicabilibus*, pp. 32-33; *Quaestiones de Anima* III.8, pp. 80-81. Soto, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, p. 66b: “... individuum vagum seu confusum, quod circumscribitur communi nomine cum pronomine demonstrativo, ut ‘hoc album’, ‘hoc veniens’, quod sparsim vagatur per omnia singularia, dum non hoc determinate significat, sed confuse universa, quare nunc accipitur pro uno, nunc pro alio, secundum quod hoc aut illud demonstratur.”

26. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. ix vb: “sensus autem qui non cognoscit nisi singulariter, apprehendit rem dupliciter, uno modo secundum singulare vagum, alio modo secundum singulare determinatum. Voco autem singulare vagum ut ‘hic homo’, ‘hoc veniens’, et voco singulare determinatum sicut ‘Sortes’ vel ‘Plato’. Nam si Sortem video a longe, ego bene sensu iudicabo quod hoc est ille homo, illud animal, vel illud veniens, sed nondum potero iudicare an sit Sortes vel Plato; et in iudicando quod est hic homo, non habeo alium modum cognoscendi et iudicandi si sit Sortes quam si esset Plato vel Robertus. Ideo talis conceptus sensualis et singularis vocatur vagus et confusus.”

'Socrates'. I can recognize someone as a man without being able to distinguish him from other men in any reliable manner. As we shall see below, Buridan took the vague singular to be the most proper type of singular term.

Finally, we have the *individuum ex suppositione* or *circumlocutione*, represented by the phrase 'son of Sophroniscus'. Some people distinguished two cases here. For John Versor, a fifteenth-century Thomist, 'son of Sophroniscus' is determinate by virtue of reference, but 'man with a fat head, a long nose, and so on' is determinate by virtue of description (*circumlocutio*).<sup>27</sup> In works which did not comment on Porphyry directly, the third type was often omitted, and there was agreement that although the phrases involved are referring expressions and may in fact refer to just one thing, they are not properly speaking singular terms, or, as Soto put it, *simpliciter singulare*.<sup>28</sup> Just as some common terms, 'deus' and 'sol' being the most popular examples, in fact have only one referent, so there are referring phrases which in fact have only one referent, but do not count as singular terms because by the mode of their signification they could supposit for more than one thing.<sup>29</sup> We should note that in the context of Porphyry's discussion, we are dealing with indefinite descriptions, given that the stipulation that Sophroniscus has only one son is not part of the phrase but merely background information. This fact is enough to ensure that the phrase in fact refers to only one individual, but it does not alter the linguistic generality of the phrase. Whether or not the phrase 'only son of Sophroniscus' would have been regarded as a singular term was not discussed, but one can infer from other examples that it would not.

Buridan has the most direct discussion of what seem to be definite descriptions. In one place he considers the phrase 'first Christian king of France' (*primus rex Francie christianus*).<sup>30</sup> This he took to be gen-

27. Versor, *Petrus Hispanus*, f. 57r.

28. Soto, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, p. 71b.

29. Buridan, *Questiones de Anima* III.8, p. 79: "Alius autem modus singularium, ut 'Sophronisci filius', non est proprie dictum singulare, quia haec oratio 'Sophronisci filius' statim innata est convenire pluribus si Sophroniscus generat alium filium. Sed solo eo hoc nomen dicitur singulare: quia de facto, non convenit pluribus. Et manifestum est quod secundum talem impropriam locutionem sui intentionem isti termini 'sol', 'luna', etc., dicentur termini singulares, qui tamen sunt termini specifici." For a larger excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text III.

30. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.20, f. liiii ra-rb. For an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text I. For some discussion, see Perreiah 1972.



eral, insofar as it is made up of common concepts. In another place he considers the phrase 'largest and brightest heavenly body' (*planeta maximus et lucidissimus*) used to refer to the sun, and he remarks that the very same phrase, without any new imposition, could supposit for a second sun if God were to create another, either similar or greater in size and brightness.<sup>31</sup> He could be interpreted as saying that the very same phrase, without being given any new signification, could refer to different individuals in different possible worlds.

The rejection of indefinite and definite descriptions from the category of singular term leaves us with the proper name and the vague individual. In order to understand how these were handled, we need to consider how grammarians and logicians approached names and pronouns. I shall begin with the name as discussed in my second authoritative text.

According to Priscian, the *nomen*, the noun or name, is the first of the principal parts of speech, and it signifies substance with quality, that is, it signifies a thing of a certain sort, or an individual established in a certain nature.<sup>32</sup> The *nomen* is divided into the common or appellative name and the proper name.<sup>33</sup> We can see immediately that the proper name was regarded as a fully-fledged part of the language, and there was a fair amount of discussion of the conventions governing its use, some of which had to do with Priscian's distinction between four types of proper name (*praenomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen*).<sup>34</sup> Nor was it just a matter of social conventions. Because the proper name is a subdivision of the name, it is taken to have the same semantic properties as the common name, and hence it can, indeed must, be taken to have a sense. According to Priscian, the proper name signifies a private substance and quality, and it may also include the apprehension of some-

31. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.18, f. liii rb: "Verbi gratia, si hunc solem voluerimus diffinire quod ipse est planeta maximus et lucidissimus, verum est quod de facto illa oratio non supponit nisi pro isto sole, sed non repugnat ipsi ex modo significationis eius supponere pro alio, quia si deus faceret alterum solem isti similem magnitudine et luciditate vel forte maiorem, sine dubio illa oratio sine nova impositione supponeret pro illo sole novo facto."

32. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* II.IV.18, p. 55: "Proprium est nominis substantiam et qualitatem significare."

33. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* II.V.22, pp. 56-57 and II.V.25-26, pp. 58-59.

34. Helias, *Summa*, pp. 214-17.

thing common.<sup>35</sup> Thus if I say ‘Virgil’, the common notions ‘man’ and ‘poet’ will be understood. Hence there are two kinds of senses attached to proper names, a particular sense which cannot be expressed by common notions, and an associated sense, a description. The idea of a primary signification which is unique and a secondary signification involving common notions was later made explicit by the influential twelfth-century grammarian, Peter Helias, in his discussion of the four types of proper name.<sup>36</sup>

So far as demonstrative pronouns are concerned, Priscian made a strong connection between the proper name and the pronoun (*pronomen*), saying that the pronoun is taken in place of a proper name.<sup>37</sup> It also has a kind of primacy over the proper name. As Priscian said, even if we know that Virgil is a man and a poet, we won’t be able to identify him (assuming we are in his presence) unless someone says “This is Virgil”.<sup>38</sup> The type of pronoun we are interested in here is what

35. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* II.V.22, pp. 56-57: “Nomen est pars orationis, quae unicuique subiectorum corporum seu rerum communem vel propriam qualitatem distribuit.” II.V.25, pp. 58-9: “Proprium vero naturaliter uniuscuiusque privatam substantiam et qualitatem significat, et in rebus est individuus, quas philosophi atomos vocant, ut ‘Plato’, ‘Socrates’ .... et in proprio quidem etiam appellativa intellegi possunt, ut, si dicam ‘Virgilius’, intellegitur homo et poeta, in appellativis autem propria non intelleguntur, ut ‘homo’, ‘vir’, nisi per excellentiam loco proprii in quibusdam personis accipiantur, ut ‘poeta’ pro ‘Virgilius’ et ‘urbs’ pro ‘Roma’.” Cf. XVII.III.23, p. 122: “Trypho”, in quo etiam ‘homo’ intelligitur.” He does not explain what he means by ‘intelligere in’.
36. Helias, *Summa*, p. 216: “... cognomen illam eandem propriam qualitatem significat quam et proprium nomen cui adiungitur. Secundario autem significat cognitionem multis communem. Nominat vero eos qui de eadem cognatione sunt nec tamen est equivocum. Est cognomen itaque proprium nomen ex principali significatione, sed commune est secundaria et nominatione.” *Ibid.*, p. 217: “Dicimus ergo generaliter quatuor species proprii nominis idem principaliter significare, quod, quia propria qualitas est, ideo propria nomina dicuntur. Idem etiam nominant sed diversa secundario significant – quedam enim eventum, quedam cognationem, ut superius demonstratum est.”
37. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* II.IV.18, p. 55: “Proprium est pronominis pro aliquo nomine proprie poni et certas significare personas.” Cf. XII.I.1, p. 577: “Pronomen est pars orationis, quae pro nomine proprio uniuscuiusque accipitur personasque finitas recipit.”
38. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* XVII.X.63, pp. 145-146: “... nec mirum, cum propria quoque nomina, quamvis ideo ponantur, ut unumquemque ab aliis omnibus discernant, incerta sint tamen, cum non possint omnes eius qualitates, quae illum separant ab aliis omnibus, ostendere absque demonstrationis auxilio, quae fit per pronomen. quamvis enim sciamus, quod poeta sit Virgilius et filius Maronis, cernentes eum, si posset fieri, nesciebamus, eius esse hoc nomen, nisi si qui nobis eum demonstrans dixisset: ‘hic est Virgilius’.”

medieval grammarians called the primitive (non-derived) demonstrative pronoun, which includes personal pronouns such as 'ego' and demonstratives such as 'hic'. Demonstration (construed as 'pointing to') can be either direct, when something is before one's eyes, or intellectual, or a mixture of the two.<sup>39</sup> Leaving aside intellectual demonstration, which occurs when an object is incorporeal or absent, we can note that the use of a demonstrative pronoun in normal circumstances has the implication that the object pointed to must be present to the speaker.

The standard case is represented by 'hoc' or by 'hic homo', and the mental correlate in both cases is a common concept singularized by a demonstrative act. Because 'hic' is tied to particular demonstrative acts, Buridan, like many other logicians in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries, took it that genuine referring uses of the phrase 'hic homo' are equivocal. What I signify when I say 'hic homo' pointing to Socrates is quite different from what you signify when you say 'hic homo' pointing to Plato, and every use of the phrase requires a new imposition.<sup>40</sup> As Soto pointed out, this is quite compatible with the claim that 'hic homo' has an unchanging general sense which is understood by all speakers of Latin.<sup>41</sup> It is also compatible with failures of reference of various sorts, as Buridan and others frequently remarked. I can say 'hic homo' and point to a donkey, or to nothing. Similarly, I can

39. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* XVII.VIII.57, p. 142. Helias, *Summa*, p. 955: "Quedam autem pronomina sunt demonstrativa oculorum, ut 'ego', 'tu', quedam oculorum et intellectuum ut 'hic'. Facit enim demonstrationem ad intellectum ut 'hic pietatis honos', quandoque ad oculum ut 'hic homo'. Quando autem fit demonstratio ad intellectum aut fit propter rei incorporeitatem ut 'hic pietatis honos', 'hic animus', aut fit propter rei absenciam, ut si dicam de absente aliquo, 'Hic fecit michi hoc', et est ad intellectum demonstratio." See also Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. b 3 rb-va. He appeals to intellectual demonstration in the context of suppositional verification.

40. Buridan, *Summulae de Praedicabilibus*, pp. 32-33: "... haec vox 'hic homo' non dicitur de Socrate et Platone secundum eandem rationem, quia requiruntur diversae demonstrationes, una Socratis et alia Platonis. Et sunt illis diversis demonstrationibus diversae rationes correspondentes, quarum una non significat vel supponit nisi pro Socrate et alia nonnisi pro Platone." Cf. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.19, f. liiii vb.

41. Soto, *Summule*, f. xix rb: "Nempe si consideretur pronomen ut per se profertur, non demonstrando aliquod individuum, tunc habet significationem communem etiam si ponatur in propositione, nam cum legeris istam singularem 'iste homo disputat', certe formas conceptus communes, et si in mente loco de ly 'homo' poneretur ly 'equus', idem pronomen maneret. Sed cum digito demonstrans Petrum, dicens 'hic homo est doctus', tunc formo conceptum singularem Petri, vel singulare vagum, quod incomplexe significat solum illud quod demonstratur."

utter ‘ista chimera’, a phrase which can never have a referent, given that chimeras are impossible objects.<sup>42</sup>

One might suppose that mere pointing is all that a demonstrative pronoun does, and certainly Priscian had claimed that while the name signifies substance with quality, that is, a referent plus its nature, the pronoun signifies substance without quality, that is, a bare referent.<sup>43</sup> However, medieval grammarians and logicians demanded some identification of the object denoted. One context for the demand is found in discussions of *evocatio* (called *devocatio* by Peter Helias), or constructions mixing first-person pronouns and first-person verb forms with proper names, which were counted as third-personal.<sup>44</sup> Priscian took such locutions as “Priscianus lego” to be ill-formed,<sup>45</sup> and in considering the well-formed expansion, “Ego Priscianus lego”, Peter Helias placed the emphasis on ‘ego’.<sup>46</sup> He explained that ‘ego’ cannot pick out a form, so ‘Priscianus’ has to be supplied in order for there to be a perfect subject. Nearly two and a half centuries later John Dorp appealed to the doctrine of *evocatio* in order to explain that the sense of the spoken phrase “Ego curro” is either “Ego Johannes curro” or “Ego homo curro”.<sup>47</sup> The mental correlate of a personal pronoun must involve an identifying concept, whether singular or universal.

For Dorp and other later logicians ordinary demonstrative pronouns such as ‘hic’ similarly require the presence of an identifying concept. This raised the issue of what in the mind corresponds to the pronoun itself. Some people apparently held that there are no pronouns in the mind. Hence one can argue that a demonstrative pronoun is a disguised categorematic term, and that the mental correlate of “Hic homo currit”

42. Ashworth 1982: 73-74. Cf. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.19, f. liii vb.

43. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* XVII.V.37, p. 131: “sed pronomina et finita volunt esse et loco propriorum accipiuntur et substantiam solam sine qualitate significant ....”

44. For discussion see Kneepkens 1981.

45. Priscian, *Inst. gram.* XVII.XII.75, p. 151. His example is “Priscianus scribo”.

46. Helias, *Summa*, pp. 972-73: “Et queritur qua ratione ibi nomen quod est tercie persone iungatur cum prima persona pronominis, quod ideo fit quia pronomem significat substantiam sine respectu qualitatis. Itaque hoc pronomem ‘ego’ significat substantiam, id est, suppositum proprietati, sed sine respectu proprietatis et sine forma. Res autem perfecta esse non potest sine forma quia omne esse ex forma est. Ideo exigit ut adiungatur sibi aliqua forma et propterea asciscit sibi aliquod proprium nomen / quod est datum ex forma et iungitur convenienter ex eadem parte orationis ut dicatur, ‘Ego Priscianus lego’, et quod dico de prima persona, hoc intellige de secunda.”

47. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. b 2 ra. See also sig. a 4 rb. Cf. Enzinas, *Tractatus*, f. x va-vb.

is “homo Sortes currit”.<sup>48</sup> On the more common view, pronouns are subordinated to special demonstrative or relative acts in the mind. If the pronoun is joined to a noun in the spoken phrase, then it represents a purely syncategorematic act in the mind.<sup>49</sup> If it appears alone in the spoken phrase, there are two possibilities, as John Dorp argued.<sup>50</sup> It can be taken to be subordinated to a mental phrase containing both a syncategorematic act and a name, and this case would be legitimate. Alternatively, it could be taken as purely syncategorematic, and this use would be illegitimate, because there would be no sign of the thing pointed to, and a purely syncategorematic term cannot be the subject of a proposition. You cannot successfully *think* “This is running” without identifying the ‘this’ in some way. However, it seems that the identification need not involve a sortal concept. A singular concept is enough.

### 3. Buridan

With this background material out of the way, we are now ready for a closer look at Buridan. I shall discuss his treatment of vague singulars, his construal of proper names, and his discussion of identity conditions for individuals.

In his commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*, Buridan claims that the vague individual is the most proper singular term.<sup>51</sup> While it is true that the phrase ‘this man’ can lack reference through improper use, if it is used properly it must point to one united existent present object, the very situation in which we form genuinely singular concepts. Demonstrative phrases are so clearly tied to the here-and-now that no problem

48. See Ashworth 1982: 71-73; Anonymus, *Commentum*, sig. b 2 v-sig. b 3 r and sig. o 6 r-v; Enzinas, *Tractatus*, f. xi ra.

49. Anonymus, *Commentum*, sig. b 2 v: “Nam si tale est pronomen primitivum et si suum substantivum est expressum, tunc est purum sincathegorema, ut ‘ille homo currit’. Iam ly ‘ille’ est purum sincathegorema et correspondet sibi purus actus demonstrativus.”

50. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. b 2 ra. Cf. sig. a 4 rb.

51. Buridan, *Quaestiones de Anima* III.8, p. 78: “Modo propriissime, ille modus ‘hoc album’, ‘hoc veniens’, etc., habet conceptus singulares sibi correspondentes quia illud pronomen demonstrativum ‘hoc’ non apponitur bene secundum modum significandi nisi sit cognitio rei per modum existentis in prospectu cognoscentis”; p. 80: “... unum quod solet vocari vagum, ut ‘hic homo’ vel ‘hic veniens’, quod vocari debet singulare simpliciter et proprie.” For an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text III.

of identity through time can arise. On the other hand, this allows for only a very time-bound usage. In his consideration of whether the singular term ‘Socrates’ could be defined by the phrase ‘iste homo’, Buridan remarked that if Socrates leaves the room, he is still Socrates, but he is no longer the referent of ‘iste homo’.<sup>52</sup>

Buridan’s view of vague individuals was related to his discussion of Aristotle’s claim (*Physics* I, 184a22-24) that we must proceed from universals to particulars.<sup>53</sup> On the one hand, he insisted that cognition can only begin when a singular thing is present to the senses; on the other hand, he argued that our cognition must move from the more general to the less general, because it requires more skill to grasp the less general. Adults, he remarked, distinguish easily between dogs and cats, but small children do not.<sup>54</sup> Instead of supposing that the only appropriate singular is Socrates, Buridan argued that for each level of generality, there is an appropriate vague singular. First we cognize this body, then we cognize this animal, and then we cognize this man.<sup>55</sup> This account of the standard progression allows a recognition both of the primacy of singulars, and of the move from more to less general. It depends on Buridan’s epistemological claim that general notions are always involved in apprehension, and that what makes an apprehension singular is the ‘confusion’ or fusing together of circumstances, so that being a man is not abstracted from being here and now in such and such a way. Singularity is not tied to the absence of generality, but to the presence of ‘confusion’ or indiscriminatingness.<sup>56</sup> In other words, a concept can be semantically simple or singular while being what Gyula Klima has called metaphysically rich.<sup>57</sup> It has a complex content without being

52. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.18, f. liii rb: “Si per demonstrativam significationem velis diffinire Sortem, dicendo quod Sortes est iste homo, constat quod remota tali significatione adhuc est Sortes, sicut si recesserit, et tamen non amplius est iste homo.”

53. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, ff. vii v-x ra; *Quaestiones de Anima* III.8, pp. 64-83.

54. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. x ra: “intellectus tuus est ita habitatus de conceptibus specialibus equi, hominis, et asini etc. quod statim potest in illos conceptus venire obiecto presente, sed homo ab infantia habet primo conceptus confusiores, scilicet secundum individua vaga confusiora, et magnum tempus apponit antequam habet specialiores. Non enim distingueret inter canem et catum.”

55. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. ix vb. For more on some of the epistemological issues here, see King 2001.

56. For discussion, see Ria van der Lecq 1993.

57. In discussion at the Copenhagen conference at which these papers were given.

compositional, and without the elements having been distinguished from one another.

John Dorp recognized that Buridan's account depends on the claim that we can grasp generality directly, and that what makes a concept singular is not the absence of generality but the fact that the general has not yet been separated from the set of particular circumstances. Dorp rejected this account, and argued that we have no such singular term as a vague individual in our language.<sup>58</sup> To cognize a thing as singular must involve cognition of particular circumstances, and the general concept 'man' cannot be part of the singular cognition. If we want to introduce vague singulars into our language, we will have to invent some special term, such as 'a', to signify Socrates together with a connotation of all the individual circumstances, and 'a' will then count as a vague singular. Dorp's view was not adopted any more than was Buridan's own. For most later logicians, the vague singular was (contrary to Dorp) one type of singular term, but (contrary to Buridan) less properly singular than the proper name, on the grounds that it did indeed involve some generality.

Buridan's treatment of proper names depends on his insistence that a

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58. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. e 1 va-vb: "Unde individuum vagum secundum aliquos est aggregatum ex termino communi et pronomine demonstrativo primitive speciei. Et secundum aliquos est precise terminus communis consideratus prout capitur cum pronomine demonstrativo primitive speciei. Sed istud non videtur verum: nam sensus exterior singulariter vage cognoscit, et tamen sensus exterior non format in [sig. e 1vb] se conceptus communes eo quod ille conceptus habentur per abstractionem a diversis circumstantiis: modo sensus exterior non est natus abstrahere ab huiusmodi circumstantiis. Ideo sequitur quod sensus exterior non cognoscit per aliquem conceptum communem, et per consequens non cognoscit aggregatum ex conceptu communi et pronomine demonstrativo. Secundo si singulare vagum esset aggregatum ex termino communi et pronomine demonstrativo primitive speciei, sequeretur quod res non prius cognosceretur singulariter vage quam universaliter. Consequens est falsum et contra Philosophum primo Physicorum. Probatur consequentia quia ex quo conceptus singularis vagus esset aggregatum ex termino communi et pronomine demonstrativo, tunc quancunque res cognosceretur conceptu singulari vago, etiam cognosceretur per conceptum communem, quare sequitur consequens illatum. Dicitur ergo aliter quod singulare vagum est terminus singulariter representans rem cum circumlocutione multarum circumstantiarum, quas circumstantias est impossibile in alio reperiri, et tali singulari vago communiter non est nomen impositum. Sed si ly 'a' imponeretur ad significandum Sortem connotando istum situm, istam figuram, istum colorem, istum locum, et sic de aliis circumstantiis, tunc ly 'a' esset unum singulare vagum." See also sig. e 2 ra.

singular term must be subordinated to a singular concept,<sup>59</sup> and that the formation of a singular concept depends on the actual presence of the singular thing.<sup>60</sup> No one can hand on a singular concept to another by definition or explanation.<sup>61</sup> In his *Questiones in Metaphysicam*, Buridan considered the names 'Antichrist' and 'Aristotle'. He argued that 'Antichrist', the favourite example of a name referring to a person who does not yet exist, is not a singular term, since it is formed from 'anti' and 'Christ', and could apply to many individuals. He then turned to his

59. See n. 17 above.

60. Buridan, *Quaestiones de Anima* III.8, pp. 76-79, especially p. 77: "tu non potes intelligere Aristotelem per modum simpliciter singularem, quia nunquam cognovisti eum per modum existentis in prospectu tuo." (For an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text III.) Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. ix ra. "Sed tu dices quomodo ergo possum concipere Aristotelem singulariter cum nunquam fuerit in prospectu meo. Ego dico quod non est tibi possibile loquendo proprie, quia tu non concipis eum differenter ab aliis hominibus nisi secundum quamdam circumlocutionem, ut quia summus philosophus, magister Alexandri, discipulus Platonis, qui composuit libros philosophie quos vel quales legimus etc. Modo licet hec descriptio secundum veritatem non conveniret nisi sibi, tamen ipsa non est proprie terminus singularis, sicut nec iste terminus 'deus' est terminus singularis. Licet non conveniat nisi sibi soli, non enim repugnat ex modo significationis vel impositionis quod conveniat pluribus et supponat pro pluribus. Si enim esset alter deus consimilis, hoc nomen 'deus' conveniret sibi et pro eo supponeret sine nova impositione vocabuli. Ita si fuisset alius qui fuisset supremus philosophus et magister Alexandri et discipulus Platonis etc., illi convenisset dicta descriptio et pro eo supposuisset. Sic autem non est de termino simpliciter et proprie singulari, quia si hunc in prospectu meo demonstratum voco 'Sortem' nomine proprio, non quia talis vel talis, sed quia isti nunquam alii quantumcumque simili conveniret hoc nomen 'Sortes', nisi ex alia impositione esset impositum ad significandum illum alium, et sic equivoce. Sed forte alio simili demonstrato mihi, crederem quod esset Sortes, et non esset Sortes, et essem deceptus. Hoc enim non est impossibile; et ista profundius perscrutanda sunt in septimo Metaphisice ...."

61. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.20, f. liiii ra: "Omnem conceptum meum debeo tibi posse manifestare per verba mea, sed conceptum meum singularem non possum tibi monstrare per verba nisi monstrando ad sensum illud quod ego concipio. Verbi gratia, si ego cognosco Sortem quem nunquam novisti, et tu petis quid intelligo per 'Sortem', et ego respondeo tibi quod per 'Sortem' ego intelligo unum hominem †morantem† qui est magister in theologia, et sic addendo quascumque circumstantias voluero, adhuc non exprimo tibi conceptum singularem, quia talis oratio ita bene conveniret uni alteri si illi alteri conveniret ille circumstantie. Et sic videtur quod non possum concipere rem singulariter nisi monstretur ad sensum." For an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text I.



own favourite example, ‘Aristotle’.<sup>62</sup> If I am in the presence of Aristotle, and I dub him ‘Aristotle’, then the name is a genuinely singular term. But if Aristotle is a figure in the distant past, then my concept of Aristotle must be a descriptive one, containing such general elements as ‘man’, ‘great philosopher’, ‘born in Greece’, and so on. Given that there was indeed such a man, having just those characteristics, then my concept supposits for Aristotle, and so stability of reference is guaranteed, but since the concept is not and cannot be a singular concept, it seems that ‘Aristotle’ cannot be a proper singular term when uttered by me, but only an individual *ex circumlocutione*.

Buridan adds a very important clause to his discussion at this point. He remarks that I can treat ‘Aristotle’ as a singular term because I believe that the name was imposed or given its signification by a person who did have the appropriate singular concept. This move allows him to avoid the awkward consequence that whether ‘Aristotle’ is a proper name or not depends entirely on the experience of the speakers, and not at all on the linguistic practices of the community. If I have never known Aristotle, but am speaking with someone who did know him, we can both be taken to be using a proper name when we utter the word ‘Aristotle’. Buridan’s remarks can be expanded in at least two closely related ways. On the one hand, given his references to an original baptism or name-giving ceremony, we can regard Buridan as offering an early hint of the historical chain theory of proper names. On the other hand, given his apparent recognition of the speaker’s intention to refer to the person who was baptized as related to the social practices of the community, and to a body of information which, accurate or not, is

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62. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.20, f.liiii rb-va: “Sed maior est dubitatio de isto termino ‘Aristoteles’, utrum sit terminus singularis, et utrum correspondeat ei conceptus singularis. Et ego credo quod bene fuit terminus singularis, et impositus fuit secundum conceptum singularem, scilicet quando Aristoteles denominabatur, dicebatur enim ‘iste vocetur “Aristoteles”’, et quia nos credimus quod secundum conceptum singularem illud nomen fuit impositum, ideo reputamus semper istum terminum tanquam singularem. Tamen credo quod in nobis qui non vidimus Aristotelem non correspondet illi nomini conceptus singularis quia in dicendo quid intelligo per Aristotelem non posset dici nisi unum hominem, philosophum magnum, de tali loco, qui fecit talia, et sic de aliis circumstantiis. Ista omnia convenirent alteri si fuisset alter talis cum Aristotele, sed tamen quia de facto non fuit talis alius, ille conceptus noster correspondens huic termino ‘Aristoteles’, et etiam iste terminus ‘Aristoteles’, non supponit apud nos nisi pro uno solo.” For an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text I.

causally connected with the man baptized ‘Aristotle’, perhaps Buridan is nearer to Gareth Evans than to Kripke (to mention just two names).<sup>63</sup> Buridan’s hints were picked up, though not developed, by later authors. For instance, Dorp remarked that we treat such names as ‘Aristotle’ as singular because they were singular for the original impositor.<sup>64</sup>

The importance of some sort of causal link between the original producer of the name and the individual named and its relation to the representative nature of even singular concepts was brought out by Buridan and Dorp in their discussion of two cases. In the first case, Plato and Socrates are exactly similar and, without my knowing it, one replaces the other in my field of sight.<sup>65</sup> Buridan and Dorp argue that while my first-formed singular concept is equally similar to the second person to appear, it is not a concept of him, because it is caused by a different individual. The criterion for distinction is not the fit between concept and object but the causal relation. The second case was discussed by Dorp alone. If identical twins are born, and are both called ‘Socrates’, it may seem that ‘Socrates’ will function as a common name in this case, because the concepts will be exactly alike, but here too the causal relation becomes all-important. There are two singular terms, each with its own signification.<sup>66</sup>

Another feature of Buridan’s approach to proper names is that he allowed the names of animals and rivers to be less properly singular than the names of people. This feature arose from Buridan’s discussion of identity through time in the last redaction of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* where he posed the question “Is Socrates the same today that he was yesterday?”<sup>67</sup> He began by presenting arguments for a negative answer. For instance, if we call Socrates’ hand *a* and the rest of Socrates *b*, and if we postulate that he loses his hand, then yesterday Socrates was *a* and *b*, since the whole is equivalent to its parts, but today he is only *b*, so he is not the same. He then presented a number of

63. See Evans 1973 and 1982; Recanati 1993.

64. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. b 1 vb-2 ra.

65. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.7, f. ix ra; *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII. 17, f. lii va-vb. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. e 2 rb.

66. Dorp, *Compendium*, sig. e 2 rb: “Item, si in dicto casu ly ‘Sortes’ non esset individuum, hoc esset quia ly ‘Sortes’ significat duos gemellos univoce; sed hoc est falsum, quia illis duobus gemellis conveniunt diversos conceptus singulares determinati non synonymi mediantibus quibus iste terminus ‘Sortes’ significat istos duos gemellos.”

67. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam* I.10, f. xiii va-vb. For discussion and lengthy quotations from the best manuscript, see Pluta 2001, as well as below, Appendix, text II.

arguments for an affirmative answer. For instance, if the adult differs from the boy, then the adult will not be a Christian even though the boy was baptized, and that is an awkward conclusion.

In his solution, Buridan makes a careful distinction between three kinds of numerical identity through time. In the strictest sense, being totally the same in number, no change of any kind is allowed, and so there are very few real individuals, perhaps only God. In the less strict sense, being partially the same in number, the continuity of one part is sufficient. Socrates is the same Socrates despite bodily changes, because he has the same soul, but the human body will not retain its identity through time, and neither will a horse. In the least strict sense of identity, being the same according to the continuity of diverse parts succeeding one another, we find that animals, bodies, and rivers can be regarded as minimally the same through time. The Seine is the same river now as it was ten years ago because of the continuous succession of water-parts. This allows us to use the word 'Seine' as if it were a singular term in accordance with the customary modes of speech. It follows that the terms 'Socrates' and 'Aristotle' on the one hand and 'Seine' and 'Brunellus (the donkey)' on the other have a different status. The former are more properly singular terms than the latter even for those who are acquainted with all of these individuals through time. In both cases it is important to note that we are allowed to retain singular concepts through memory, so I can keep the same concept through time provided I have had the requisite original experience of the individual in question.<sup>68</sup>

Reflection on the problem of identity through time led some logicians to adopt an even more restrictive account of proper names than Buridan himself had countenanced, and one which has much in common with his account of vague singular terms which change their reference from moment to moment. Various authors in early sixteenth century Paris, including Juan Dolz,<sup>69</sup> Gaspar Lax,<sup>70</sup> and William Mander-

68. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam* VII.20, f. liiii va (for an excerpt from this question, see below, Appendix, text I.)

69. Dolz, *Termini*, f. xxx ra-rb. He writes (rb): "iste terminus 'Sortes' equivoce significat Sortem qui est nunc et Sortem qui fuit heri; immo continue significat mediante alio et alio conceptu. Ex quo patet quod iste terminus 'Sortes' quando fuit impositus non precise fuit impositus ad significandum unum, sed etiam imponebatur ad significandum omnes qui illi succedere deberent, et tamen mediantibus diversis conceptibus; et sic bene significat plura divisim, sed hoc est equivoce."

70. Lax, *Termini*, sig. E ii ra-va. He writes (sig. E ii rb) "dico quod non est possibile quod

ston,<sup>71</sup> argued that a sequence of different concepts of Socrates will be formed through time, even by one acquainted with him, and hence that the name 'Socrates' is no more a proper singular term than is the name 'Seine'. It is radically equivocal, since at every moment it is subordinated to a different concept. Nor is this incompatible with the intentions of the person who originally gave Socrates his name. Strictly speaking, only the baby was called Socrates, but the name was imposed equivalently or as a consequence to signify every successor to the boy by means of different concepts.

Domingo de Soto strongly opposed these views.<sup>72</sup> He discussed the three types of identity, and agreed that the distinctions made were useful, but he held that to regard the name 'Socrates' as an equivocal term which refers to a succession of individuals is a denial of common speech and of the common sense of the wise men who originally gave terms their signification. Identity of the second type is sufficiently strong to be the basis for one singular concept to be predicated non-ambiguously through time, and this is not just because there is a continuous soul, but because there is an identity of the body as well, by virtue of its continuous form and function. Here he appealed to Aristotle to support his thesis. He insisted that horses and trees could also enjoy the

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iste terminus 'Sortes' univoce incomplexo et singulariter significet Sortem qui tunc est et Sortem qui fuit heri, supposito quod aliquem partem quantuncunque parvam habeat Sortes qui nunc est quam non habuit Sortes qui heri fuit ... Et si contra hoc arguas: tunc sequeretur quod iste terminus 'Sortes' continue aliud et aliud significaret mediante alio et alio conceptu, sed hoc est falsum. Patet: ly 'Sortes' precise imponebatur ad significandum illum qui tunc erat puer, et iste non est ille qui tunc erat puer, ergo non imponebatur ad significandum istum per illam impositionem, nec per aliam ut suppono, igitur non imponebatur ad significandum istum nec significat naturaliter, ergo non significat istum. Ad hoc respondetur concedendo illatum, nec inconvenit quod aliquis terminus imponatur ad significandum aliquem cuius conceptum singularem non habemus. Ad argumentum nego illud esse falsum. Et ad probationem distinguo quod solum imponebatur ad significandum illam, vel formaliter, et sic concedo, vel equivalenter, et sic nego, unde equivalenter imponebatur ad significandum omnes illos qui debent succedere isti."

71. Manderston, *Dialectica*, sig. c 5 rb-va: "licet pater baptizans imponebat illum terminum 'Sortes' formaliter ad significandum Sortem qui tunc erat, equivalenter tamen et ex consequente imponebat ad significandum omnem hominem qui poterat illi succedere per augmentum vel decrementum, manente simili anima. Hoc tamen fit diversis conceptibus mediantibus." Like Buridan, he then claimed that having the same soul is sufficient for the continued efficacy of baptism: the adult Socrates is still a Christian.

72. Soto, *Summule*, ff. xviii vb-xix rb.

appropriate kind of identity, and so do rivers. The names ‘Seine’ and ‘Tormes’ (the river that flows through Salamanca) are singular terms in the proper sense.

## Conclusion

During the sixteenth century, singular concepts remained a subject of discussion in commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics* and *De anima*, and even such Thomists as Franciscus Toletus continued to argue for singular concepts. However, while parts of Buridan’s discussion of singular terms were still very influential in the early sixteenth century, unfortunately the logicians who came after Domingo de Soto reverted to a very cursory treatment of proper names and vague individuals. We have to wait for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for a rediscovery of some of the problems that had exercised John Buridan in the fourteenth century.

## Appendix: Three Texts from Buridan

### I. Buridan, *Questiones in Metaphysicam*, VII.20, f. liiii ra-va.<sup>73</sup>

Consequenter queritur vicesimo utrum possibile est aliquam rem cognoscere singulariter sine eius sensatione.

Arguitur quod sic.

Primo, quia deus omnia cognoscit singulariter et discrete, et tamen non sentit.

Item. Per nomina singularia tu loqueris de Aristotele et Antichristo, quos tamen nunquam sensisti, et oportet illis nominibus singularibus correspondere conceptus singulares, igitur ....

Oppositum arguitur.

Primo per Commentatorem tertio de Anima qui dicit quod intellectus intelligit universale per se, sed non singulare nisi mediante sensu.

Item. Omnem conceptum meum debeo tibi posse manifestare per verba mea, sed conceptum meum singularem non possum tibi mon-

73. The punctuation and paragraphing do not reproduce that of the edition. A few emendations have been performed, but they are marked as such. Critical notes enclosed between {...} refer to the immediately preceding word.

strare per verba nisi monstrando ad sensum illud quod ego concipio. Verbi gratia, si ego cognosco Sortem quem nunquam novisti, et tu petis quid intelligo per 'Sortem', et ego respondeo tibi quod per 'Sortem' ego intelligo unum hominem †morantem† qui est magister in theologia, et sic addendo quascumque circumstantias voluero, adhuc non exprimo tibi conceptum singularem, quia talis oratio ita bene conveniret uni alteri si illi alteri convenirent ille circumstantie. Et sic videtur quod non possum concipere rem singulariter nisi monstretur ad sensum.

Ista questio est multum difficilis et forte parum usitata.

Dico ergo primo quod bene certum est quod multi sunt termini quorum quilibet pro unica re supponit, et non est possibile stante eius significatione quod pro pluribus supponat, sicut iste terminus 'deus' secundum suam significationem propriam nunquam potest pro pluribus supponere, quia impossibile est plures deos esse. Et ita etiam iste terminus 'sol' vel iste terminus 'luna' non potest pro pluribus supponere nisi fiat miraculum, quia non est possibile per naturam quod sit alius sol vel alia luna vel alius mundus, etc. Et tamen dicti termini non sunt termini singulares; immo magis sunt termini communes quantum est ex modo sue impositionis, quia non repugnat illis terminis ex modo sue significationis supponere pro pluribus. Si enim per [possibile vel] impossibile esset alius deus vel alter sol vel altera luna, predicti termini sine nova impositione supponerent pro illis sicut supponunt pro iis que nunc sunt, et tantum {tamen *ed.*} ex parte rerum significatarum repugnat quod supponant pro pluribus, sed {licet *ed.*} ex tali repugnantia non vocatur terminus singularis. Et sic etiam dicendum est quod predictis terminis non correspondent conceptus singulares, immo conceptus specifici et communes, quia quantum est ex modo concipiendi non repugnat quod talis conceptus sit indifferenter plurium rerum.

Postea etiam dico quod de pluribus individuis eiusdem speciei habemus bene conceptum supponentem pro uno solo illorum individuorum sine sensatione illius. Et hoc est ex appositione plurium [liiii rb] proprietatum quarum collectio in nullo aliorum invenitur, ut dicit Porphyrius. Verbi gratia, ista oratio 'primus rex Francie Christianus' non supponit nisi pro uno determinato homine, et tamen isti orationi non correspondet conceptus singularis, sed congregatio plurium conceptuum communium, cum illa oratio sit composita ex terminis communibus.

Sed dubitatio est magna de impositione quam cotidie facimus et maxime in syllogismo expositoryo ....

Sed iterum est dubitatio de illo termino 'Antichristus'. Et ego credo quod ex modo sue impositionis non est terminus singularis, quia com-

ponitur ab ‘anti’ quod est ‘contra’, et ‘Christus’, quia finget se Christum, et non erit, quia magis erit contra eum. Et huic orationi non correspondet conceptus discretus; immo si essent plures se fingentes Christum et existentes contra Christum, quilibet esset Antichristus.

Sed maior est dubitatio de isto termino ‘Aristoteles’, utrum sit terminus singularis, et utrum correspondeat ei conceptus singularis. Et ego credo quod bene fuit terminus singularis, et impositus fuit secundum conceptum singularem, scilicet quando Aristoteles denominabatur, dicebatur enim ‘iste vocetur “Aristoteles”’, et quia nos credimus quod secundum conceptum singularem illud nomen fuit impositum, ideo reputamus semper istum terminum tanquam singularem. Tamen credo quod in nobis qui non vidimus Aristotelem non correspondet illi nomini [liiii va] conceptus singularis quia in dicendo quid intelligo per Aristotelem non posset dici nisi unum hominem, philosophum magnum, de tali loco, qui fecit talia, et sic de aliis circumstantiis. Ista omnia convenirent alteri si fuisset alter talis cum Aristotele, sed tamen quia de facto non fuit talis alius, ille conceptus noster correspondens huic termino ‘Aristoteles’, et etiam iste terminus ‘Aristoteles’, non supponit apud nos nisi pro uno solo.

Et sic finaliter videtur michi esse dicendum quod nullus est conceptus singularis nisi sit conceptus rei per modum existentis in presentia et in prospectu cognoscentis tanquam illa res appareat cognoscenti sicut demonstratione signata, et istum modum cognoscendi vocant aliqui intuitivum.

Verum est quod per memoriam bene concipimus rem singulariter per hoc quod memoramur hoc fuisse in prospectu cognoscentis, et per talem modum illud cognovisse. Et sic memorando de Sorte quem vidi, iterum concipio ipsum singulariter, licet ipsum non videam. Sed si eum non vidissem, non possem de eo formare conceptum supponentem pro eo solo nisi per congregationem circumstantiarum communium.

Similiter etiam in somnio bene res concipimus singulariter, quia per modum existentium in conspectu nostro, unde apparent nobis signate in conspectu nostro, sed sepe illi conceptus sunt ficti, quia non habent in re extra convenientem correspondentiam. Non est enim inconveniens quod sint conceptus singulares ficti sicut et communes.

## II. Buridan, *Questiones in Physicam*, I.10, f. xiii va-vb.<sup>74</sup>

Questio decima est consequens ad precedentem, scilicet utrum Sortes est hodie idem quod ipse erat heri, posito quod hodie additum est sibi aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} ex nutrimento et conversum in substantiam eius, vel etiam posito quod ab eo est aliqua pars remota ut si amputata est sibi manus.

Arguitur primo quod non sit idem, quia sequitur quod totum esset idem cum sua parte, et sic totum esset sua pars, cuius oppositum dictum est in alia questione. Consequentia patet ponendo quod illud quod hodie additum est Sorti vocetur *b* et residuum totum vocetur *a*, constat quod Sortes heri erat illud *a*, et si est hodie idem ipse est adhuc illud *a*, et tamen *a* est pars eius distincta contra *b*, ergo etc.

Iterum si manus que hodie amputatur vocetur *b* et residuum *a*, tunc Sortes heri erat *a* et *b*, cum totum sit sue partes, et ipse hodie non est *a* et *b*, cum *b* sit ablatum, ergo non est idem quod heri.

Iterum sequitur quod illud quod esset totum corruptum remaneret adhuc idem quod ante, quod est impossibile, cum dictum sit secundo de Generatione<sup>75</sup> quod corruptum non potest reverti idem numero. Consequentia probatur ponendo casum quod hoc dolium sit plenum vino, et illud vinum ponatur continere centum vel mille guttas, tunc si ille mille gutte fuerint {fuerunt *ed.*} corrupte totum hoc vinum erit corruptum, et tamen remanebit hoc idem vinum. Probatio ponendo casum quod quilibet hora una illarum guttarum defluat per fundum et corrumpatur et per os supra una gutta aque ad replendum apponatur. Constat quod post remotionem prime gutte et appositionem alterius adhuc erit idem vinum quod ante. Pari ratione sicut Sortes est idem licet sit aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} appositum ex nutrimento et aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} deperditum a calore consumente; et pari ratione si iterum auferatur una gutta et apponatur alia, adhuc erit idem et sic semper. Tunc ergo per mille horas omnes ille mille gutte erunt corrupte, et sic totum illud vinum erit unum corruptum, et tamen adhuc remanebit idem vinum.

Oppositum arguitur quia reverteretur opinio Eracliti quod non contingeret eundem hominem {*K* : equum *ed.*} intrare bis eundem fluvium quia continue {*K* : continuo *ed.*} mutaretur per continuam nutritionem et fieret alius quam ante.

74. The printed edition ("ed.") has been corrected with the help of ms. *K* = København, Det kongelige Bibliotek, Ny kgl. Saml. 1801, 2, the readings of which have been taken from the transcriptions in Pluta 2001: 53-59.

75. Arist. *GC* 2.11.338b16-17.



Iterum sequitur quod hoc nomen ‘Sortes’ non esset nomen discretum quia supponeret pro pluribus et diversis, licet prius et posterius sicut hoc nomen ‘tempus’.

Iterum quod augetur manet idem, ut habetur primo de Generatione,<sup>76</sup> et tamen augetur per appositionem aliquarum partium ex nutrimento.

Item sequitur quod ego nunquam alias vidissem te quem nunc video, sed vidissem unum alium; et periret actio iniuriarum et retributio bonorum. Tu enim non es ille qui heri me percussit vel qui heri defendit me ab inimicis, quare ergo peterem emendam vel quare deberem tibi retribuere?

Iterum sequitur quod tu qui hic es non fuisti baptisatus sed unus alius, ideo tu non es Christianus.

Iterum eodem die corrumperentur multi Sortes et generarentur multi alii quia in hac hora iste Sortes est et in hora precedente non erat, sed unus alius qui modo non est, ergo iste hodie est genitus et iste corruptus, cum generatio {*K* : generatum *ed.*} sit mutatio de non esse ad esse et corruptio econverso.

Non querimus de idemptitate secundum speciem vel secundum genus, sed de idemptitate numerali {*K* : naturali *ed.*} secundum quam hoc esse idem {*K* : *om. ed.*} illi significat hoc esse illud et tunc ista questio faciliter solvitur per distinctionem. [vb]

Tripliciter consuevimus dicere aliud alicui esse idem in numero.

Primo modo totaliter, scilicet quia hoc est illud et nichil est de integritate huius quod non sit de integritate illius et e converso. Et hoc est propriissime esse idem numero; et secundum istum modum dicendum est quod ego non sum idem quod ego eram heri, nam aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} heri erat de integritate mea quod iam resolutum est, et aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} etiam heri non erat de integritate mea quod post nutritionem est de substantia mea. Et sic dicebat Seneca in epistola ad Lucillum, que incipit ‘quanta verborum’, “nemo idem in iuventute et senectute, immo nec heri et hodie. Corpora enim nostra rapiuntur fluviorum more”.<sup>77</sup> Et ad istam intentionem locutus est bene Eraclitus quod sic continue mutamur, et non contingit {*K* : convenit *ed.*} eundem hominem {*K* : equum *ed.*} totaliter bis intrare fluvium et totaliter eundem. Et ad hunc modum capiendi ‘idem in numero’ procedunt bene rationes que fiebant in principio questionis ad probandum quod Sortes non sit idem hodie quod Sortes erat heri.

76. Arist. *GC* 1.5.321b12-13.

77. Sen. *Ep.* 58 (VI.6).22.

Sed secundo modo aliquid {*K* : aliud *ed.*} dicitur alicui idem partialiter, scilicet quia hoc est pars illius, et maxime hoc dicitur si sit maior vel principalior, vel etiam quia hoc et illud participant in aliquo quod est pars maior vel principalior utriusque. Sic enim dicit Aristoteles nono Ethicorum<sup>78</sup> quod homo maxime est intellectus, sicut civitas et omnis congregatio maxime est principalissimum, prout allegatum est in questione precedente, et exinde etiam proveniunt denominationes totorum a denominationibus partium. Et ita manet homo idem per totam vitam, quia manet anima totaliter eadem que est pars principalior, immo principalissima. Sed sic non manet equus idem, immo etiam nec corpus humanum.

Et sic bene est verum quod tu es ille idem qui a quinquaginta annis citra fuit baptisatus, maxime cum hoc nobis conveniat principaliter ratione anime, non corporis. Et possum te prosequi super iniuriis vel teneor ad remunerandum tibi, quia etiam opera iniuriosa vel meritoria sunt principaliter ab anima, non a corpore. Et sic etiam non dicimus te generari hodie quia non dicimus aliud generari simpliciter nisi generetur secundum se totum vel secundum eius partem maiorem vel principalem.

Sed adhuc tertio modo et minus proprie dicitur aliquid alicui idem numero secundum continuationem partium diversarum in succedendo alteram alteri. Et sic Secana dicitur idem fluvius a mille annis citra, licet proprie loquendo nichil modo sit pars Secane quod a decem annis citra fuisset pars Secane. Sic enim mare dicitur perpetuum, et iste mundus inferior perpetuus, et equus idem per totam vitam, et similiter corpus humanum. Et iste modus idemtitatis sufficit ad hoc quod nomen {*K* : nullum *ed.*} significativum dicatur discretum vel singulare secundum communem et consuetam locutionem que non est vera proprie. Non enim est proprie verum quod Secana quem ego video est ille quem ego vidi a decem annis citra. Sed propositio conceditur ad istum sensum quia aqua quam video que vocatur Secana et aqua quam tunc vidi que etiam vocabatur Secana et aqua etiam que intermediis temporibus fuerunt et vocabantur quelibet in tempore suo Secana continue fuerunt in succedendo ad invicem. Et ex idemtitate etiam dicta secundum huiusmodi continuationem dicimus hoc nomen 'Secana' esse nomen discretum et singulare, quamvis non ita proprie sit discretum, sicut esset si maneret idem totaliter ante et post.

78. Arist. *EN* 9.8.1168b31-35.

Et per hec dicta apparet manifeste quomodo sit dicendum ad omnes rationes que fiebant, et quomodo procedunt viis suis, etc.

### III. Buridan, *De Anima* III. 8, ed. Zupko 1989: 77-79.<sup>79</sup>

... Et ab hoc, dico corollarie esse credendum quod tu non potes intelligere Aristotelem per modum simpliciter singularem, quia nunquam cognovisti eum per modum existentis in prospectu tuo. Et verum est quod bene cognoscis singulariter hanc vocem ‘Aristoteles’ vel hanc vocem ‘homo’ quae tibi proponitur, quia audis eam per modum existentis in prospectu auditus tui. Sed rem significatam isto nomine tu non cognoscis per modum simpliciter et proprie singularem {singulare *ed.*}, quia tu nunquam cognoscis Aristotelem distincte a Platone vel Roberto, nisi per circumscriptionem tibi datam ab aliquibus: ut quod Aristoteles fuit unus homo natus in Graecia; discipulus Platonis; consultor Alexandri, qui composuit tales libros. Modo talis circumlocutio non est secundum conceptum simpliciter singularem, quia ponamus, sive sit verum sive sit falsum, quod unus alter homo habuit similes condiciones. Tunc illa circumlocutio ita conveniret isti sicut illi; nec magis per talem circumlocutionem intelligeres unum quam alium. Sed tamen, verum est quod illud nomen ‘Aristoteles’ fuit impositum ad significandum eum secundum conceptum singularem, quia demonstrantes eum in prospectu suo dixerunt ‘Iste puer vocatur “Aristoteles”’. Et illam sententiam Aristoteles intendebat in septimo *Metaphysicae*, ubi dicit quod non contingit singularia definire,<sup>80</sup> immo nec circumloqui circumlocutione propria, oportet enim circumlocutionem fieri, [78] ut dixi, per plurima nomina, et illa essent convenientia aliis, vel possibilea convenire, ut si alia singularia generarentur similia: verbi gratia, dicit Aristoteles, “si quis te definiat, dicit ‘gressibile’ aut ‘album’ aut aliquid aliud quod in alio sit”, etc.

Sed tu quaeres: Nonne hoc nomen ‘Aristoteles’ est nomen singulare et individuum? Et ego dico quod nomen vocale non debet dici universale vel singulare nisi ex eo quod sibi correspondet conceptus universalis vel singularis.

Porphyrus autem tetigit tres modos singularium: scilicet ‘Sortes’, ‘hoc album’ et ‘Sophronisci filius’.<sup>81</sup> Modo propriissime, ille modus

79. I have corrected some typographical errors.

80. Arist. *Metaph.* 7.15.1039b27-28.

81. Porph. *Isagoge* 7.19-21.

'hoc album', 'hoc veniens', etc., habet conceptus singulares sibi correspondentes quia illud pronomen demonstrativum 'hoc' non apponitur bene secundum modum significandi nisi sit cognitio rei per modum existentis in prospectu cognoscentis.

Iste autem modus singularium, scilicet 'Sortes', 'Plato', 'Aristoteles', fuerunt proprie singulares habentes conceptus singulares sibi correspondentes, quia imponebantur ad significandum res conceptas per modum existentis in prospectu imponentium, quia dicebant "Hic puer vocatur nomine proprio 'Sortes'". Sed illa nomina aliis qui non videntur illos, non sunt iam singularia, nec habentia conceptus correspondentes simpliciter singulares, sed sicut notat Porphyrius,<sup>82</sup> dicuntur singularia illis per circumlocutionem "ex [79] proprietatibus quarum collectio nunquam in alio eadem erit", vel fuit: ut per hoc nomen 'Aristoteles' intelligimus hominem generatum, sapientissimum, discipulum Platonis, etc., haec enim circumlocutio dicitur sic singularis quia non convenit nisi uni soli homini, sed non sic {sit *ed.*} singularis quod non {quod non: quoniam *ed.*} esset innata aliis convenire, non enim fuisset impossibile quod alius fuisset talis. Sed cum dico 'hic homo', impossibile est quod alius sit hic homo.

Alius autem modus singularium, ut 'Sophronisci filius', non est proprie dictum singulare, quia haec oratio 'Sophronisci filius' statim innata est convenire pluribus si Sophroniscus generat alium filium. Sed solo eo hoc nomen dicitur singulare: quia de facto, non convenit pluribus. Et manifestum est quod secundum talem impropriam locutionem seu intentionem isti termini 'sol', 'luna', etc., dicentur termini singulares, qui tamen sunt termini specifici.

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82. Porph. *Isagoge* 7.21-23.

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