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## STANISLAV OF ZNOJMO EXPLAINS WYCLIF'S FIRST PRINCIPLES

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**Abstract:** The reception of John Wyclif's philosophical thought in late fourteenth-century Prague began as an embrace of his metaphysics and philosophy of language, known today as propositional realism. At the core of his philosophical approach is the identification of Truth and Being, which Wyclif describes in the first treatises of his *Summa de ente*. Stanislav of Znojmo was foremost among Wyclif's expositors and he articulates this identification in the first several chapters of his treatise *De vero et falso*. This article describes this articulation and elements in which Stanislav departed from Wyclif.

**Keywords:** Stanislav of Znojmo, John Wyclif, philosophy of language, theory of truth, complex significant

When Archbishop Zbynek ordered Wyclif's books to be burned in 1410, an obstreperous group of young theologians staged public defenses of some of these works between 26 July and 6 August. Simon of Tisnow stood with a copy of Wyclif's *Logica continuacio* in hand on 29 July and interrogated the accused text: "Have you attacked the corruption of the clergy? Do you rail against simony? Do you enjoin priests to a life of poverty? What have you done, little book?"<sup>1</sup> Perhaps using a puppeteer's voice, the treatise was

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Loserth, *Wyclif and Hus*, trans. M. J. Evans (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), 309ff, my version abbreviated. The author is grateful for the very helpful suggestions of the two reviewers of this article.

made to respond, “I have been given to innocent youths that they may learn to prove propositions and am made to overcome their sweet sensibilities by showing and teaching how universals, as much affirmative or negative for particulars may be established by logical rules [...] doubtless I am sent, innocent, to this place of damnation and burning [...]” Jakoubek of Stribro in turn defended Wyclif’s treatise on the Decalogue, *De mandatis divinis*, Procop of Pilsen defended *De ideis*, Zdislav of Zvířetice spoke on behalf of *De universalibus*, Jan of Jičín for *De materia et forma* and Hus for *De Trinitate*. Simon’s defense is the most amusing, effectively showing the silliness of condemning books about logic and metaphysics as heretical.<sup>2</sup>

This essay will explore one element of the Bohemian reception of Wyclif’s philosophical theology, specifically, that of Stanislav of Znojmo, his foremost expositor. Stanislav was initially the most able and prolific teacher of Wyclif’s thought in Prague, responsible for at least four treatises engaging with a range of subjects associated with the Oxford don. After his encounter with ecclesiastical opponents of Wyclif in 1409, Stanislav became a dedicated opponent of Wycliffism, or at least, the ideas within it judged to be theologically dangerous. The nature of Stanislav’s reversal, and the reasons for it, are both complex

<sup>2</sup> František Šmahel, “*Universalialia realia sunt heresis seminaria*. Filosofie pražského extrémního realismu ve světle doktrínalně institucionální kritiky,” *Československý časopis historický* 16 (1968): 797–818 is the landmark study of the hereticisation of Wyclif’s logic and metaphysics, which Šmahel has developed and expanded into a set of articles entitled *Universalialia realia* in his *Die Prager Universität im Mittelalter Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 467–598. See also his “Der Kampf um Wyclif und die Stimmenmehrheit an der Universität” in František Šmahel *Die Hussitische Revolution*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Schriften, vol. 43.2, ed. Alexander Patschovsky, trans. Thomas Krzenck (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2002), 788–831. Many of Šmahel’s articles surveying the reception of Wyclif have appeared in German as well as Czech. Vilém Herold’s *Pražská Univerzita a Wyclif* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1985) contains a wealth of philosophical detail not included in Šmahel’s studies. More recent studies include Martin Dekarli: “Jsou Insolubilia pulchra (*Modus solvendi insolubilia secundum magistrum Johannem Wyclif*) autentickým dílem Stanislava ze Znojma (d. 1414?),” *Studie o rukopiscích* 49.2 (2019): 105–130; “New Texts Relevant to the Reception of John Wyclif,” in *Wycliffism and Hussitism: Methods of Thinking, Writing and Persuasion, c. 1360 – c. 1460*, ed. Kantik Ghosh and Pavel Soukup (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021); *Wyclif, Pálec a nominalisté na pražské univerzitě v pozdním středověku* (Praha: Středověk, 2023); Miroslav Hanke, “Řešení sémantických paradoxů v *De vero et falso* Stanislava ze Znojma,” *Časopis pro studium řecké a latinské filosofické tradice* 7 (2012): 115–144.

topics, better left for analysis elsewhere; our interest today will be to describe his earlier position, with interest in his development of Wyclif's philosophy of language. This appears most fully in his *De vero et falso* (from here on: *DVF*), which seems to be about logic, the rules and structures by which we reason about things.<sup>3</sup>

Wyclif and Stanislav believed that there is a direct, natural correspondence between sentences we use to express our thoughts and the way things are in the world.<sup>4</sup> Many problems arise in philosophy that are the result of misunderstanding how the structure of propositions relates to how things are in the world, how terms refer to things, how verbs function in relation to nouns, and so on. But at issue is more than just how words function in propositions. There are two points of departure possible for a philosopher intent on describing the structure of reality: first, from the things that make up reality as we perceive it, and second, from the standpoint of 'ultimate reality.' The first was dominant in late medieval metaphysics, since it is Aristotle's beginning point, while the latter had been the starting point for earlier scholastics. It will not be surprising, then, that theologians intent on recovering the earlier approach begin from the latter standpoint. Rather than beginning with individual substances and describing how the Aristotelian categories predicable of them are their attributes, Wyclif and Stanislav begin with God and the divine understanding of what there is.

<sup>3</sup> Nathan Bulthuis, "Propositions," in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Richard Cross and JT Paasch (New York and London: Routledge, 2021), 5–18; Stanislav of Znojmo, "De vero et falso." *Studie a prameny k dějinám českého myšlení*, ed. Vilém Herold (Praha: Ústav pro filosofii a sociologii ČSAV, 1971). See also Stanislav Sousedík, "Tractat Stanislava ze Znojma *De vero et falso*," *Filosofický časopis* 63 (2015): 831–857; Stanislav Sousedík, "Stanislaus von Znaim (d. 1414) Eine Lebensskizze," *Mediaevalia Philosophica Polonorum* 17 (1973): 37–56; Monica Brinzei, "Stanislav of Znojmo and the Arrival of Wyclif's Remanence Theory at the University of Vienna," in *Wycliffism and Hussitism*, 245–274.

<sup>4</sup> See Alessandro Conti, "Logica intensionale e metafisica dell'essenza in John Wyclif," *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 99.1 (1993): 159–219; Laurent Cesalli, *Le réalisme propositionnel: Sémantique et ontologie des propositions chez Jean Duns Scot, Gauthier Burley, Richard Brinkley, et Jean Wyclif* (Paris: Vrin, 2007); Alessandro Conti, "Significato e Verità in Walter Burley," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 11 (2000): 317–350; Mark Thakkar, "Wyclif's Logica and Logica Oxoniensis," in *Before and After Wyclif: Sources and Textual Influences*, ed. Luigi Campi and Stefano Simonetta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

Stanislav stipulates that metaphysical certainty cannot come from unaided reason, but from a conviction that divine illumination is a necessary precondition for understanding. With this established, the mind naturally desires to understand as God wills it, and so begins with the relation of the divine ideas to created being. It is difficult to know whether Wyclif began this way, although a standard *Sentences* commentary has this structure, and several treatises in his *Summa de ente* suggest origins as sections of a commentary on Peter Lombard.<sup>5</sup> The first treatise of *Summa I*, *De ente in primo*, begins with recognition that any understanding of a substance begins with knowledge of its being, which points to a transcendent being. Likewise, in his treatise on the being of the predicables, *De ente predicamentali*, Wyclif points out that we cannot recognise there to be a plurality of things in the created world unless we admit that we are implicitly contrasting it with the concept of unity: “Just as all the other predicables are reduced to the genus of substance as primary, thus the first of this genus simply is the first of any genus, and so God is the first simply of any gens.”<sup>6</sup> So it seems likely that Wyclif had intended his readers and followers to begin from the recognition that God’s being is prior to created being. This has the philosophical structure of Aristotelianism, in that it begins with thinking of what is immediately evident and proceeds rationally to membership in a species, a genus, establishing a connection with what is ontologically prior.<sup>7</sup> While the structure is Aristotelian, though, the approach is more evocative of early scholasticism, in which the mind seeks God and begins with the most fundamental thing that is evident, which is being. A belief that divine illumination is necessary for our understanding of creation allowed Wyclif and Stanislav to order their

<sup>5</sup> Wyclif also suggests this in the beginning of his *Quaestiones et dubia super viii libros physicorum* (Venice Bib. S. Marc Lat. VI. 173): “Philosophia realis dividitur in tres partes in primam scienciam divinam theologiam vel metaphysicam que absolute considerat de ente sic quod non solum de substantia accidente corpore quantitate vel accidente alie assignando secundum dicitur omni ente et suis quidditatibus facit quantum est possibile mencionem.”

<sup>6</sup> “[Q]uod sicut alia omnia predicamenta reducuntur ad genus substantie tanquam primum, sic primum simpliciter illius generis est primum simpliciter cuiuslibet alterius generis [...]”. John Wyclif, *De ente praedicamentali*, ed. Rudolf Beer (London: Trübner, 1891), 27–30.

<sup>7</sup> See Rega Wood, “The Subject of the Aristotelian Science of Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina van Dyke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 609–621.

philosophical reasoning to the theologically defined order of God to creation. This was a position that had been common in early scholasticism, but was rarely held by the late fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Wyclif's philosophy of language and logic had been innovative, a challenge to the Ockhamist propositional theory familiar to the German students in Prague. Its threat seemed to be the ontology it supported. While the Ockhamist approach had reduced metaphysics to an austere minimum, a world consisting only of substances and our thoughts about them, Wyclif's approach revived the rich Platonism of the twelfth-century French schools, with universals, particulars, aggregates, real relations and propositions existing apart from linguistic and conceptual formulations of them. But Wyclif was not the first English logician to stimulate Bohemian students. Richard Billingham (1344–1361) had written a popular textbook on proving propositions, that is, establishing truth in the premisses of arguments. The importance of *probation* lies in identifying what is signified by a spoken proposition and what makes the proposition true. This makes his *Speculum puerorum* the beginning point for the questions Stanislav tackles in *De vero et falso*, as it was earlier for Wyclif in his *Logica continuacio*.<sup>9</sup> Šmahel estimates Billingham's treatise had arrived in Prague by the 1360s, providing a base for the reception of Wyclif's logical treatises in the early 1390s. Wyclif had also inspired several logicians in Oxford to pursue his approach and several of their works, commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, found their way to Prague, as is clear in Šmahel's analysis of Narodní Knihozná Codex VIII F 16.<sup>10</sup> Here we will begin an analysis of Stanislav's reading of Wyclif by discussing his explanation of how propositions reveal truth.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Noone, "Divine Illumination," in *The Cambridge History*, 369–383.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Billingham, "Terminus est in quem sive Speculum puerorum," in *Some Fourteenth Century Tracts on the Probationes Terminorum (Martin of Alnwick O.F.M., Richard Billingham, Edward Upton and others)*, ed. Lambertus M. de Rijk (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), 45–186.

<sup>10</sup> František Šmahel, "Eine Hussitische *Collecta de Probationes Propositionum*," in *Die Präger Universität im Mittelalter: gesammelte Aufsätze / The Charles University in the Middle Ages: Selected Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 581–598. The codex VIII F 16 also contains works by William Milverley and Roger Whelpdale (Whelpdale in Ms.).

In *Metaphysics* 8, Aristotle had said:

Now being and nonbeing are used: first, according to the types of categories; secondly, according to power or actuality of their contraries; and commonly, according to the true or the false. This use depends on things being combined or dissociated; so that he who thinks that what is dissociated is dissociated, and what is combined is combined, holds the truth, whereas he whose thought is contrary to the state of affairs is in error. When, therefore, is there or is there not what is called truth or falsity?<sup>11</sup>

The characteristic scholastic attention to the details of words and sentences in reasoning about theology has its roots in the development of the ‘modern logic’ of the twelfth century, when Aristotle’s logical works were used as the basis for innovative philosophy for the first time in centuries. By the mid-fourteenth century, William Ockham pioneered a new style of philosophical reasoning, known at the time as ‘Modern.’ Rather than study Aristotle’s logic and metaphysics using long-established presuppositions about the terms in them, he advocated a different approach. The familiar phrase ‘Ockham’s Razor’ describes his use of Aristotle’s Principle of Parsimony, which exhorts philosophers not to use many ideas to explain something when only a few are needed. The result was a pared-down understanding of how concepts, words and things are related and how they function. At the center of his approach was the understanding that the words we use and the sentences we construct with them are signs of our thoughts, which themselves are signs of our perceptions and reasoning about things. For example, the word ‘cat’ signifies a concept we use to think about cats, the name we’ve given to the feline beings who tolerate us. A sentence like “The cat is hungry” expresses an idea we have about the cat that is behaving in a manner consistent with our previous encounters with it and what makes the sentence true is our grasp of the cat’s behavior and how we understand it.

This approach placed a great deal of emphasis on the relation of propositions to thought and to things in the world. Recognising truth and falsity demanded painstaking analysis of how words, terms and names express how things are in the world and in our thoughts.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952), c. 101051a37-b6.

A division arose within the Modern movement about the terms and names we use to refer to groups of related beings, or kinds of things. This division was an outgrowth of a much older argument about the being of 'universals', but it was less about ontology than about how propositions describe it.<sup>12</sup> The shift in focus to how terms function in propositions to express truth resulted in a corresponding move away from speculating about universals as things with beings beyond their particulars, to how one could use the names that refer to them and hope to say something true. Were propositions about universals true because of their applicability to all beings, the universal term 'Humanity', names? Is such a proposition about many things – human beings in this case – or about one thing: Humanity? And if a true proposition like "Humanity is a kind associated with Animality" is about one thing, Humanity, and its relation to another, Animality, what makes it true?

Ockham's followers answered by saying that such true statements were made true by our concepts 'Humanity' and 'Animality', which naturally signify our ideas about large numbers of beings that they name. We conceptualise these groups by coining new names, 'Humanity' and 'Animality', but there really are no such things to which those names refer beyond our own concepts. Ockham's opponents were not so quick to dismiss terms such as 'Humanity' or 'Animality' as mere conceptual constructs. It is possible that such terms refer to something real that provides Human and Animal natures to people, what Aristotle called 'secondary substances' in his *Categories*. There were various ways of explaining this reality, many of which today are classified as 'moderate realism.' Wyclif represented a departure from the conventional reasoning of the 'moderate realists', most of whom were not quite prepared to admit that there is such a thing as Humanity or Animality having being other than the forms of individual people as we perceive them. Wyclif's approach, which Stanislav artfully explains in *DVF*, is to ask about the reality of the propositions we use to express the truths we understand. Are the truths about the things in the world an intermediary class of beings connecting our minds and the things outside of us? Ockham, and

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<sup>12</sup> See Alessandro Conti, "Realism," in *The Cambridge History*, 647–660; Stephen Read, "Logic in the Latin West in the Fourteenth Century," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic*, ed. Catarina Dutilh Novaes and Stephen Read (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 142–165; Guyla Klima, "Nominalist Semantics," in *The Cambridge History*, 159–172.

almost everyone else at the time, would have ridiculed such an idea as there being mind-independent truths ‘out there’ beyond our thinking them. This was Wyclif’s position, though, and Stanislav explores it in detail in the treatise.

It will be important to clarify some terms. A proposition is a statement using two kinds of terms, a subject term and a predicate term. It has the form ‘x is F,’ normally abbreviated  $Fx$ . The subject term may be simple, like ‘Socrates’ in ‘Socrates sits,’ or complex, like ‘The father of Pamphilius sits on the ground.’ It is the same for the predicate term, which is simple in the former case or complex in the latter case. Affixing a predicate term to a subject term is ‘predication,’ and for Wyclif, this is something more than making word-strings that make sense. If a predication is true, this is because the predication is expressed in the being of the subject named by the subject term. That is, ‘Socrates is the father of Pamphilius’ describes a real relation arising from the connection of Socrates to Pamphilius that is described by the name ‘paternity.’ Socrates being the father of Pamphilius matches Pamphilius being the son of Socrates, which is the relation between the two people. The being of the two people ‘bespeaks’ or expresses this relation, which when Socrates is the subject, is the predicate ‘is the father of Pamphilius,’ and when Pamphilius is the subject, is the predicate ‘is the son of Socrates.’ Explaining this use of terms and how Stanislav explains its connection to truth is the subject matter of the treatise.

Stanislav appears to have developed *DVF* as an introduction to Wyclif’s approach, and may well be evidence, along with his Commentary on Wyclif’s *De universalibus*, of the substance of his lectures on Wyclif in Prague in the 1390s and 1400s. The treatise plunges into explaining truth and falsity in things and in propositions. Each chapter develops a problem associated with linking propositional structure directly to ontological reality and God’s understanding of it.

The entire treatise is divisible into three sections. The first two chapters introduce the relation of Being to God in true propositions, establishing that God is the basis for all truth and for all being simultaneously. The next seven chapters introduce kinds of propositions and the elements of truth they describe, including truths about relations and necessity, privation and negation, conditional statements and how each corresponds to God’s understanding and willing about creation. Finally, the last chapters discuss falsity and how truths without corresponding



ontological content can make some kind of sense. Because of the tie between God's knowledge and created truth, each chapter contains elements of Wyclif's description of God's knowing, understanding and willing, as well as to Wyclif's thoughts on the differing kinds of propositions that he describes in the logic treatises. We will restrict our discussion to the first section of the treatise.

## God and the truth of propositions

The introductory chapters of *DVF* cover some very important ground. Elements of Wyclif's thought from several different treatises crop up in Stanislav's overview of the point of departure for philosophical reasoning, suggesting that Stanislav regarded this first part of the treatise as a general introduction to Wyclif's philosophical project. He begins innocently enough with the concept of truth, which will soon be revealed to be conjoined to Being, the subject of metaphysics. "We use the word 'true' to describe both statements and things," Stanislav begins.

We speak of a 'true man' or 'true gold' and of a 'true sentence' or a 'true proposition'. What do they have in common that leads us to identify them with truth? What does a lump of gold have in common with a collection of terms organised into a proposition? Metaphysical truth, as expressed in 'true gold', demands understanding of how the glistening lump of metal has properties that make it gold rather than iron pyrite. In metaphysical terms, the substance has form with essential and accidental properties that determine it as 'being gold.' What connects its 'being gold' to being true gold?

Stanislav argues that it is the place where being and truth have their foundation, which is God.

This is based on an assumption that statements or propositions have the same structure as what they describe. That is, 'This lump is true gold' and this lump being true gold have the same structure: subject (this lump) and predicate (being true gold.) Stanislav says, "the truth of a being is the way in which we speak of a true God, a true man, true gold, and so on. The truth of a proposition is held either when it is somehow true, or the truth is in it, in which it refers to the truth beyond it, which

is a true being [...].”<sup>13</sup> This position is propositional realism, in which the whole of created being is divided into facts, or individual realities, the way a computer screen is divided into pixels, with each fact having a subject and a predicate the way a pixel has a shape, intensity, and color. Laurent Cesalli effectively describes this position, developed by Walter Burley, Richard Brinkley, and Wyclif in *Le réalisme propositionnel*. Stanislav’s approach is to begin with this briefest of comparisons of things and propositions and move quickly to the connection of being and truth. Gabriel Nuchelmans explains that “we might even say that a propositional or logical truth is the ontological truth or fact insofar as it is apprehended in a propositional manner by the human mind.”<sup>14</sup>

This isomorphism between true propositions and the reality of things in the world is at odds with most scholastic thinking. After all, we may think about the things we encounter in the world by distinguishing between the being of the things and the being of what is so about those things, but why would we conclude that the way we form ideas about things naturally reflects the way things really are, outside of our thinking about them? The metaphysical structure of something in the world might be formulable into propositions we construct by converting our impressions and ideas into terms that we string together, but what allows us to be certain that reality is strung together the same way? While many medieval thinkers regarded the ideas we describe with linguistic propositions as somehow naturally connected, and that the ideas we formulate come from perceptions that naturally reflect how things are in the world, they thought that assuming that things are arranged in the world in the same way as we formulate linguistic propositions was questionable.

Stanislav provides a helpful analogy in *DVF* c. 9, suggesting that the relation of form to matter in substance functions the same as the relation of predicate to subject in a proposition. A proposition realizes a truth, and is expressed by a substantial reality, so that x being

<sup>13</sup> “Verum entis modo, quo dicimus verum Deum, verum hominem, verum aurum, etc. Verum autem propositionis ponitur ipsa propositio vera. Sive quidam modus in propositione, quo ipsa denominatur vera, ultra hoc, quod ipsa est verum ens [...].” *DVF*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Nuchelmans, “Stanislaus of Znaim (d. 1414) on Truth and Falsity,” in *Mediaeval Semantics and Metaphysics: Studies Dedicated to L. M. de Rijk*, ed. Egbert P. Bos (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 313–338, citation on page 315.

F bespeaks 'Fx,' in which F is so of x. Take 'The cat is white.' The cat is like the matter and being white is like the form. Being white is not something that can simply be realised without having a material thing as its ontological basis, so the material being of the cat functions as the subject in which being white is manifest. This analogy, Stanislav warns, is simply to explain how propositions function in articulating truth; the ontological subject remains the cat, and the ontological predicate is its being white, which is what is expressed in 'The cat is white.' It is only when thinking about the proposition that we can consider subject and predicate being related as matter and form.<sup>15</sup>

But this does not explain why a fact is true. Here Stanislav directs the reader to the nature of the Trinity, in which the being of a thing has its origin in God the Father, as power, the truth of the thing in God the Son, as Word, and the goodness of the thing from God the Holy Ghost, as divine will.<sup>16</sup> Nuchelmans explains:

Since the truth that every man is a man can be nothing but Humanity as it is common to every man, God's saying that every man is a man amounts to his being the exemplary cause according to which the universal form of humanity is in every man [...] Since God's conceptions determine what there is and in particular that the things which have being are what they are, the truth that is said by God coincides with the metaphysical truth that consists in the fact that a thing is what it is.<sup>17</sup>

So if we take Fx, x being F, as grounded in God's being, then if being F were necessary for x for x to exist, God would know 'Necessarily Fx' before Fx were true in creation. But God's understanding is not mediated by propositions the way our understanding is. We know Fx by saying or thinking 'Fx,' while God eternally understands Fx.<sup>18</sup> So what is the intelligibility of Fx in God? As we know from the matter of divine ideas, this intelligibility is nothing other than the divine essence existing intentionally.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *DVF*, 159–170.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Nuchelmans, "Stanislaus of Znaim," 316.

<sup>18</sup> *DVF*, 45–46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 53. Stanislav discusses the divine ideas at greater length in *De Universalibus*, 3–16. See John Wyclif, *Miscellanea philosophica*, ed. Michael Henry

What are we to do with this? As presented, this leads to many questions. If God is the ultimate truth foundation for all understanding, it is one thing to say that this lump is true gold because God understands the true gold to have *N* essential properties and understands that this particular quantity of matter is arranged as ‘*N*.’ But what about truths with more complexity, like ‘There are no chimeras,’ ‘Antichrist will come,’ ‘Peter will lie before the cock crows,’ or ‘If it is raining, the streets are wet’? This is the subject matter of Stanislav’s treatise and its purpose is to provide a reliable account of how more complex truths reflect created reality as well as how their truth is connected to God’s understanding. So *De vero et falso* is not simply a logic treatise; it explores the implications of Wyclif’s thought in several of his philosophical works, including *Logica continuacio*, *De logica tractatus tercius*, the first three treatises of the first part of the *Summa de ente*, namely *De ente in communi* [I.i], *De ente primo in communi* [I.ii] and *Purgans errores contra veritates in communi* [I.iii] and four treatises on God from the second part of the *Summa de ente*: *De ideis*, *De sciencia Dei*, *De intellectione Dei*, and *De volucione Dei*.

## What Stanislav assumes you already know about Wyclif

But there remain many basic questions to which answers are assumed to allow it to be taken as a starting point for understanding created being and truth. Why are being and truth necessarily identified within God and does this mean that the first created truth is created being? Stanislav plunges ahead into the question about negative facts like ‘No man is an ass’ and what makes them true, leaving these underlying issues unaddressed. Accordingly, we need a reliable account of the nature of Being as such before we can begin to make connections between the truth and the false.

It is likely that Stanislav presupposes the contents of the first three treatises of the *Summa*, of which there is only one manuscript in Europe, Wien ONB 4307, dated to 1433.<sup>20</sup> There may have been an earlier one

Dziewicki, (London: Trübner, 1905), II, in which the treatise is incorrectly attributed to Wyclif.

<sup>20</sup> Franz Unterkircher, *Die datierten Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek von 1401 bis 1450*. Katalog der datierten Handschriften in lateinischer Schrift in Österreich (Wien: Böhlau, 1971), II: 87–88.

in Prague, but if so, no evidence remains. The three treatises together amount to 26 folio pages of some of the most dense texts Wyclif wrote. They may have been notes for a commentary on *Metaphysics* VI, Aristotle's discussion of the scope and subject matter of metaphysics, as they make references to some of the same questions posed by Aquinas and Scotus in their respective commentaries on this book. The three treatises introduce the fundamental principles of Wyclif's thought but demand familiarity with the Aristotelian commentary tradition.

S. Harrison Thomson edited the first treatise of the first part of the *Summa*, *De ente in communi*, and published it with the second treatise of the first part, *De ente primo in communi*, in 1930. Wyclif's readers have long grumbled about the difficulties involved in reading his Latin works but this first treatise may well win the prize for being the most opaque of all his philosophical works. Thomson provided a summary of the argument in his edition, which accurately describes the structure of the treatise, but explains very little about its subject. It may be that Wyclif intended this treatise to do for his philosophical project what *De esse et essentia* did for Thomas's metaphysics. That is, it begins where Aristotle begins his explanation of the starting point of metaphysics and lays out all the most basic elements of this, the most basic science. In his *De esse et essentia*, Thomas described the three ideas with which he begins: first, being is the most basic of things to be known, second, being can refer to things or to truth in propositions, and third, there are other basic principles with which we begin to reason aside from knowledge about being.<sup>21</sup> Thomas describes the first basic principle as Aristotle does in *Metaphysics* I c. 2, 982a 25, saying that it is best to begin with simple things and proceed to the complex ones. Wyclif's first chapter has the same structure, even if his reasoning is different from Thomas's.

Whenever we say something about a thing, Wyclif begins, we are really doing two things. We are saying, 'There is this thing, and here is something true about it.' We know this because when we perceive a thing and form knowledge about it, we import an idea about something while doing so, namely that there is something rather than nothing about which we are thinking. This imported idea is what Wyclif calls

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 21–44.

‘Being to be in common’ (*ens esse in communi*).<sup>22</sup> Say that we see a horse, and say, ‘That is a lovely horse.’ We are doing several things. First, we perceive the horse as something in the world and identify it with equinity, an idea we already have in our minds, thanks to our knowledge about kinds of animals. Next, we compare what we perceive of this horse against our previous experiences with horses and decide that this is a lovely specimen. So, we express our decision by indicating the perceived horse with the word ‘that’ and predicate ‘is a lovely horse’ about it. But tedious and exact as this description may be, it needs to be slowed down even more. First, we perceive that there is something there rather than nothing. Next, like other beings we have encountered, it falls into a general classification scheme, it has a body, it seems to be alive, so it is an animal of some kind. In this case the animal kind is one we’ve already encountered; it is a horse. In order to run down the list of ‘being, in a body, living, animal, horse,’ we have to recognise that this fits into the general class of something rather than nothing. This horse must first be seen to have being, which makes ‘having being’ our first indicator that something is there. If we imagine that we see something out of the corner of our eye and turn and perceive that there isn’t anything there, we say, ‘Oh, it was nothing.’ This is another way of saying that the subject of the sentence that seemed to be there turned out to be an illusion, not really anything.

This is what Wyclif refers to with his phrase, “Being to be in common.” If something is ‘in common,’ it is shared by many things. Universals are shared by many – is Being a universal? It is one thing for something to have being, but is there Being apart from individual somethings? Here, Scotus’s reasoning helps to clarify Wyclif’s position. In his first question on *Metaphysics IV*, Scotus takes up the assertion that “There is a science that investigates being as being.” (1003a21).<sup>23</sup> He notes that Avicenna distinguished between saying that something has being, and that a property of something has being. Saying Socrates exists is not the same as saying that Socrates’s whiteness exists, but they have something important in common: for both Socrates and

<sup>22</sup> John Wyclif, *Summa de ente: libri primi, tractatus primus et secundus*, ed. Samuel Harrison Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 7.14.

<sup>23</sup> John Duns Scotus, *Questions on the “Metaphysics” of Aristotle*, trans. Girard J. Etzkorn and Allan B. Wolter (Saint Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997), I: 255.

his whiteness, we can correctly say that they exist. This, Scotus says, is the most basic predicate, *esse existere*, to be existing. Suppose we say, 'Diaphaneity exists,' without knowing to what the term means. Diaphaneity is being held to be something, whether substantial or accidental we do not yet know. All we can say is that *esse existere* is true for Diaphaneity, even if all else is confusion.<sup>24</sup> If the next thing that we do is think about the nature of Diaphaneity, whether or not it is substantial or accidental, we concentrate our attention on the *esse quid* of Diaphaneity. But in doing so, we have introduced a sharper focus on it. Without that focus, without wondering whether it is a substance, quality, relation, action, or whatever, all we are left with is recognition that Diaphaneity is something rather than nothing. This is what Wyclif means when he says, "I know this to be, therefore I know this to be what this is, consequently, I know being to be *esse existere* in this way, so I know being to be."<sup>25</sup>

It was a commonplace among scholastics to distinguish between the 'order of being' and the 'order of knowing.' Simply, if we describe the world as it is, we engage in a description based on the order of being, while if we describe the world based on how we encounter it, we are describing according to the order of knowing. Aristotle, Wyclif explains, holds that the natural way to proceed using reason, innate within us, is to begin with what is prior and most common in nature. We have just reasoned that the most basic beginning point is Being and this is the starting point both for the order of being as well as for the order of knowing.

In linking the orders of being and knowing to Being, Wyclif introduces the convertibility of being and truth. Aquinas made this case in *De Veritate* Q. 1 a. 5, establishing God as both primary Being and first Truth.

If we conceive of truth for the truths of true creatures that inhere within us, as we come upon them in the world, and in the created understanding, this truth is not eternal...if we consider the truth of true creators, which are designated true for all, just as an extrinsic measure, which is the first Truth [...] this first Truth cannot be for all things unless it is one.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, 274–275.

<sup>25</sup> Wyclif, *Summa de ente*, 1.22–23.

<sup>26</sup> See: Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regenry Company, 1952), p. 5. Q. 1 a. 5.

But Wyclif's argument proceeds differently. It seems as though he moves from discussing Being as we encounter it as the first object of science, to Being as the basis for our knowledge of things, which exists in common across all beings that we recognise as the basis for our knowledge of beings.<sup>27</sup> Wyclif uses the convertibility of being and truth to describe the ontology that lies behind his propositional realism, so he may sound like Thomas Aquinas or Scotus, but he is using their approaches to his own end.

His end was startling to his contemporaries. If Being and Truth are convertible terms, and Truth is propositionally structured, then so is Being. This he describes in *De logica* c. 5 with a distinction between five kinds of propositional being. The first three are familiar. There are mental propositions (concepts), vocal propositions (spoken statements) and written propositions (statements made in written language.) Then there are real propositions, such as this man or this stone, because in this man there is a person who is a subjective part of the human species. This man has a human nature and since this relationship holds for as long as this man is a man, having a human nature is so for him. If it is so, it is true, so this man having a human nature is a truth, and so, is a real proposition. This is not the same as it is to say the being of this man expresses something existing having a human nature. Such an expression is a manifestation of the real proposition, a truth signified distinct from the thing, which corresponds to a *complex significabile*.

### Rejecting the *complex significabile*

Two of Wyclif's contemporaries, Adam Wodeham and Gregory of Rimini, argued that when I think to myself, 'It's true that the road is slippery,' I am recognising the truth about reality – that the road is slippery – which signifies a slippery road. The ontological status of 'that the road is slippery' is different from my thinking 'that the road

<sup>27</sup> That is, he seems to begin with Aquinas's equation of Being with Truth in *De veritate* and shift to an univocal understanding of a common Being shared by all in existence, creature and creator, as Scotus had argued in his commentary on *Metaphysics*. Because we are not tracing the Thomism or the Scotism in Wyclif's thought, all that we need to do here is indicate that his approach takes aspects of each in formulating an approach to Aristotle's concept of Being.



is slippery' and agreeing with it, and from the being of the icy road. Wodeham argued that this fact is what I am agreeing with and that it is what is so about the icy road, distinct from the road itself. Gregory expanded the definition to include false propositions as well. That is, if I think 'That painting is not a Caravaggio' when I see it labelled as by him, I am denying the truth of 'This is a Caravaggio' that is expressed by the label's having 'by Carravaggio' written on it. That there could be a falsity existing apart from my thought as a *complex significable* was also Wyclif's position. He held that a true proposition refers to the *complex significable* expressed by what the proposition is about and that a false proposition refers to the *ens logicum* corresponding to the absence in the world that is incorrectly described by the proposition.<sup>28</sup> The principle difference between Wyclif and Stanislav is the latter's rejection of *complex significables*, which, as we will see, makes his articulation of Wyclif's position difficult. The absence of the *ens logicum* to which our true statements about the world correspond is explicable by Stanislav's semantics of propositions, to which we will now turn.

The metaphysically true statement 'Fx' comes from x being F, and understanding this requires understanding the relation between substantial forms, and accidental positive and privative forms. Wyclif held that created beings express, or bespeak their truth, and God is the foundation of the being of every created truth. 'Fx' is true because God understands that x is F; if it were necessary to x's being that it be F, without which x could not exist, God would know that it is absolutely necessary that Fx even before x becomes F in time. This understanding, Stanislav explains, does not occur through the mediation of words or propositions, as ours does, but God is capable of articulating understanding in this fashion for our revealed truths in Scripture. The intelligibility of Fx to God is nothing in itself because the divine essence is absolutely unified, yet this intelligibility has intentionality towards created being. The question that follows for Stanislav, is whether our reference to Fx as a truth about the world, when we say 'Fx is true,' is

<sup>28</sup> Laurent Cesalli, *Le réalisme propositionne*, 381: "Une proposition vraie a pour signifié premier un ens logicum vrai parce qu'instancié dans le monde, cette instanciation étant son signifié second et la cause de sa vérité. Une proposition fausse a comme signifié premier un ens logicum faux parce que dépourvu d'instanciation dans le monde." See also Laurent Cesalli, "Propositions: Their Meaning and Truth," in *The Cambridge Companion*, 260–261.

the reference to the *complex significable* 'Fx' or is it just to Fx? A *complex significable* is not God, and it is not a creature, so it has no place in the discussion. Yet there are so many kinds of true propositions that do not correspond directly to things that exist in the world, things that God knows eternally and that we come to know, that there must be a way of understanding how they are true. For example, 'There was a first moment of Time' is true but it doesn't refer to anything that exists now. What makes it true?

The answer, Stanislaw begins, is by organising the truths we recognise about things. This organisation process was a familiar element of medieval logic, in which truths are classified as Categorical if they are about a subject and a predicate, and Hypothetical if they are two categorical truths joined by a mediating particle. Stanislaw has primarily been talking about categorical truths thus far and will return to them for a large part of the book, but he begins with Hypothetical truths. Wyclif describes the reason why there are seven kinds of Hypothetical truths in his *De logica tractatus tertius*, explaining that the first eternal truth is God's existence. When the first caused truth occurs, namely that being in common exists, the basis for the first Hypothetical truth is established, namely the conjunction of 'God exists' and Being in Common exists. This leads to the recognition that there are two distinct truths, which leads to the possibility of creating disjuncts (a or b). These allow us to construct copulative and disjunctive statements and to recognise that, in the example of God's being and Being in common coming into existence, the former causes the latter, making for causal truths (because of a, b). With this relation established, we can recognise a basis for comparing truths because God's being has to precede Being in common's existence. Thus far, there are four kinds of Hypothetical truths: copulative, disjunctive, causal and comparative. Finally, Wyclif concludes, God can create if desired, when desired, and where desired, allowing for conditional, temporal and location Hypothetical truths.<sup>29</sup>

Stanislaw begins his explanation by observing that we easily recognise truths about relations between things and divide them into

<sup>29</sup> John Wyclif, *Tractatus de logica*, ed. Michael Henry Dziewicki, 2 vols. (London: Trübner, 1897). This edition is from one Ms. only and is generally recognised to be faulty. I have used Prague IX E 3, 1r, in addition, but understand that the manuscript of the Assisi Biblioteca Communale 662 is likely to be the most reliable version.

conjunctions (a and b) and disjunctions (a or b). For conjunctions, both of the truths must be so for the union to be so, and for disjunctions, both may be true but one must be true for the combination of the two to be true. These disjunctions are confusing because there are cases, like 'Socrates speaks' or 'Socrates does not speak,' in which only one of the two propositions can be true at any given time. This suggests the basic distinction between 'inclusive disjuncts' and 'exclusive disjuncts.' This is the difference between 'Do you want the salad or the dessert, or both?' and 'Are you married or single?' There are a number of truths that are structured this way. There are truths that have a place in common, or a time in common or a causal relationship in common. All have these two senses, they can be understood as two truths that are consonant with one another, as in 'This is so or this is so' and 'This is so and this is so.' Or they can be understood as consonant by virtue of how they agree, as in 'At this place, this is so and this is so,' or 'Right now, this is so or this is so' or 'This is so because this is so.' The difference between these two senses by which to take such truths is the difference, Stanislav says, between matter and form in a substance.<sup>30</sup>

Consider a substance, say a golden bell. We distinguish between what it is made of, its matter, gold, and its form, bell-shaped. If the golden bell is analogous to a true proposition, there is that which is what the proposition is about and the form of the proposition, the gold and the bell-shape, respectively. The gold considered in itself is malleable, able to take any number of forms by which it could be defined. Now if we have two bells, a golden bell and a silver bell, we have two bells at once. This possibility is one thing, called 'There being two bells at once' and we already have two other things, namely 'To be a gold bell' and 'To be a silver bell.' Certainly, nobody would say that there are three bells. What distinguishes these statements is that we have added 'and' to the two categorical propositions: 'This is a gold bell' and 'This is a silver bell.' By constructing 'This is a gold bell and a silver bell,' I have suggested a new kind of being by introducing a new form, namely a conjunction. What the new statement signifies is not one thing, but an aggregate. Is the aggregate something other than the two things?

This is not as simple an issue as it may appear, particularly for a follower of Wyclif. There being a golden bell is a truth signified by

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<sup>30</sup> *DVF*, 60–66.

the golden bell and it is the same for there being a silver bell. What is signified by the truth ‘There is a golden bell and a silver bell’? Is it just the two bells or is it the union of the two that is signified by the proposition? One might say that there is no difference between saying ‘Look, there is a gold bell. There is a silver bell.’ But if there were no difference, why is the syncategorematic term introduced, if not to suggest a combination of the two truths? Stanislav is using this simple species of hypothetical proposition, the conjunction, to suggest that there is something really different about all of these species of hypothetical propositions. They all seem to suggest that they are about something more than the two subjects involved. Take the causal proposition: ‘The streets are wet because it just rained.’ What is being signified by the combination of these two facts? Is it something other than the two facts alone? We might want to say so, because the statement could be in response to the question, ‘Did somebody open a fire hydrant again?’ Wyclif believed the *complex significable* of a causal truth, formulated as the hypothetical proposition ‘The streets are wet because it rained,’ is something apart from it having rained and wet streets. Stanislav is arguing that nothing new has been brought into being by introducing a syncategorematic term like ‘because’ to unite the two categorical propositions. One might as well say that the combination of two people makes a third person, which is the force of Stanislav’s analogy between a categorical proposition and a substance.

### Where is the truth?

At this point, Stanislav appears to recognise that the time has come to reveal what lies behind the questions about True and False he has been discussing. There appear to be two texts directing his reasoning, the first is Scotus’s Commentary on *Metaphysics* VI and the other is Anselm’s *De veritate*. This is not an odd combination; both describe how truth is in things and how that truth reflects in our statements about them. Stanislav is explicit in his comments on the former and never mentions the latter text. I will argue that the last part of *De vero et falso* is best understood as his attempt to do as Wyclif has already done in I.i and I.ii, namely yoke Anselm and Scotus into a philosophical team.

In *Metaphysics* VI c. 4 Aristotle distinguishes between the true and what is true, saying that the latter are not things in themselves but are only in the mind. Otherwise, what is good would be true and what is evil would be false. When we use our concepts of things, we combine and separate them in our minds, and this is where truth and falsity arise. Stanislav responds, saying that these statements arising from combination and separation are still metaphysical truths. “[...] so to be true and truly to be that every good is good is a truth metaphysically said, and truth thus said is a metaphysical object holding itself distinct from the existence of the thing.”<sup>31</sup> There is a complex commentary tradition on the *Metaphysics* VI from which this discussion arises, to which Stanislav nods when he cites Thomas’s position. Laurent Cessali’s *Le réalisme propositionnel* traces this effectively, showing how Wyclif’s position arose from Scotus’s response to Aquinas as well as from Burley and Richard Brinkley’s response to Scotus. This is a complex issue, and the best we can do in this section is to describe Aquinas and Scotus as well as Stanislav’s version of Wyclif’s position. Stanislav introduces the discussion this way.

Consider four speech acts performed by four different people: Peter says, ‘Esse,’ Paul says ‘Est,’ John says ‘Esse est’ and James says ‘Esse non est.’ Nobody would say that Peter and Paul are saying anything to which we can assign a truth value but people could say that what John says is true, while what James says is false. The truth and falsity arises from composition and division, which is what the intellect does when it moves from the name of a subject to saying something about the subject. In his commentary on 1027b29-29, Thomas says that while the understanding contains within itself an image of something known, just because it has used that image, it does not follow that the intellect analyses it until it uses it by combination or division in reasoning. Just having the image of a man in mind does not yield a truth; it is when one takes that image and combines it with a predicate, say ‘Man is a rational animal,’ that truth or falsity becomes associated with the

<sup>31</sup> “[I]deo proprie vere esse et verum esse, quod omne bonum est bonum, est veritas methaphysice dicta, et veritas sic dicta est obiectum metaphysicum a parte existencie rei se tenens.” *DVF*, 146.

image. “Hence it is evident that truth is not found in things, but only in the mind, and that it depends upon combination and separation.”<sup>32</sup>

In his *De veritate*, Aquinas explains that it may seem that truth is said of a thing, which acts upon the human understanding when we recognise the thing, suggesting that the truth is in the thing before it is in our minds, but this is a mistaken ordering. Truth arises in our minds when we understand the thing and then recognise that what we understand matches how the thing is. Augustine, he reflects, recognised that there are many things of which we have no understanding, but which are knowable. The reason for this, Aquinas continues, is that these things are understood in the divine mind and that our minds thereby have the *potentia* to understand them.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas explains that truth and falsity may be said to be in things when a statement is made about them that either does or does not articulate in words the proper form that is within the being. But truth and falsity is not really something in the thing; it is the product of a statement about it. Scotus summarises Thomas’s position in his commentary on 1027b29-34, beginning with Thomas’s position from *ST Ia IIae Q. 3 a. 7*. The intellect is naturally drawn to what is so, so it regards the truth as bespeaking the being that is its subject. Given what Aquinas says in his *Metaphysics* commentary, Scotus understands Thomas as having said that the understanding develops the true from a cognition and its combination or separation within a proposition.<sup>34</sup> We form the proposition and are drawn to true ones, from which we recognise that something is so, making propositional truth prior to the being of the subject of the proposition. That is, I perceive the cat sitting by the door and construct a proposition reflecting that reality as well as understand the proposition to be true, from which we understand the being of the cat sitting by the door.

This cannot be the way things work, Scotus says, not least because when we understand the cat sitting by the door as something comprehensible, we have already recognised the being of the act of the intellect representing that fact. It is better to distinguish between truth in reality and truth in the intellect. Truth in general is in a thing when we

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s “Metaphysics,”* trans. John P. Rowan (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 422, 1236.

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, Q. 1 a. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Scotus, *Questions on the “Metaphysics” of Aristotle*, 60–62.

consider the thing in relation to its exemplar in the mind of its maker. In our example, the truth is in the cat at the door by virtue of its being a likeness to its exemplar in the divine ideas. If the cat were not sitting, but hovering, then the truth would presumably not be in the cat, given that God did not create cats to hover.

There is also a sense in which truth is in the thing in comparison to the intellect that understands the thing. This sense is the closest Scotus comes to the starting point of Wyclif's position. There are three ways a thing is true when it is considered by the understanding but prior to the truth being in the intellect. First, when I perceive the cat, I am perceiving it as a cat in the state of being a cat. "It manifests itself as to what it is, to any intellect able to know it as such."<sup>35</sup> Second, it is true insofar as it can be received as such by the intellect, so the cat being a cat is something that can be perceived as true by our minds. Third, once the intellect has made it an object of understanding, the cat is something known by us.

Now consider how the truth is in me, knowing the cat to be sitting by the door. I recognise that anybody else would understand that there is a cat sitting by the door, then I recognise this as something that can be turned into a knowable proposition by the understanding, and finally, having done that, I perceive the fact of the cat sitting by the door as something I know. This makes six senses in which there is truth in the thing, three in which the truth arises from a relationship between the thing and what makes the thing so and three in which the truth arises from the relation between the thing and what understands the thing to be so. Scotus notes that if the thing were not understood to be so, the first three senses would still apply, "each thing according to its entity would be suited to manifest itself."<sup>36</sup>

In the next part, truth is in the intellect in two ways corresponding to the two operations of the understanding, simple apprehension and judgment.<sup>37</sup> In the former, falsity is not an option; we are not in a place to decide whether or not something is so because either we apprehend

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<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 66. This means that a tree falling in the forest would certainly make a sound, if there were somebody there to hear it, it would be heard, but if not heard, it would still be a sound. Cesalli explains this very lucidly in his *Le réalisme*, 145-154.

<sup>37</sup> Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle*, 67.

it as so or we remain ignorant of it altogether. We make judgments about the truth or falsity of a proposition about the thing only after the proposition is formed through composition or separation. Can something 'be false' in reality? No, because "The false is that which lacks identity to that which appears to be, and falsity is the non-identity of the being as manifested to the being [...]"<sup>38</sup> The simple object signified by the simple concept is not, in itself, simple at all. But as the significate of a concept, it has no existence beyond its being as such. When we connect the simple object to a predicate of some kind, we are doing nothing to the being of the thing as such, because if the proposition is true, all it is doing is reflecting what is so. Truth and being are not both objects of metaphysics, then; truth considered as in the intellect is not the concern of the metaphysician, but unlike the being that is the subject of composition or separation, the truth that results from such a proposition is a product of the intellect. In summary, Scotus admits to there being three senses in which truth is in extramental being, in that it is something open to the intellect, but the mind that understands the extramental being is the primary location of truth. Falsity arises when there is an absence of identity between what is declared to be and what is. The false statement does not signify a not-being; it arises from composition or separation in the mind that fails to capture the being of the subject. Because there are no 'false beings,' there is no concern for significates of false statements beyond the intellect that formulates them.

Returning to Stanislav's discussion of Peter, James, John and Paul's speech acts, it seems that he is endorsing Scotus's position because the falsity in James's statement arises from his failure to understand. The question of whether there is falsity in 'Esse non est' does not arise. Further, Stanislav has rejected the idea of a complex significable. What is signified by a false proposition, thereby making it false? 'Chimera exists' is not about anything but what about 'God does not exist?' These are two different statements about two different beings but neither say nothing. To say and believe the former is simple foolishness but to say and believe the latter is a sin. What is false in a proposition that fails to express what is so functions in our thought, Stanislav says, the way that the truth of 'Peter is at fault' does. There is a propositionally

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 70.



structured statement that fails to correspond to a propositionally structured extramental reality. While 'Peter is at fault' does not refer, 'that Peter is at fault is true' does; likewise, while 'God does not exist' signifies nothing, 'That God does not exist is false' is a truth, signifying God's necessary existence.

Consider a related statement: 'God cannot refer to this, which is insignificant.' If the opposite were true and God could refer to such a thing, a contradiction would arise. So what does the statement signify? Stanislav suggests that we compare this to the use of a zero in math, a sign used to stand for a value used only to define other numbers. As mentioned, a sin has secondary being as a means whereby God can implement justice. False propositions are like this; they lack a primary being to reflect, yet they do not say nothing. So they have a secondary signification, giving truth to other propositions. Stanislav suggests that we think of this secondary signification as arising from a proposition primarily lacking representation of truth, a propositionally structured absence. He suggests that such truths 'designify' rather than signify. In holding 'God does not exist,' if we were to think that it primarily signifies God's non-existence, then God's non-existence must be real somehow. But this cannot be so. So we should think that the statement has several senses. Since 1) 'God does not exist' does not signify God not existing, it fails, but 2) 'God does not exist' thereby signifies an emptiness, and this second signification arises from the falsity of the primary signification. It is a designification of the truth, rather than a signification of falsity.

Returning to 'God cannot refer to this, which is insignificant,' the term 'insignificant' does not primarily signify what cannot be signified because if it could, the insignificant would be significant. So 'insignificant' designifies the significant, which allows it to signify what cannot be signified without contradiction. This is not simple word trickery; Stanislav's point is not to invent a 'behind the back' signification system. His regular comparisons to sinning as analogous to falsity suggest a broader truth about error. If a false proposition designifies the true, which means that the proposition appears to function by signifying one thing, but instead signifies its negation, then our use of them must arise from a similar act within us. That is, when we will evil, what we are really doing is putting a falsity in the place of a truth and

expressing our affirmation of it. That affirmation is not real willing, it is sin, or false willing.

This is not Stanislav's innovation; Anselm explains this in *De casu diaboli* to show how, when we talk about what is ontologically nothing, we are saying something rather than nothing. Let us say that 'Fx' signifies if x is F, but it designifies if  $\sim Fx$  is so, because the proposition does not say nothing, but it does not say what is so. The signification of 'Fx' is empty but functions as a placeholder for the act of signification, as Stanislav has explained. If 'Fx' designifies  $\sim Fx$  and I say, 'Fx' intending to deceive, I choose falsity over truth, which is not a true choice but false, evil willing. This false choice seems to be as much an act as true choice is because both are acts of the will. Anselm begins to address this false willing by saying that 'falsity' and 'evil' do not fail to signify, so even if what they signify are absences, they still signify. "How, then, is evil nothing if what the name 'evil' signifies is something?" Anselm's student asks. The Teacher develops the question, "Given that there is no difference at all between being nothing and not being something, how can one say what that something, which is not something, is?"<sup>39</sup> There is no way to signify that which is absent. In 'No dogs are fish' one must use the term 'dog' to rule out being a fish as predicable of them. So when we think about the falsity 'Fx,' it does not signify Fx because there is no 'x being F,' yet 'Fx is False' is a truth. How is this so? "It signifies by excluding; it does not signify by including [...] it is not necessary that nothing be something just because its name signifies something in a certain way."<sup>40</sup>

This may describe what is happening when we use words to signify what is not there, but it does not explain why this signification works this way. There is no fault in correspondence of proposition to fact, even if there appears to be one. "You see, the form of the expression often does not match the way things are in reality."<sup>41</sup> Some verbs inherently deceive us into thinking that something is being acted upon when, in fact, there is no action. 'I fear bees' seems to have me having some active relation to bees, but the truth is, 'Bees cause fear to arise within me' is more accurate. Again, 'I ignore tulips' suggests that I am actively

<sup>39</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *De casu diaboli*, in *Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 183–184, c. 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 185.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 186.

doing something to tulips, when in fact I am not doing anything at all; I am simply not paying any attention to tulips. The structure of the language, Anselm explains, suggests that activity is occurring when the opposite is true. In the same way, 'No dogs are fish' does not suggest that there are 'no dogs' somewhere to which being a fish applies. The connection to the apparent being of what lacks being depends upon signifying what is absent, rather than what is present. To say 'Fx is True' when  $\sim Fx$ , is to make a false statement. What is said is not nothing but really signifies what is not present, namely a statement of the form ' $\sim Fx$  is True.' Using Anselm's reasoning this way, Stanislav develops this idea of designification to explain negative affirmations and to show how false propositions function.

## Conclusion

While the association of John Wyclif with the beginnings of the Hussite movement is usually articulated in terms of ecclesiology, eucharistic theology and other practically applicable issues, the reception of his philosophical thought has received less attention outside of Czech scholarship. Stanislav of Znojmo's reputation in this has most commonly been restricted to a small part in the criticism of Jan Hus and his associates. In this essay I hope to have introduced the reader to the philosophically complex reading of Wyclif that Stanislav taught in Prague before 1409, and in so doing, shed light on a part of the resurgence of interest in Platonism as it was interpreted in light of fourteenth-century thought. The reaction against Ockham has been described in Czech literature but a detailed analysis of the logic and philosophy of language that typified Prague philosophy in this period must begin with Stanislav of Znojmo's *De vero et falso* and *De universalibus* considered as articulations of Wyclif's *Summa de ente*. I hope to have provided the reader egress into these treatises.

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