OCKHAM'S SUPPOSITION THEORY
AND EXCLUSIVE NEGATIVE PROPOSITIONS

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There is considerable debate among modern commentators as to whether William of Ockham's supposition theory is a quantification theory, or more properly, whether his account of the modes of common personal supposition (MCPS) is intended to constitute a quantification theory. Ockham distinguishes personal supposition, in which a term supposits for what it signifies, from material supposition, in which it supposits for itself, and simple supposition, in which it supposits for an intention of the soul.[1] He further distinguishes discrete personal supposition, in which a particular individual is signified by a proper name or a demonstrative pronoun, from common personal supposition, in which individuals are signified more generally. Thus, the term "man" has simple supposition in the proposition "Man is a species," material supposition in " 'Man' has three letters," discrete personal supposition in "This man is an animal," and common personal supposition in "Every man is an animal."

Aspects of quantification theory enter the picture when Ockham defines three modes of common personal supposition, distinguished by the valid inferences that can be made in descending to singulars from a general term within a proposition, and to some extent by whether one can then validly ascend from one of the singulars to infer the original proposition. The supposition is determinate if one can descend via a disjunct proposition (Some S is P; therefore this s is P or that s is P or . . .) and can ascend from one of the singulars (This s is P; therefore some S is P). It is distributively confused if one can descend via a conjunct proposition (Every S is P; therefore this s is P and that s is P and . . .) but cannot ascend. Merely confused supposition is somewhat more complicated, but in brief it applies when one must descend via a disjunct predicate: Every S is P; therefore every S is (this p or that p or . . .). That these MCPS are meant to distinguish among various quantified terms is evident; the question under debate is whether this qualifies as quantification theory.

Those who argue in the affirmative generally maintain that the descent to

singulars is meant to result in a proposition, containing only terms with discrete supposition, which is logically equivalent to the original proposition containing a common term or terms.[2] As a result, they must maintain that Ockham erred, particularly in attributing distributively confused supposition to the predicate of a particular negative proposition.[3]

Those who argue in the negative maintain that Ockham never explicitly claims equivalence for the descended forms, that his theory is quite consistent when taken at face value, and that there is therefore no need to saddle him with extraneous intentions.[4] However, these commentators are then faced with the question posed by Spade: what is the purpose of Ockham's theory?[5]

In this article I shall argue in the negative, claiming that Ockham did not intend for the definitions of the MCPS to constitute a quantification theory, except perhaps in a looser sense than the term is generally used by modern logicians, and that he did not err in attributing distributively confused supposition to the predicate of a particular negative proposition. However, I shall show that he does make a different error, and that consideration of the nature of and possible reasons for this error sheds much light on the purpose he had in mind for supposition theory. But first, some comments on historical method are in order.

I

The discipline of history embraces the study of movements and trends as well as the study of individual works and events. Certainly, the historian's task would be boring if restricted to the verification of facts, but it would be relatively useless also, since facts can generally be understood properly only in relation to their settings. However, there is a danger in placing too much emphasis on the movements and trends lest they be seen to cause individual facts rather than merely elucidate them. On the contrary, it is individual facts that account for the movements and trends.

For the present purpose, it may often be useful to investigate what Ockham's predecessors and contemporaries had to say, in order to help clarify his meaning in a particular obscure passage, or perhaps to understand why he even bothered to raise some issue which may seem peripheral to his main argument. Lacking such evidence, one might be forced to consult the works of Ockham's successors, relying on the rather uncertain assumption that the topics and underlying presuppositions of scholastic debate did not change significantly over the period in question.

However, it is quite another matter to charge Ockham with error on the grounds that his theory does not match modern theories, or even those of later

scholastics. What are we to make of an expression such as "mature supposition theory" used by Priest and Read?[6] Theories don't literally mature. If they change they become different theories. It must be that "mature" is used metaphorically here, perhaps to indicate a theory that is more powerful or refined than some other similar theory. But "mature" also carries the connotation of having reached some natural goal. Indeed, Priest and Read speak of Ockham's contribution to the history of philosophy as a "new scientific development,"[7] and they assume that the purpose of Ockham's supposition theory is the same as that of "mature supposition theory," which they further take to be the same as that of modern quantification theory.

This strikes me as a rather whiggish approach.[8] "Supposition theory" is nothing more than a generalization extracted from the particular supposition theories of individual philosophers, and as such it should be accorded no higher ontological status than Ockham grants to universals. "Supposition theory" is not a figment, since it is a useful shorthand for discussing the similarities and differences among specific theories. But if Ockham's theory is in error, it is because it contains some specific error, and not because it might differ in some respect from "mature supposition theory" or from modern quantification theory. Thus with Ockham's razor we shave the Whigs.

Regarding the matter at hand, I find no good reason to label as erroneous Ockham's attribution of distributively confused supposition to the predicate of a particular negative proposition. Corcoran and Swiniarski show that this is not only consistent with, but is required by, Ockham's definitions of the MCPS, and that these definitions form a logically consistent structure.[9] Among other things, the definition of *merely* confused supposition requires that ". . . it is not possible, without a change in either extreme, to descend to singulars by way of a disjunctive proposition. . . ."[10] Now, to show that the predicate of a particular negative proposition has *distributively* confused supposition, Ockham would descend as follows: "Some S is not P; therefore, some S is not this p and some S is not that p and. . . ." This is a valid inference, even though it does not carry in the other direction, and the descended form is not equivalent to the original. But whenever it is possible to descend via a conjunct proposition (as we just did) it is also possible to descend via a disjunct proposition, so from Ockham's definition quoted above, we can infer that a term can have merely confused supposition only if no descent to singular propositions is possible under that term.[11] Thus the predicate of a particular negative proposition cannot have merely confused supposition.

Still, Ockham's treatment might be criticized as less than mature in the sense that, by altering his definitions to require logical equivalence of the descended forms, he could have produced a more powerful theory, one that

constitutes a quantification theory as well. However, as Freddoso argues, Ockham does essentially provide a theory of quantification in his treatment of the truth conditions for quantified propositions, and this is a more powerful theory than any that could be obtained by tinkering with the definitions of the MCPS.[12] Thus, I see no reason at this point to charge Ockham with error, either with regard to the predicate of a particular negative proposition or with regard to the definitions of the MCPS.

II

Ockham is not entirely free from error, though. In his chapter on exclusive propositions he says,

> Second, it should be noted that when an exclusive proposi-
> tion is negative, then the subject supposits just as it does in an
> affirmative exclusive — and the same holds for the predicate.
> For this follows: 'Only a substance is not an accident, therefore
> only a substance is not this accident.'[13]

Hereinafter I shall refer to this passage as the problematic passage, for there are two distinct problems here. One is that his example does not appear to follow. The other is that it is not clear what the example is meant to elucidate, since the last phrase of the first sentence is amphibolous.[14] Is Ockham claiming that the predicate supposits in a distributively confused manner (i.e., the same as for the predicate of an affirmative exclusive), or that it has merely confused supposition (i.e., the same as for the subject)?

With regard to the first problem, it has been observed that the example does follow if only one accident exists.[15] This is reminiscent of the way Ockham deals with universal propositions with universal predicates,[16] but in that case he is dismissing necessarily false propositions from consideration. "Only a substance is not an accident" is not necessarily false, and there is in fact more than one accident, as Ockham would be the first to admit. To avoid saddling him with such a howler, we might note that at the beginning of the same chapter he explains that the exclusive expression can be added either to the subject, the predicate, or the composition.[17] When the exclusive expression is added to the predicate, "S is P" becomes "S is only P." But when we write "Only S is P" it is not entirely clear whether the "only" governs the entire proposition or just the subject. In English we generally mean the former, and when we mean the latter we write "What is only S is P." "Tantum S est P" is similarly ambiguous in Latin, since one could properly translate "tantum" either as "only" or as the adjective "mere." It may be that what Ockham means in his example is

best rendered into English as "What is only a substance is not an accident, therefore what is only a substance is not this accident." This is not only valid, it is true as well.

But while this would solve the immediate problem, there is still something amiss. At the beginning of the section in which he shows what is required for the truth of an exclusive proposition, Ockham mentions the three ways the exclusive expression can be applied; yet in that section he discusses only cases in which it is applied to the subject or predicate. When he finally mentions the application to the composition, he says,

> For example, in 'A man is only seen by a man,' if 'only' is a determination of the composition, then the proposition has these exponents: 'A man is seen by a man' and 'A man is not other than a thing seen by a man.'[18]

And when he discusses the exclusive expression applied to the subject he uses examples such as,

> 'Only a man is not a donkey' has these two exponents: 'A man is not a donkey' and 'Everything other than a man is a donkey.'[19]

Thus, whatever he means by "the composition," he clearly means for the case in which the exclusive expression governs the whole proposition to be covered under those instances in which it is applied to the subject. Now it may be that Ockham intends to make a distinction in application of the exclusive expression to the subject between a broad sense (in which it governs the entire proposition) and a narrow sense (in which it governs only the subject). But if so, it is uncharacteristic of him not to state the distinction explicitly. Furthermore, he uses the narrow sense at most once, and that is in the problematic passage. There he equates the supposition of the subject in an exclusive negative proposition with that of the subject in an exclusive affirmative, which supposits in a merely confused manner. But the example he gives for the affirmative case uses the broad sense,[20] and it is by no means clear that the supposition would be the same in these two senses, nor even that there would be any point in introducing the narrow sense into such a comparison.

The second problem with the problematic passage ought to be resolvable by appealing to the example to see which type of descent is used, but Ockham gives only one singular instead of the complete descent, which again seems uncharacteristically lax of him. Now it seems extremely unlikely that he would take this singular as a sort of abbreviation for the disjunct predicate involved in the descent from a term with merely confused supposition, but it is at least plausible that it is meant to be one element from a conjunct proposition. Thus,

we may tentatively infer that Ockham is claiming that the predicate of an exclusive negative proposition supposits in a distributively confused manner.

However, when the exclusive expression is applied to the subject in the broad sense, "Only S is not P" can be taken to imply neither "Only S is not this p and only S is not that p and . . . " nor "Only S is not this p or only S is not that p or . . . ," since in either case there may be some other p which is not this p. Thus the predicate is not distributively confused and is not determinate; it must have merely confused supposition.[21] Indeed, the descent to a disjunct predicate follows: "Only S is not (this p or that p or . . .)."[22] This example of merely confused supposition may be more confusing than some others, but the question then arises whether "the most learned William of Ockham, the repository of every part of logic"[23] could really be mistaken, or whether there might be some other basis for claiming that the supposition is distributively confused.

<center>III</center>

As far as I am aware, there are only two possible ways to determine the supposition of a term, other than by applying the definitions directly and attempting descent within the original proposition. One way is to apply one or another of the rules that Ockham advances in his chapters on the various MCPS, but as we shall see, this will cause more problems than it would solve with regard to the problematic passage. The other way is suggested by the claim of Priest and Read, that Ockham held supposition to be invariant under logical equivalence.[24] I shall refer to this claim as the proposed rule.

Now, in his discussion of the conversion of exclusive propositions, Ockham states,

> Similarly, this follows: 'Only a man is not running; therefore everything which is not running is a man.'[25]

or in general,

(1) Only S is not P; therefore every non-P is S.

The converted form is a simple universal affirmative proposition, so according to Ockham its subject has distributively confused supposition and its predicate is merely confused. Thus it might be claimed, under the proposed rule, that the subject of the exclusive negative is merely confused and its predicate is distributively confused, just as Ockham appears to claim (without reference to conversion) in the problematic passage.

There is some support for this approach in Ockham's own words. With regard to an exclusive affirmative proposition, he states,

Thus, in 'Only what is an animal is a man'; 'animal' has merely confused supposition just as it does in the universal affirmative proposition convertible with it — 'Every man is an animal.'[26]

or in general,

(2) Only S is P, therefore every P is S.

However, Ockham does not necessarily take conversion to mean logical equivalence. He distinguishes between simple conversion, which does involve mutual entailment, and accidental conversion, which does not.[27] Regrettably, he does not say whether he thinks an exclusive affirmative proposition converts simply or accidentally, though we might be safe in assuming that the conversion is simple, based on a statement from the *Elementarium logicae.*

. . . in this proposition 'Only man runs' the term 'man' supposits in a purely [merely] confused manner, because the proposition is logically equivalent to the proposition 'Every running thing is a man,' in which the term in question supposits in a purely confused manner.[28]

Also, it was generally agreed by the scholastics that the converted form was equivalent in this case.[29] On the other hand, while Ockham does state that an exclusive affirmative proposition converts to a universal affirmative, he also notes that "a universal affirmative proposition is only converted accidentally,"[30] i.e., "Every S is P" converts to "Some P is S." Furthermore, the matter is not even this clear in the case of the exclusive negative, since Ockham's example of conversion of this type of proposition involves the creation of a negative (or infinite) term from an affirmative term. This raises two questions, one about existential import, and the other about the mode of supposition of negative terms.

With regard to the first question, let us take "non-P" as the predicate of an exclusive affirmative proposition. We can convert, following Ockham's example in (2) above, as follows:

(3) Only S is non-P; therefore every non-P is S.

The consequent portions of (1) and (3) are identical, so if these conversions are truly simple (i.e., mutual), then we can conclude,

(4) 'Only S is not P' is equivalent to 'Only S is non-P'.

Does this mean that an exclusive negative proposition is simply a disguised version of an exclusive affirmative, which might explain why Ockham attributes the same MCPS to their terms? I think not. Ockham would not accept (4) because he was careful to distinguish between propositional negation and terminal negation.[31] The reason for the distinction has to do with existential

import, at least in the case of simple categorical propositions.[32] Thus, "A chimera is not a man"' is true since it makes no claims as to the existence of chimeras, while "A chimera is a non-man" is false unless at least one chimera exists, according to Ockham's interpretation, and he further takes chimeras to be impossible. Now it may be that such existential considerations do not affect the mode of supposition.[33] But since Ockham would reject statement (4), we must conclude that at least one of the conversions (1) or (2) is not necessarily simple, and therefore that one cannot safely determine the modes of supposition of the exclusive propositions by applying the proposed rule in this case.

With regard to the second question, there seems to be no way to relate the MCPS of P *simpliciter* to the MCPS of P in the expression "non-P." Ockham's chapter on negative terms discusses them only as they appear in the predicate and says nothing about supposition.[34] He does deal to some extent with the effect of negation on the mode of supposition in his chapter on distributively confused supposition, but only with regard to predicate negation. He concludes this section with the following:

> A general rule is that if anything makes a term stand confusedly and distributively, it is either a sign of universality, a negation, or an expression equivalent to a negation. Nevertheless, it does not always happen that a term incorporating a negation makes a term stand mobily. This is clear in the case of the expression of exclusion in an affirmative proposition, for there it is not the subject but the predicate that supposits confusedly and distributively. However, in an exclusive negative proposition where the expression of exclusion is added to the subject, both subject and predicate have confused and distributive supposition.[35]

We might hope to deduce from this passage something about Ockham's understanding of how the mode of supposition of the subject is affected by a negative term. But recalling his statement in the problematic passage that the subject of an exclusive negative proposition has merely confused supposition, all we can deduce is that Ockham himself is merely confused, since he directly contradicts himself here.[36] Furthermore, there is no point in attempting to resolve the contradiction by applying any of the rules that Ockham himself advances, since the passage just quoted is itself the rule he advances to cover the case in question.

There is one more hope for applying the proposed rule, though. If anything can be claimed to be logically equivalent to an exclusive proposition it is its exponents, which Ockham discusses in his chapter on exclusive propositions under the second section, "what is required for the truth of an exclusive

proposition."[37] The exclusive affirmative is expounded as follows:[38]

$$
\text{Only S is P} = \begin{array}{c} \text{(some) S is P} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{No non-S is P} \end{array}
$$

while the negative becomes,

$$
\text{Only S is not P} = \begin{array}{c} \text{(some) S is not P} \\ \text{and} \\ \text{Every non-S is P.} \end{array}
$$

Here we are faced with the problem that Priest and Read raise in their discussion of empty terms.[39] The MCPS of the respective terms in the two exponents do not agree, so how can one infer a single mode of supposition for each of the terms in the exclusive proposition? For the affirmative case, let us assume for the sake of argument that we are justified in disregarding the first exponent as merely stating an existential requirement.[40] If "Only S is P" is thus logically equivalent to "No non-S is P" (and the predicates do both have the same MCPS, i.e., distributively confused) then it might be assumed that the negation of the subject term alters the merely confused supposition of S in "Only S is P" into the distributively confused supposition of "non-S" in the universal negative proposition which stands as the second exponent. However, this approach is of no help in the central problem regarding the exclusive negative. As to the first question, "(some) S is not P" carries no existential import for Ockham, so it cannot be disregarded as merely stating an existential requirement. And as to the second question, if "Only S is not P" is equivalent to "Every non-S is P," the conclusion we would be led to is that the predicate of an exclusive negative proposition has merely confused supposition, just as the predicate of a universal affirmative.

Thus, I must conclude that Ockham really did err in attributing distributively confused supposition to the predicate of an exclusive negative proposition, as he does at least once, and possibly twice. Furthermore, the proposed rule has turned out to be something of a chimera itself. It may work in a few simple cases, but in general it cannot even be applied.

IV

Finally, I would like to speculate on what might have led Ockham to make such an error. The amphibology employed in the problematic passage, as well as the failure to distinguish between the broad and narrow senses of the application of the exclusive expression to the subject, suggest the possibility that Ockham was deliberately fudging in order to cover up a perceived

inadequacy in his supposition theory. There is in fact such an inadequacy, and while it is impossible to know for certain whether Ockham was aware of it, it is tempting to assume that he was, since his hypothetical refusal to confront it would then reveal much about his view of the purpose of supposition theory.

The inadequacy is that merely confused supposition is defined in terms of the predicate only: " . . . but it is possible to descend by way of a proposition with a disjunctive predicate. . . . "[41] Modern commentators tend to generalize this so that any term can be said to have merely confused supposition.[42] Loux notes that,

> Ockham's definition suggests that only the predicate terms of
> E* propositions can exhibit merely confused supposition, but in
> other contexts he explicitly tells us that the notion has a more
> general application.[43]

He does not identify the other contexts, however, and I am aware of only four.

Two of these refer to the subject of an exclusive affirmative proposition, but here Ockham appeals to the fact that such a proposition is convertible to a universal affirmative, in which the *predicate* has merely confused supposition.[44] In the other two contexts Ockham extends the usage of the term "supposit" with an explicit caveat. He allows that the term "man" in "At every time after Adam some man existed" can be said to have merely confused supposition " . . . if we so extend the term that part of an extreme can stand or supposit."[45] And when he deals with the supposition of "horse" in "A horse is promised you," he even takes the trouble to move the term into the predicate ("I promise you a horse") before attempting a descent, and remarks that,

> . . . strictly speaking 'horse' does not exhibit merely confused
> supposition. It does not supposit at all since it is merely part of
> an extreme.[46]

Thus, while Ockham is willing to speak loosely when necessary (and he seems to find it necessary only when discussing the standard problem cases of the scholastics), he clearly prefers to attribute supposition only to entire extremes, and merely confused supposition only to entire predicates. The problem with an exclusive negative proposition is that *both* extremes have merely confused supposition. Furthermore, this is not a case in which the term "supposit" is applied loosely, nor will any amount of rewording make the problem go away.[47] It seems to me that Ockham would have two ways out of this difficulty, and it is significant that he pursues neither.

One way out would be to claim that an exclusive negative proposition is merely a sophism, that it is nothing more than the definition of a negative term:

"Only non-A is not A." Many of the interesting examples of exclusive negative propositions can easily be altered into exclusive affirmatives: "Only a man is not free from sin" becomes "Only a man sins." Examples which do not contain negative or privative terms have another problem. "Only a substance is not an accident" is, strictly speaking, false, since a proposition, for example, is neither a substance nor an accident. In order for an exclusive negative proposition to be true, the subject and predicate must exhaust the universe of discourse, and this is possible only if one term is defined as the negative of the other, or if the universe of discourse is arbitrarily limited. But Ockham wants supposition theory to apply as much as possible to natural language, in which the universe of discourse is not limited to some pre-analyzed subset, and this suggests that he does not view supposition theory as a tool of syntactical analysis.[48]

The second way out would be simply to alter the definition of merely confused supposition to allow descent to a disjunct subject term as well as to a disjunct predicate.[49] However, this would allow for propositions (such as the exclusive negative) in which it is not possible to descend to propositions with singular subjects, and such a descent should always be possible under the definitions of the MCPS as Ockham gives them. Does his failure to take this approach mean that he has an implicit priority of analysis rule?[50] No, because he does not claim that the descended forms are logically equivalent to the original propositions: he is not doing quantificational analysis at all.

I think Ockham does have what might be called an implicit priority of reference rule. His chapters on subject and predicate in his theory of terms contain strong echoes of a more restricted notion of propositions, in which subjects refer to things and predicates refer to properties of things.[51] "Subject," he says, has two senses: one with respect to existence (in which it is synonymous with substance) and another with respect to predication. The latter sense itself has three senses, two of which involve truth, and in only one sense is a subject "that which can be the subject of any proposition, true or false."[52] Predicates, on the other hand, are defined only in relation to subjects.

Now all this may seem to be in direct contrast to Ockham's theory of truth conditions, which requires that the subject and the predicate supposit for the same things, and which thus appears to put the subject and predicate on equal footing. However, even in his theory of propositions Ockham still shows evidence that he considers the predicate to be less ontologically critical. For example, the chapter on negative terms, certainly an ontologically thorny issue, treats them only in the predicate. More significantly, Ockham declines to recognize the fourth (copulative) MCPS, which is required if a second universal expression is allowed to distribute the predicate in a universal propo-

sition.[53] Rather, he dismisses such cases since "every universal proposition in which the predicate is taken universally is false if the subject or predicate is predicated of more than one thing,"[54] and nowhere does he discuss how the predicate of "Every S is every P" might be said to supposit. This may be rather inconsistent with his willingness to discuss supposition in affirmative propositions with chimeras as subjects, which also must be false, but the inconsistency reveals a view of propositions in which the subject has a more important role. The supposition of subject terms must be carefully accounted for, while odd things that happen in the predicate may be swept under the rug of merely confused supposition without the need for further and finer distinctions.

This characterization may seem tantamount to calling Ockham's theory immature, but the objection (and most of the apparent inconsistencies) will vanish if only we assume that the entire purpose of Ockham's supposition theory is to establish a theory of reference[55] that does not require extramental universals. Common personal supposition is required in order to handle quantified terms, and the distinction between determinate and distributive common personal supposition may be seen as a rudimentary quantification theory. As Priest and Read point out,[56] the further distinction of merely confused supposition was introduced in order to avoid attributing simple supposition (and hence a reference to an extramental universal) to the predicate of a universal affirmative proposition (which, as far as Ockham was concerned, refers only to individuals). Ockham's definitions of the MCPS are sufficient, at least for this purpose. If one finds it convenient to squeeze medieval theories into modern pigeonholes, one would have to say that Ockham does quantification theory, semantic theory and truth conditions all more thoroughly in his theory of propositions, and it is pointless to try to make his supposition theory handle these duties. After all, as a theory of reference, supposition theory must deal with the real world as well as the ways in which we talk about it, and that should be quite enough to ask of it.

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NOTES

1. Michael J. Loux, trans., *Ockham's Theory of Terms: Part I of the Summa Logicae* (hereinafter referred to as SL I) (Notre Dame, 1974), ch. 64. The distinctions which follow are from ch. 70.

2. The most complete case is made by Graham Priest and Stephen Read, "Merely Confused Supposition: A Theoretical Advance or a Mere Confusion?" in *Franciscan Studies* 40 (1980), 265-97. Paul Vincent Spade, "Priority of Analysis and the Predicates of 'O'-form Sentences," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976), 263-70, argues similarly in a more restricted vein.

3. See section I below. Michael J. Fitzgerald, "Ockham's Implicit Priority of Analysis Rule?" *Franciscan Studies* 38 (1978), 213-19, assumes that Ockham intends the MCPS definitions to provide analysis of quantified propositions, but still manages to find him consistent with regard to the predicate of a particular negative proposition. However, Fitzgerald's approach will not work for an exclusive negative proposition, in which there is nowhere to begin his sort of analysis.

4. The most complete case is made by John Corcoran and John Swiniarski, "Logical Structures of Ockham's Theory of Supposition," *Franciscan Studies* 38 (1978), 161-83. Others in this camp include Robert Price, "William of Ockham and *Suppositio Personalis*," *Franciscan Studies* 30 (1970), 131-40; Gareth B. Matthews, "*Suppositio* and Quantification Theory in Ockham," *Nous* 7 (1973), 13-24; and Hermann Weidemann, "William of Ockham on Particular Negative Propositions," *Mind* 88 (1979), 270-75.

5. Spade, 270.

6. Priest and Read, 274.

7. Priest and Read, 270.

8. See Sir Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), who argues against the tendency of certain of his contemporary historians to view the past as progress toward the present.

9. Corcoran and Swiniarski, 175. Their demonstration that merely confused supposition cannot apply to the predicate of a particular negative rests on the ascent criterion in Ockham's definition. (See also Weidemann, 274.) But that criterion is not crucial to Ockham's definition, as the following discussion shows, and it may even be rather inconvenient (see notes 22 and 53).

10. SL I, ch. 70, p. 201.

11. Ockham states this more explicitly in *Ockham's Theory of Propositions: Part II of the Summa Logicae* (hereinafter referred to as SL II), trans. Alfred J. Freddoso and Henry Schuurman (Notre Dame, 1980), chapter 17, p. 139. See also note 20 below, and the discussion by Priest and Read, 272-73.

12. Alfred J. Freddoso, "Ockham's Theory of Truth Conditions," in *Ockham's Theory of Propositions*, pp. 22-23.

13. SL II, ch. 17, 140.

14. The amphibology is perhaps even more obvious in the original: " . . . subiectum supponit sicut in exclusiva affirmativa, et predicatum similiter." See Philotheus

Boehner, Gedeon Gal and Stephen F. Brown, eds., *Guillelmi de Ockham Summa logicae* (hereinafter referred to as the critical edition) (St. Bonaventure, N.Y, 1974), p. 304, lines 230-33.

15. See the critical edition, p. 304, note 5.

16. See below, sec. IV and note 54.

17. SL II, ch. 17, 132.

18. SL II, ch. 17, 140.

19. SL II, ch. 17, 133.

20. "But this does not follow: 'Only a man is running; therefore only this man is running or only that man is running,' and so on for every other man. Nor does this follow: 'Only a man is running; therefore only this man is running and only that man is running,' and so on for each man. And so the subject term in such a proposition has merely confused supposition." (SL II, ch. 17, 139.) This also confirms that Ockham intends merely confused supposition to apply whenever no descent to singular propositions is possible.

21. As noted by Priest and Read, 288, but see also note 25.

22. Actually, there is a problem here too, since the ascent criterion does not hold; i.e., "Only S is not this p, therefore only S is not P" is not valid. However, as observed in sec. I and note 9 above, this is not crucial to Ockham's definition of merely confused supposition. Thus, we may be generous enough to consider this case as merely confused supposition in a broad sense, since none of the MCPS definitions applies strictly here. We might be tempted to assign the fourth (copulative) MCPS, since the disjunctive descent to "Only S is not (this p or that p or . . .)" is equivalent to "Only S is not this p and not that p and not . . . ," however, Ockham doesn't recognize this mode (see section IV and note 53 below).

23. Johannes Eckius (1516), quoted by Priest and Read (p. 291) along with their evidence that Ockham did not recognize the fourth MCPS.

24. Priest and Read, p. 293 and note 31. It is not entirely clear that Ockham would accept this as a general rule, for he is speaking loosely with regard to supposition (see also section IV below) in the passage cited (SL I, ch. 72, 208):

> The response to the fourth difficulty is that in the proposition 'He is deprived of sight,' the word 'sight' does not actually supposit. The reason is that it is only part of an extreme. Nevertheless, to the extent that it can supposit, it supposits confusedly and distributively; for the proposition is equivalent to 'He has no sight' where 'sight' is negatively expressed in a confused and distributive manner.

25. SL II, ch. 23, 163. This is, incidentally, precisely the way Weidemann converts "Only pigs don't fly" in order to claim that the predicate has distributively confused supposition (p. 274). It is apparently also incidental that this is precisely what Ockham appears to claim in the problematic passage, since Weidemann cites neither passage. Priest and Read, who argue (p. 288) directly against Weidemann, also make no mention of Ockham's statements on the subject.

26. SL I, ch. 73, 213. This is the same conversion (indeed, the same example) that he gives in the chapter on conversion of exponible propositions, SL II, ch. 23, 163.

27. SL II, ch. 21, 154-55. Ockham's description of accidental conversion is consistent with what we now refer to as conversion by limitation.

28. Quoted and translated by John Swiniarski in "A New Presentation of Ockham's Theory of Supposition," *Franciscan Studies* 30 (1970), 201. Care must be taken not to place too much emphasis on this evidence in view of the problem of authenticity of the *Elementarium*.

29. E.J. Ashworth, "The Doctrine of Exponibilia in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Vivarium* 12 (1974), p. 148, rule A4.

30. SL II, ch. 21, 156.

31. See Freddoso, p. 63, and SL II, ch. 12, 120.

32. Ockham apparently counts exclusive propositions as categorical (see SL II, ch. 1, 81), but not as simply categorical (see SL II, ch. 23, entitled "On the conversion of propositions which are not simply categorical, e.g., exclusives . . ."). In general, the scholastics counted any proposition with a subject, copula and predicate as categorical, and this included exclusives (see Ashworth, 141).

33. In SL II, ch. 14, 123, Ockham says, "if the terms supposit significatively, then 'A chimera is a chimera' is, strictly speaking, false, since it implies a falsehood." That is, while the term "chimera" must be connotative rather than absolute, since there can be no chimeras, and it can thus signify only secondarily (see SL I, ch. 33, 114, on secondary signification), it can nevertheless supposit significatively. See also Ockham's response to the second objection in SL I, ch. 72, 206, discussed by Priest and Read, 286. Whether they are right to characterize this response as an *ad hoc* stipulation raises interesting questions about Ockham's views on the supposition of empty terms, questions which are, regrettably, beyond the scope of this article.

34. SL II, ch. 12.

35. SL I, ch. 74, 214. I have corrected the word "inclusion" in the third sentence to "exclusion" based on the critical edition, line 49.

36. This contradiction was noted in the margins of two different MSS of the *Summa logicae* (see p. 304, note 4, of the critical edition). Note that the contradiction stands under any interpretation of the problematic passage.

37. SL II, ch. 17. This section, mentioned in the first paragraph, extends from the bottom of p. 132 to the top of p. 139, and deals mostly with improper and secondary uses of exclusive expressions.

38. These statements are generalized from the examples given on p. 133. The "(some)" has been inserted for clarity, since an indefinite proposition and a particular proposition are equivalent when personal supposition is involved (SL II, ch. 3, 91-92). One must be careful not to interpret the indefinite "A man is not a donkey" as the universal "All men are not donkeys" here. That "Only S is not P" does not have "All S is not P" as one of its exponents can be seen from an example: "Only a man is not free from sin" is true, but the Son of Man is a man and is free from sin, so "All men are not free from sin" does not follow.

39. Priest and Read, 284-86. Though they do not say so, their analysis of "Every chimera is an animal" is a close parallel to Ockham's exponentiation of a proposition involving a figment term in SL II, ch. 14. However, Ockham may have thought this

exponentiation unnecessary for a term which is accidentally empty, as opposed to a figment term, which is ontologically empty.

40. This is at least plausible, since many scholastics held that "All S is P" is exponible into "Some S is P" and "Nothing is S unless it is P" (see Ashworth, 141-42), and here the first exponent does simply state the acknowledged existential import of the proposition.

41. SL I, ch. 70, 201.

42. e.g. Priest and Read, 272, and Spade, 264.

43. Michael J. Loux, "Ockham on Generality," in *Ockham's Theory of Terms*, p. 28. By an E* proposition, Loux means an English proposition in the present tense, containing no modal terms and no categorematic terms with empty extensions.

44. See note 26. In SL II, ch. 17, 139 (see note 20), he descends directly on the subject term but, perhaps significantly, only to show that its supposition is neither determinate nor distributively confused, i.e., he never gives the merely confused descent on a subject term.

45. SL I, ch. 73, 212. See the definition of supposition in SL I, ch. 63, 189.

46. SL I, ch. 72, 207.

47. We have already seen that expounding the proposition is no help since the terms in the exponents have conflicting supposition. Also, the only candidates for simple conversion of (and thus, logical equivalence to) "Only S is not P" are

<div align="center">

Only P is not S

All non-P is S   No non-P is not S

All non-S is P   No non-S is not P

</div>

and all either contain negative terms, or exhibit the same form as the original.

48. I think Price (p. 138) is close to the truth when he contrasts supposition theory as a semantical notion against quantification theory as a syntactical device. However, he makes too strong a claim when he insists that the descent to singulars displays the truth conditions of the undescended proposition. He conveniently avoids the question of the predicate of a particular negative proposition (top of p. 138), which would belie his claim unless he argued for revising Ockham's attributions of the MCPS. Ockham's supposition theory is not a semantic theory either; Freddoso (p. 16) claims that Ockham's theory of propositions fills that role.

49. Ockham could, of course, rephrase the definition to allow descent under any categorematic term, as he seems to allow in some of his examples. But this would lead to a supposition theory as broad as grammar itself, requiring submodes of supposition dependent on the modes of supposition of other terms. Rather than opening this Pandora's box, he treats some of the standard cases of scholastic debate as exceptions in which he allows himself to speak loosely.

50. See Swiniarski, "Presentation," 209-11; Priest and Read, 208 and note 23; and especially Fitzgerald, passim. Spade, 268, would not even find Fitzgerald's priority of analysis rule sufficient.

51. SL I, chs. 30 and 31.

52. SL I ch. 30, 111.

53. See Swiniarski, "Presentation," 212-13, and the more complete discussion of this MCPS in Priest and Read, 290-95. I am not sure that Priest and Read are justified in dismissing the fourth mode on the grounds that descent via a disjunct term is always possible, since they still end up with a conjunct term. What the fourth mode involves is a descent to singulars via a conjunct term. If one holds that the descent to singulars must be logically equivalent to the undescended proposition, then one cannot dispense with the fourth mode. Even if universal propositions with universals predicates are ignored, the fourth mode would still be required to provide logical equivalents for the predicates of exclusive negative propositions or of propositions such as "The signification of the term 'humanity' is every man." And even with Ockham's approach, the fourth mode can be disregarded only if the ascent criterion is removed from the definition of merely confused supposition.

54. SL II, ch. 4, 101.

55. Freddoso, p. 6, limits this characterization even further, allowing it "only if (a) a predicate term may be said to have reference or denotation and (b) a term may be said to have reference or denotation even when it has no referent or denotatum."

56. Priest and Read, 274-75.