TANTUM UNUM EST. 13TH-CENTURY SOPHISMATIC DISCUSSIONS AROUND THE PARMENIDEAN THESIS.

1. Introduction

TANTUM unum est. Old Parmenides would have turned over in his tomb had he known what the scholastics did to his thesis of the unity of being. Not because all scholastics discussions of the thesis totally missed the point; they did not all miss the point. Nor because most scholastics approached the thesis with the preconception that it must be wrong since they believed in the reality of plurality and change. Of course it would have annoyed the old philosopher that people continued to hold this erroneous belief more than a millennium after he had shown its untenability. But what really would have made Parmenides turn over was the way those people examined his proposal that only one is.

They did it in two different settings. They did it when reading Book I of Aristotle's Physics. Old Parmenides would probably have understood that. If people could not simply ignore that Macedonian upstart, then surely they must discuss whether his criticism of the unity thesis held water. Yet, the way the medievals presented the thesis and the argument for it might have surprised its inventor. According to Theophrastus, as reported by Alexander of Aphrodisias, as reported by Simplicius, Parmenides had argued

What is besides the being is not being
what is not being is nothing
therefore the being is one

Thanks to Averroes^ this reconstruction of Parmenides' argument was known to the West, but the Latins elaborated it into this form:

Quicquid est praeter ens est non ens; Whatever is besides the being is not being;
   sed non ens est nihil; but the not being is nothing;
   igitur quicquid est praeter ens est nihil; therefore whatever is besides the being is nothing;
   sed ens est unum; but the being is one;
   igitur quicquid est praeter unum est nihil; therefore whatever is besides the one is nothing;
   igitur tantum unum est. therefore only (the) one (thing) is.

The Westerners not only discussed the Parmenidean thesis when reading the Physics, but also when conducting sophistic exercises. A "sophisma" in the sense relevant here is not a bad argument but a proposition (often a strange one) that presents logical problems because it appears to be possible to prove
both its falsity and its truth. The scholastics had standard sophismata to illustrate problems with each of a fairly long list of syncategorematic words. For the operator of exclusion — *dictio exclusiva* — ‘tantum’, ‘only’ or ‘just’, one standard sophisma was ‘Tantum unum est’. In the sophistic context there were two standard proofs of the proposition and one standard disproof, viz.

**Proof 1.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unum est</td>
<td>One (thing) is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et nihil est quod non sit unum</td>
<td>And nothing is that is not one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ergo tantum unum est.</td>
<td>Therefore only one (thing) is</td>
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</tbody>
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**Proof 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quicquid est unum,</td>
<td>Whatever is one (thing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ergo tantum unum est.</td>
<td>Therefore only one (thing) is</td>
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**Disproof.**

1) tantum unum est,
2) non ergo multa sunt
3) < Sed multa sunt
4) ergo prima falsa >

Another relevant sophisma was ‘si tantum pater est, non tantum pater est’ “If there is only a parent, there is not only a parent”. This sophisma does not carry its connection to the Parmenidean thesis on its surface, but there is a connection, as I shall show.

In his discussion of monism in *Physics I* Aristotle points out that there is an inherent contradiction in claiming that only one thing is and also claiming that it is a principle:


*2Cf. Averroes, In libros Physicorum I.10 “Syllogismus autem Parmenidis est quod quicquid est praeter ens est non ens; et quod est non ens nihil est; ergo ens est unum.”, in: *Aristotelis De physico auditu libri octo cum Averrois Cordabensis variis in eodem commentariis*, Veretis, Apud Iunctas, 1562, fol. 10G (vol. 4 of the Juntine Aristotle; rp. Frankfurt am Main, Minerva, 1962).*

*3Thus Johannes Wakefield, *Quaestiones super Physicam*, ms Cambridge, Gonville & Caius, 344/540, ff. 264rA–277vB; qu. l.16, f. 274rB. The question starts: “Utrum haec sit vera ‘tantum unum est’. Et videtur sic per rationem Parmenidis.” Then follows the argument printed above.*

*4See, e.g., Collector Secundus, *Sophismata*, ms Paris, BN, lat. 16135, ff. 37v–103v, at f. 37vA: “De probacione sic quaeretur. Cum enim duplex sit probatio — uno enim modo probatur sic “unum est et nihil est quod non sit unum, ergo tantum unum est”, alio modo probatur sic “quicquid est est unum, ergo tantum unum est” —, primo igitur utrum prima probatio valeat erit prima quaestio, se­cundo utrum secunda valeat. § Ultimo de im­probatione, utrum valeat ‘tantum unum est, non ergo multa sunt’.”*
For a putative principle will no longer be a principle if there is only one thing — and one in that way (i.e. unchangeable) —, for a principle is of some thing or things. [Aristotle, Physics 1.2.185a3–5]

One reasonable comment on this text would be that it shows that Aristotle had realized that a principle must differ from that whereof it is a principle. It has no explanatory value to say that A is a principle of A.

The typical medieval comment is different. First the core of the Aristotelian argument is condensed into the conditional “If there is a principle, there is something whereof it is the principle” — ‘Si principium est, principiatum est.’ Next the whole argument is reconstructed along these lines:

1. If there is only a principle, there is a principle.
2. If there is a principle there is something whereof it is a principle.
3. That of which something is the principle is a different thing from the principle.
4. Therefore, if there is a principle there is some different thing from the principle.
5. If there is some different thing from a principle, there is not only a principle.
6. Hence, if there is only a principle, there is not only a principle.

Finally the crucial words ‘principle’, ‘principiate’ (as I shall henceforward translate principiatum), and ‘tantum’ are assigned to their respective logical classes: ‘principle’ and ‘principiate’ are relative terms, and mutually correlative at that; ‘only’ (tantum) is an operator of exclusion (dictio exclusiva). Now the scene is set for raising the examination of the Aristotelian argument up to a general level.

One lesson of the above argument would seem to be that if A and B are correlative terms, ‘Only A is’ implies ‘B is’. The medievals examine the question under the tide Utrum dictio exclusiva addita uni correlativorum excludat reliquum “Whether an operator of exclusion when added to one of two correlatives excludes the other.”

Another typical medieval reaction to the argument is to examine the validity of the inference ‘there is only a principle, therefore there is a principle’ which was the first premiss in the reconstructed argument. If one judges the conclusion (6) to be unacceptable — ‘if there is only a principle there is not only a principle’ — one might try to block the deduction by denying premiss (1) ‘if there is only a principle, there is a principle’. On a general level this becomes an investigation into the validity of the rule

Omnis exclusiva ponit suam praecidentem
Every exclusive proposition posits its prejacent i.e.

For any x and phi: only x phis → x phis.
The “prejacent” is the proposition from which the exclusive is formed by adding ‘only’.

A very typical medieval reaction to the argument is to treat the conclusion as a sophismatic proposition and apply the normal techniques of sophismatic disputation to it. ‘If there is only a principle there is not only a principle’ is structurally like ‘if there is only a parent there is not only a parent’. A proposition seems to imply its contradictory and the problem seems to lie in the occurrence of correlative terms and an operator of exclusion. The parent-sophisma was a traditional one and medieval masters used it as a pattern for discussions of Physics 1.2.

We thus have two types of texts to use: questions on the Physics and sophismata.

This also applies when we look at the most concise formulation of the monist thesis ‘tantum unum est’. It is a standard sophisma and it is a standard subject of inquiry in questions on the Physics. The medievals typically ask if the proposition is true and if the consequence ‘tantum unum est, non ergo multa sunt’ “Only one is, therefore many are not” is valid — the latter question can also be subsumed under the question whether an operator of exclusion excludes one of a pair of correlatives when joined to the other. ‘One — many’ are then treated as correlatives.

A standard move in a 13th-century sophismatic disputation is for the respondent to introduce a distinction to explain why both proof and disproof of the sophisma seem to work. Many of the discussions surrounding the Parmenidean thesis concern such distinctions. Is ‘unum’ polysemous in some way? Or does it somehow signify a composite entity whose two constituents can both be affected by the operator of exclusion, but each by itself, not the two together?

“The sophismata were the subject of a seminar in École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, Jan.–Febr. 1991. I wish to thank both the school and the participants in the seminar for two good months of work.


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At this point I had better confess that my paper has no thesis. It consists of a series of observations that represent a first attempt to find ways to exploit a vast, but precisely defined, source material that I have gathered in the hope that it would elucidate doctrinal and formal developments in the arts faculties of the 13th century. My material consists of (a) questions on ‘tantum unum est’ and the like from some fourteen Physics commentaries, and (b) more than a score of large-scale sophismata from the 13th or very early 14th century, all carrying the title ‘Tantum unum est’ or ‘Si tantum pater est, non tantum pater est’. I have tried to find all surviving texts of this kind from the 13th c. It will be a matter of several hundred pages when, hopefully, I manage to finish my editions and publish them. I have used the material elsewhere to demonstrate how logic affected the way people did natural philosophy already in the 13th century, not just in the 14th. Most of the texts are anonymous, some carry the names of masters of little renown — William Dalling, for instance —, and only one can be safely ascribed to a famous author: Radulphus Brito.

In the remaining part of this paper I will show first that my corpus of texts about ‘tantum unum est’ etc. may throw light on certain passages in theological works; then I will present the reader with some glimpses of the theories proposed and discussed in the corpus.

2. On the structure of 13th-century sophismata and their influence on theological works

Among the genres cultivated at the arts faculties in the thirteenth century none offered room for so careful a discussion as did the sophismata, and they even influenced the way theologians approached their problems — at least occasionally. Nowadays, most people who know of the genre at all know it from the printed editions-cum-translations of John Buridan’s and Richard Kilvington’s Sophismata, that is, works from the third and fourth decades of the fourteenth century. Each sophisma is structured like a simple quaestio with arguments for and against the truth of the sophismatic proposition followed by a solution and response to those of the initial arguments that need refuting. Some of my 13th-century texts are similarly structured, but many are much more complex; one common type contains not only proof, disproof and solution of the sophismatic proposition, but also a whole cluster of fully developed quaestiones on matters somehow related to it. Thus one sophisma may be the equivalent of a group of four or five thematically related quaestiones, such as is often found in question commentaries on Aristotle. Or, for that matter, we could compare it to one quaestio of Aquinas’ Summa Theologiae with its several articuli.

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Most sophismatic propositions contain a syncategorematic word, i.e. a function-word like ‘every’ or ‘only’ which is not a term of the propositions in which it occurs. Twelfth-century theologians worried a lot about Trinitarian or Christological propositions containing syncategoremes or other difficult words. Stephen Langton’s *Summa Quæstionum Theologiae* (1180/1210) is partly organized by difficult word. One of them is ‘solus’ “alone, only”, which is closely related to ‘tantum’, and though the proposition Langton principally wants to investigate is ‘unus solus deus non generat’ he soon starts to investigate propositions with ‘tantum’ also: ‘solus’ and ‘tantum’ are both operators of exclusion (*dictiones exclusivae*) in his terminology.

I am fairly convinced that the theologians’ interest in funny words played a role in encouraging logicians to study them and thus was co-responsible for the rise of treatises on syncategoremes and sophismata. But when we reach the second half of the 13th century the current goes the other way. A theologian remained marked for his whole life by what he had learned in the arts school. Operators of exclusion were treated in commentaries on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* 1.21, where questions were raised about such propositions as ‘solus deus est pater’ and ‘solus pater est deus’. 13th-century theologians could, and did, rely on foundations laid by such late 12th-century “dialectic” theologians as Stephen Langton and Alan of Lille, but influence from later developments in the arts is obvious.

Both Thomas Aquinas’ and Bonaventure’s commentaries on *Sentences*...
1.21 are unmistakably coloured by the logicians’ discussion of ‘tantum’ and ‘solus’ and so is the corresponding section of Thomas’ Summa Theologiae (1.31.3). Not only do they use the logicians’ vocabulary, but these theologians also have to fight at least one of their battles on ground ultimately chosen by logicians studying the sophisma ‘si tantum pater est, non tantum pater est’.

Interestingly, the editor of Bonaventure felt he had to excuse his saint for wasting his time on operators of exclusion:

“The questions of this distinction” he says, “are rather intricate, but they were commonly treated in the schools by the theologians of that age, after the Master of Sentences, with much dialectical subtlety. [. . .] In this and the following questions the Seraphic Doctor presupposes several pieces of doctrine — more subtle than useful — from the old logic about operators of exclusion, their species, and the five rules to be observed when expounding them.”

The editor had little sense for the medieval quest for a consistent syntax for theological propositions. Though it is only fair to say that he went on to produce a remarkably well-informed survey of the lore of operators of exclusion.

Whether one likes logic or not, and whether one thinks the influence of sophismata on 13th-century theology was superficial or more than skin-deep, the fact remains that some parts of the works of the great theologians become fully understandable only when seen against the background of sophismatic disputations about, for instance, ‘si tantum pater est . . .’ and ‘tantum unum est’.

3. Theories proposed and discussed in the ‘tantum’ corpus

I will start with some theories concerning relative terms and operators of exclusion. Then I will pass on to some theories about the semantics of the word ‘unum’, in order to end with some remarks about implied meanings and double truth.

3.1 A relative term somehow includes its correlative in its meaning

This was a popular theory. It could justify the inference ‘There is a principle, therefore there is a principiate’, for it was generally accepted that whatever is included in a term’s meaning follows from it. (In the 13th c. the relation of following applies to terms also, not only to propositions.)

But the inclusion theory was also known to create problems. In fact, the same sort of problems that beset claims that concrete accidental terms like ‘album’ signify both an accidental form (e.g., whiteness) and a subject (e.g., some thing that whiteness inheres in). If ‘album’ means “white thing”, then ‘res alba’ means “white thing thing.” If ‘principle’ means “principle of
principiate”, then ‘principle of principiate’ means “principle of principiate of principiate”. The sort of vicious repetition that occurs in this case was called “nugation”. ¹⁵

Some authors¹⁶ employ a terminology well known from the discussion of concrete accidental terms. One relative term “gives its correlative to be understood” (unum relativorum dat intelligere reliquum). One significate is primary or proper, the other — the correlative, that is — is secondary or improper.

This again suggests a new move. Take one significate to be essential, the other to be extra-essential. Then the extra-essential significate need not be

¹⁵The argument from nugation is mentioned by William Chelveston, Quaestiones super Physicam, ms Cambridge, (University Library), Peterhouse 192,1, ff. 1rA–36vB, at qu. I.15, ff. 12vB–13rA: “Ad illud potest dici: Significatio termini dupliciter accipitur, proprie aut large. Illud autem est de proprio significato alciuus termini quod est de primario eius conceptu; sed unum relativum non est de primario conceptu alterius, nec subjectum de primario conceptu accidentis. Ex consequenti tamen potest dici quod unum significat aliiu, accipiendo significatum pro omni eo quod per aliud datur intelligi; unum autem relativorum dat intelligere reliquum propter ordinem et dependentiam quam habet ad aliud, non enim possimus intelligere complete aliquid dependens ab alio nisi illud quodammodo intelligimus, unde idem significatur per duplum per se acceptum et per duplum adiunctum et quod est dimidium loquendo de proprio eius significato, cuiusmodi est duplitas, ad quod imponitur terminus ad significandum. Loquendo tamen de significato improprio et secundario, hoc est pro eo quod datur intelligi, et sic non idem significatur; cuius ratio est, quando enim duplum dicitur per se cum dependentiam habet ad dimidium, cum illud non exprimatur, semper dat illud intelligere; sed quando dicitur ‘duplum dimidii’, illa dependentia iam terminatur, quia illud apponitur ad quod dependet; sed si idem significatur per terminum relativum per se sumptum et suo correlativo adiunctum, contingit adducere ad veram negationem, unde illud quod est de primario conceptu alciuus est de essentia eiusdem, illud autem quod significatur per terminum pro eo quod datur per illum intelligi non oportet quod sit de essentia eiusdem, immo tale potest esse aliud ab eo secundum essentiam et esse, et ideo exclusione facta circa unum relativorum potest reliquum excludi.”

¹⁶Thus William Chelveston; see quotation in previous note.

¹⁷Radulphus Brito, Quaestiones super Aristotelis Physicam, I.14, versio Florentina (ed. in S. Ebbesen, “Sophismata and Physics Commentaries”, CIMAGL 64 [1994], pp. 164–195): “debet intelligi [. . .] quod unum relativorum non est de essentia nec de intellectu alterius, sicut pater non est de essentia filii, sed esse in habitudine ad filium est de essentia patris. Modo bene volo quod habito uniis relativi ad aliud non excluditur per dictioinem exclusivam, sed unum extremum ab alio excluditur. Tunc ad rationem. Cum dicitur “Illud quod includitur in intellectu alterius non excluditur etc.”, verum est: si sit in intellectu eius primo. Sed si sit compositans ad eius intellectum, non debet. Et cum dicitur “unum correlativum includitur in intellectu alterius”, dico quod non in intellectu eius primo, sed habitudine ad aliud extremum bene est in intellectu alterius extremi, et ideo volo quod ille respectus per dictionem exclusivam non excluditur, sed alterum extremum excluditur. § Ad aliam. Cum dicitur “Illud quod ponitur in definitione aliquius non excluditur ab eo”, dico quod aliquid poni in definitione aliquius, hoc potest esse dupliciter: vel tamquam terminans eius dependentiam, vel tamquam aliquid pertinentis ad eius essentiam. Modo si ponatur ibi tamquam pars pertinentis ad essentiam aliquius, verum est quod istud non excluditur ab eo per dictionem exclusivam. Si autem sit sicut aliquid terminans respectum definiti, de illo non est verum quod non excluditur per dictionem exclusivam. Et cum dicitur ‘Unum relativum ponitur in definitione alterius’, verum est, tamquam terminans respectum eius, et non tamquam pertinentis ad eius essentiam.”

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present on all occasions. If it is lexicalized, as is "half" in 'double of the half' or "principiate" in 'principle of principiate', it is no longer "given to be understood" by its correlative ('double' or 'principle'). Hence the way to nugation is blocked.

It is a dangerous path to tread, the path that introduces secondary significates besides the primary ones. It might be wiser to introduce instead some quasi-entity, an unsaturated relation attaching to the primary significate, and such that it is obvious what will satisfy it. The satisfier may be expressed, or it may not. In the latter case we mentally supply it — "datur intelligi". The medieval name for such a relational quasi-entity is a *habitudo* or *dependentia*, and some texts actually do introduce it. But there is always some uneasiness when "habitudes" are introduced. Their ontological status is unclear. Moreover, my authors do not always get quite rid of the secondary significate even when they introduce a habitude or dependence. Thus Radulphus Brito (ca. 1300) says that the correlative is not included in the "first meaning" (*intellectus primus*) of a relative term; only the habitude or being in habitude to its correlative belongs to the essence of a relative. The correlative is part of the definition of the relative, but not as an essential ingredient, only as terminating, i.e. satisfying, its dependence.\(^{17}\)

Incidentally, since Radulphus treated the dependence of an accident on a substance much the same way, he came close to the notion that a relation is a two-argument function, but instead of embracing this untraditional view he resisted it by claiming that depending on a *terminus* is different from depending on a subject.\(^{18}\)

But back to the main subject: notice that according to Brito the correlative is not included in the *first* meaning of a relative. This leaves the door open for introducing the correlative via a *secondary* meaning such that it is signified *ex consequenti*, as the phrase was.

Many of the problems the medievals incurred may be said to be due to their persistent attempts to squeeze polyadic predicates into moulds made for monadic ones. Some problems are probably of a deeper nature, but I find it difficult to express exactly what the point is in each case, because I do not myself have a good theory of relations to use as a measuring rod for the medieval theories. I do, however, think that it is an important feature of much medieval — and not least 13th-century — thought that links between different constituents of reality, or of conceptualized reality, tend to be analyzed in terms of pairs of significates jointly signified by one term. Signification bridges ontological gaps, as it were.

It should be obvious by now that my corpus of texts can be used as a source for medieval theories of relation, and I cannot help mentioning my strangest
find. A mid-13th-century author tries to find a way to block the inference ‘if there is a child, there is something other than a parent’. He has already introduced the notion that parenthood and “childhood” (paternitas and filiatio) are actually the same sort of relation, though differently named according to which term (extreme) of the relation we are speaking of:  

According to Boethius parenthood and childhood are one species of relation though it receives different names in the different extremes, which are parent and child.

He now goes a step further, saying:

Or we might say that although it follows on there being a parent that his child be, yet it does not follow that if there is a child there is something other than the parent. For parent and child are one individual of relation just as parenthood and childhood are one species of relation. For just as two unities, for all their being in themselves two, yet are one individual of <the species > “set of two”, so parent and child, for all their being two particular entities, are one individual of a relation.

What is an individual of a binary relation on this theory? A a pair of objects. — As Quine once said:

Logically the important thing about relative terms is that they are true of objects pairwise.  

3.2 ‘Tantum’ works as a diminishing modifier so that ‘tantum x phis’ does not universally imply ‘x phis’

It was standard doctrine, based on Aristotle’s Peri Hermeneias, that adjectival


\[^{18}\text{Anonymus, Sophisma ‘Si tantum pater . . .’, ms Paris, BN lat. 16618: 143r–v: “secundum Boethium paternitas et filiation est una species relationis, sortitur tamen diversa nomina in diversis extremis, quae sunt pater est filius, sicut altitudo et profunditas maris sunt unum in re, sortiuntur tamen diversa nomina in diversis extremis, sc. in profundo et superficie maris. Si vero cum dicitur ‘si filius est, alius a patre est’ intelligitur alius in forma relata ad suppositum, sic est vera ‘si filius est, alius a patre est’.”}\]

\[^{20}\text{Anonymus, Sophisma ‘Si tantum pater . . .’, ms Paris, BN lat. 16618: 143v: “Vel dicendum, licet ad patrem esse sequatur filium esse, tamen non sequitur ‘si filius est, alius a patre est’, nam pater et filius sunt unum individuum relationis, sicut paternitas et filiation sunt una species relationis, nam quemadmodum duae unitates etsi sint duae in se sunt tamen unum individuum binarii [b.: binarium cod.], sic pater et filius etsi sint duo supposita sunt tamen unum individuum relationis.”}\]


\[^{24}\text{For this example, and for the whole doctrine of diminution, cf. S. Ebbesen, “The Dead Man is Alive,” Synthese 40 (1979), pp. 43–70.}\]
modifiers may introduce an oppositio in adiecto. Since the notion of living is included in the meaning of ‘man’, the expression ‘dead man’ introduces two incompatible notions, being alive and being dead. It was also standard, though sometimes disputed, doctrine that modifiers that introduce an oppositio in adiecto diminish or detract from the meaning of the term they modify; ‘dead’ destroys the semantic component ‘living’ that the word ‘man’ normally carries, and therefore you cannot argue ‘here is a dead man, therefore here is a man’. Positing a mutilated man in the antecedent does not justify positing a complete man in the consequent.

If this way of thinking is transferred to ‘there is only a principle’ it might be held that ‘only’ amputates a part of the usual meaning of ‘principle’, so that you cannot argue ‘there is only a principle, therefore there is a principle’.

This amounts to a denial of the universal validity of the rule ‘every exceptive proposition leaves its prejacent’, i.e.

For any x and phi: only x phis \( \rightarrow \) x phis

There were several objections to treating the adverb ‘only’ as a modifier of the same type as ‘dead’, but the diminution theory was slow to die. It harmonized with something fundamental in 13th-century thought, the notion that meaning-inclusion is what the relation of following is based on.

### 3.3 ‘Tantum’ operates differently on different sorts of relative terms

A number of English authors think it makes a difference which sort of relative term ‘tantum’ operates on. They use a standard classification of relatives into relativa &quiparantiae, superpositionis, and suppositionis; i.e. relative terms which are their own converses (relativa &quiparantiae) and those which are not. The former class includes such terms as ‘the same’ and ‘similar’, the latter is differentiated in a way that is strictly speaking logically irrelevant, namely according to rank. ‘Master’ and ‘parent’ are relatives of superposition, i.e. dominance, whereas ‘servant’ and ‘child’ are relatives of supposition. The idea is then that when you deal with symmetrical relations you cannot posit one of the relata without the other, since they are (in some sense) identical, whereas the extremes of an asymmetrical relation are sufficiently independent one of another that this is possible — in fact they cannot share a subject, you cannot be your son’s father and his father’s son at the same time.

There is, however, an exception to the rule that you can include one and exclude another of the extremes (c1, c2) of an asymmetrical relation by saying ‘Only c1 phis’, and that is the case in which the verb that holds the place of ‘phis’ is ‘is’, as in ‘tantum principium est’ or ‘tantum pater est’. For while two

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asymmetrically related properties are not compatible in the same subject, they
do depend on one another for their being. So while ‘only the parent is running’
in an unobjectionable way includes the parent and excludes the child from
running, ‘only the parent is’ is a highly objectionable proposition. It affirms
the parent’s being while denying the being of something which is required for him
to be. As one author concludes, this is similar to what happens if you say ‘a dead
man’. By saying ‘man’ you posit the life that you deny by saying ‘dead’. We
thus have a combination of the diminution theory with the distinction between
symmetrical and asymmetrical relations.

The diminution theory allows one to deny that ‘only parent’ implies
‘parent’. Remember, the theory says that the modifier introduces a negative
element that destroys part of the meaning of what is modified. But there is

2E.g. Anonymus GC611, Sophismata, ms Cambridge, Gonville & Caius 611/341, ff.
47vB–60vB, ‘Si tantum pater . . .’ at f. 53vA–B: Ad secundum problema dicendum
est quod quaedam sunt relativa aequiparantiae, et in illis utrumque extremum
codem nomine nominatur, cuiusmodi sunt ‘aequale’ ‘similis’ ‘socius’ et huissiodi; quaedam
autem sunt relativa superpositionis et suppositionis, et in talibus extrema diversis
nominibus nominantur, cuiusmodi sunt ‘pater’ et ‘filius’, ‘dominus’ et ‘servus’, ‘duplum’
‘dimidium’. Dictio autem exclusiva addita relativo aequiparantiae non excludit alterum extremum
illius relationis, nam si dicatur ‘tantum simile est’ nec excluditur hoc simile nec illud, sicut si diceretur ‘tantum simil(tudo)’
non excluderetur illa simil(tudo) nec illa, nec si diceretur ‘tantum homo’ nec excluditur ille
homo nec ille. Dictio exclusiva addita relativo superpositionis excludit relativum
suppositionis et consequens, nam dictio exclusiva addita filio excludit patrem et consequens.
Et huiss ratio est quia ‘tantum’ addita alicui excludit omne illud quod separatum est secundum
esse ab eo [eo: esse cod.] cui additur. Et sequitur ulterius, licet duo sint coniuncta se­
cundum esse, si tamen unum signifcetur cum praecisione alterius dictio inclusiva addita
uni excludit aliu licet non sint separatum secundum esse, quia si dicatur ‘tantum albedo est’
excluditur homo eo quod ‘albedo’ signifcit
sua praecisio subiecti; et si diceretur ‘tantum humanitas est’ excludetur et supposition et accidens, quia ‘humanitas’ signifcit
cum praecisione suppositorum et accidentium,
unde nec praedicitur humanitas de suppositis
nec supposita de ipsa — nec enim Socrates est
humanitas nec est humanitas quae est alba.
Dixi etiam ‘si a proprietatibus explicite repugnantibus accipiantur’, quia si diceretur
‘tantum numerus est’ dico quod excluditur unum, licet quilibet numerus sit unus; et si
diceretur ‘tantum substantia est’ excluditur accidens eo quod substantia accipit
a propriete quea subest et accidens a propriete quea est adiacerre, quae quidem propriete explicite repugnant. § Unde dictio
exclusiva excludit illud quod separatum
esse et cum cuius praecisione signifcat et si a proprietate sibi explicite repugnant assimilat. Nunc autem relativa
superpositionis et suppositionis sunt separatae
secundum esse, ut opposita sunt, pater enim et
filius opponuntur et a proprietatibus manifeste
diversi accipiantur, et ideo dictio exclusiva
addita uni excludit alterum.”

See also Anonymus GC513, Quaestiones
super Physicam, 1.10, f.3vA–B in Ebbesen
“Sophismata and Physics Commentaries”,
CIMAGL. 64 (1994). William Chelveston,
Quaestiones super Physicam, 1.15, ms Cam­
bidge, (UL), Peterhouse 192,1: 12vA–B.
Anonymus Oriel33(1), Quaestiones super
Physicam, ms Oxford, Bodleian Library,
Oriel 33, ff. 8r–72v, at qu. 1.11, f. 11vA.
another way to look at such cases of *oppositio in adiecto*. Suppose the modifier
does introduce a negative element, but the corresponding positive and negative
elements do not cancel out.

We might then consider accepting:

\[
\text{parent} \rightarrow \text{human being} + \text{child} \\
\text{only parent} \rightarrow (\text{human being} + \text{child} \setminus \text{child}) \rightarrow (\text{human being} + \text{child}) \\
& (\text{human being} \setminus \text{child}) \leftrightarrow \text{parent} \& \text{not parent}.
\]

Some authors actually took the daring step of admitting that one proposition
may imply two contradictory propositions. ‘Only the parent is’ implies both
‘the parent is’ and ‘the parent is not’, they said.\(^5\) It had never been popular to
hold that one proposition may imply two contradictories. One might think our
authors would have used the apparent implication of contradictories to declare
such propositions as ‘only the parent is’ either ill-formed or not genuinely
atomic propositions, but moleculars in disguise. The first alternative was not
used by anyone, I think. The second alternative was easily available, since there
was a standard rule of exposition, according to which

\[
\text{Only } x \text{ phis} \leftrightarrow x \text{ phis} \& \text{nothing other than } x \text{ phis}.
\]

In view of this rule of exposition, it might be possible to claim that since ‘only
the parent is’ equals the conjunction ‘the parent is and nothing other than the
parent is’, the contradictory propositions derivable from the original one can be
traced back each to one of the exponents. There is nothing wrong in deriving a
contradiction from a disguised conjunction of propositions, a *propositio plures*.
Though known,\(^6\) this strategy was not the commonest. Characteristically, the
medievals try rather to explain the genesis of the two contradictories in terms of
primary and secondary meaning, even when they leave the level of terms for the
level of propositions, as does John Wakefield\(^2\), according to whom ‘only the
principle is’ has a primary meaning (*intellectus primus*) which is that being is
in the subject in a precise measure; true, the precision (*præcisio*) imported by
‘only’ excludes the principiate, and by consequence the principle – but all this is
a secondary meaning and accidental to the primary one, so even though the
occurrence of two meanings explains how we can derive contradictory proposi-
tions from ‘only the principle is’, it does not render it a *propositio plures*.

3.4 ‘Unum’ has two constituents, and ‘tantum’ may operate
on one without operating on the other

Let me now tum to ‘tantum unum est’.\(^3\) In the attempt to explain how the
proposition could apparently be both true and false, two types of distinction

\[
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were proposed. Either ‘unum’ has two constituents, and ‘tantum’ may operate
on one without operating on the other, or ‘unum’ has more than one sense, so
that ‘tantum unum est’ is a propositio plures, each of whose constituents should
be evaluated separately for truth and falsehood.

The idea behind the first kind of distinction is simple. ‘Unum’ somehow
signifies both a form and its bearer. If ‘tantum’ operates only on one of those
constituents at a time, we get two possible readings, viz.

(a) Only what is one is, i.e. there is something that is one and nothing that is not
one. ‘Only’ includes all things that have the form of unity and excludes all
things that fail to have it.
(b) Only that which is one is, i.e. there is one thing, and no other thing is. ‘Only’
includes one thing and excludes any others.

The idea is simple, and the distinction recurs under many names in the texts.
Perhaps it first made its appearance in grammatical clothes as a distinction
between substance and quality (a noun was traditionally said to signify a

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20See Anonymus GC513, Quaest. Ph. I.10, in Ebbesen, “Sophisma and Physics Com-
Oxford Oriel 33: 11vB–12rA: “Aliter dicitur quod licet sequatur ‘principium est, ergo prin-
cipiatum est’, tamen addita exclusione non sequitur quia sequi non possit nisi per hoc
medium quod est principium esse; sed virtute huius ‘tantum principium est’ non ponit
principia[rum] esse, quia omne removens aliquid quod necessario exigitur ad esse alterius,
ipsum esse simpliciter non ponit sed secundum quid tantum, sicut patet: mortuum re-
movent vitam quod est necessarium ad esse hominis, ideo hominem secundum quid ponit;
sed exclusio addita uni relativorum respectu huius verbi ‘est’ removet alterum, quod tamen
est necessarium ad esse eius; ponit igitur inclusum respectu ‘esse’ secundum quid. Hic
igitur est fallacia secundum quid et simpliciter ‘tantum principium est, igitur principium est’.
Sed respectu aliorum verborum non est falla-
cia; sequitur enim ‘tantum pater currit, igitur
pater currit’ quia filium currere non est neces-
sarium ad patrem currere, et ideo exclusio
removens cursum a filio nihil deminuit a patre
respectu cursus.”

21Thus Anonymus, Sophisma ‘Si tantum pa-
ter . . .’, ms Brugge SB 509: 105rA (No.
XVIII in Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum
Medii Aevi IX, in preparation): De hoc non fuit
dubitatio apud antiquos quia [. . . ] ideo omnes
concorditer dicunt quod non sequitur ‘ homo
mortuus, ergo homo’. § Apparet tamen mihi
esse dicendum quod sequitur ‘homo mortuus,
ergo homo’. Unde cum ‘mortuus’ non tollat
hominis suum significatum nec modum signifi-
candi, semper ponit hominem, et hoc inuenu
Aristoteles libro Peri hermeneias dicebat
[enim] quod ibi est opposito in obiecto quasi
contradictio; et ibi non esset contradictio nisi
homo et non homo implicarentur, unde impli-
cantur cum sic dicitur ‘homo mortuus’
<homo per le ‘homo’ > et non homo per le
‘mortuum’, cum sit determinatio deminuens.
Unde universaliter dicitur determinatio demi-
uens, non qua tollit significatum terminabile
sed quia privat aliquid quo remoto removet
[in]determinabile. Verbi gratia ‘mortuum’ de-
minuit hominem quia privat vitam ab homine,
quaes esse de ratione hominis, <quar > remota
removetur homus; similiter ‘irrisibile’ dicitur
determinatio deminuens respectu hominis
quia privat aliquid, ec. risibile, quo remoto
removetur homus; † ‘risibile’ similiter † dicitur
determinatio deminuens respectu termini rela-
tivi quia privat respectum, qui respectus(?)
infertur per terminum relativum, quo remoto
removetur terminus. Unde si dictio exclusiva
addita uni relativorum alterum non excludat,
nunquam ipsum destrueret. Sic appetit ergo
quod sequitur ‘homo mortuus, ergo homo et
non homo’ et etiam sequitur ‘tantum pater,
ergo pater et non pater’, quia cum ‘tantum’
non tollat patri suum significatum, sequitur
‘tantum pater, ergo pater’, et etiam tollit ali-
quid quo remoto removetur pater, et ita impli-
cantur non composabilia.
substance with some quality: *substantiam cum qualitate* or *substantiam et qualitatem*. We also find matter/form, substance/accident and other variants, sometimes implying subtle changes in the theory, but not importing any radical differences.

The idea was simple, but it was also problematic, if for no other reason then because it brought with it the whole vexed question of what concrete accidental terms signify. An analysis of the signifiate of ‘unum’ or ‘pater’ into two constituents can only be a particular case of a general rule about concrete accidental terms. It was hotly disputed whether such terms signified a form only or both a form and its bearer. One late 13th-c. master took the bull by the horns when dealing with the sophisma ‘tantum unum est’:

There are two questions concerning this sophisma. The first is about the distinction, the second about its truth or falsehood. Concerning the first point there are two questions. First, since ‘unum’ is a concrete term, whether in general a concrete term signifies a form or the whole aggregate of form and subject or matter.

I will not dwell on this distinction, but it deserves to be remembered both because it was widely accepted for a long time and because it is typical of a phase in the development of scholastic philosophy; the 13th century is, among other things, a period in which people experimented with Aristotelian concepts — such as matter and form —, testing their possible utility in areas they were not originally designed for.

3.5 Quantifier or adjective

Another typical 13th-century experiment is to see if you can solve problems by distinguishing between a syncategorematic and a categorematic use of a word. In the case of ‘tantum unum est’ we have already got one syncategorematic, viz. ‘tantum’. But perhaps ‘unum’ is one of the words that may be either this or that. As a categorematic, or genuine adjective, ‘unum’ would ascribe the quality of unity to whatever its subject is. Such unity is perfectly compatible with a plurality of objects possessing it. ‘Tantum unum est’ would no more exclude ‘plura sunt’ than ‘only man is’ excludes a plurality of men. On this reading, ‘tantum unum est’ equals

For any x: being (x) → unity (x)

By contrast, the syncategorematic ‘unum’ is a quantifier (“signum”). On this reading the sophisma comes out as

For just one x: being (x)
Like Anonymus Erfordensis, I can feel some sympathy for this idea, more in fact than for its more successful competitor, namely that ‘unum’ is ambiguous as to (A) the one that is convertible with being, and (B) the one that is the principle of number (NB: in Antiquity and the Middle Ages one or the unity was not a number).


The distinction between convertible (essential) and numerical (accidental) unity yields two possible readings of ‘tantum unum est’, viz.

a) Only what has being-unity is.

If ‘ens’ and ‘unum’ are convertible, this is reducible to the claim that only what is is, and it seems a safe bet that that is true.

b) Only what is an indivisible unit is.

In this sense the proposition is false because there are all sorts of divisible sets around — heaps of grain or stones, and whatnot.34

The distinction between the two types of ONE has its roots in Aristotle’s **Metaphysics**, but does not come straight out of his work. The Latins owed it to Averroes’ commentary on the **Metaphysics**, as Robert Kilwardby seems to have been aware of.35

A metaphysical derivation of the two sorts of unity is offered by some texts. The recipe for making unity1 and unity2 is this:36

Start with unformed matter; add a form, preferably a substantial one. That will confer being (esse) on the matter and on the resulting compound of matter and form. But there is more to being than meets the eye. In fact, the gift bestowed by form has a trinitary structure with two essential and one accidental component. (1) form gives beingness (entitas); (2) form gives indivision of beingness (indivisio entitatis), i.e. internal solidarity, also called substantial unity, and in fact identical with the essence of the thing; (3) concomitantly form gives discretion (divisio/discretio) from any other thing; such discretion is called accidental unity. Please remember, you cannot divide your batter to make some cakes with substantial unity and some with beingness. The two are only modally different. In a non-miraculous kitchen you cannot leave out accidental unity either, but in a miraculous one you might make cakes without it, for it is a real thing, a new quality over and above beingness and convertible unity. One, unum, by substantial unity is convertible with ens. Unum by accidental unity is the principle of number.

This account, it might be said, takes care of the two tasks sometimes thought to be involved in individuation, viz. making the object self-identical (indivisible on pain of loss of identity) and distinct from other objects. Yet, as many medievals saw, this story about unity raises more problems than it solves. They used very different words to say it, but it seems to me that one of the sources of their worries was that on this account a heap of 500 grains can scarcely be anything but a multiple of a grain; it is hard to see how it can be a unit member (element) of a set of 500-grains.

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The texts in my corpus rarely deny that there may be some point in this distinction, but it is clear that trust in its ability to solve the problems raised by 'tantum unum est' was fast eroding, probably as early as the 1250s. The distinction's failure in this particular case did not immediately deal it a death blow, and Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* 1.11 accepts it with so few questions asked that it feels like he was not quite abreast of developments in the

39This possibility is discussed by Anonymous Paris 16618, Collector Secundus, and Anonymous Erfordensis, among others.

30Ms Erfurt WAB Amplon. f328: 60vA–B: "Aliter autem dicitur ab alius et satis probabiliter quod hoc quod est 'unum' semper dicit unitatem accidentalem et nuncum essentiae. Nam quocumque modo accipiat li unum, semper est in genere quantitatis, saltem per reductionem. Importat enim semper unitatem, quae est principium numeri. Sed adhuc distinguenda est propositio, nam huissmodi unitas accidentalis dupliciter potest accipi sive considerari: vel ut est absoluta vel ut est respectiva. [. . .] Dicunt igitur quod si li 'unum' dicat unitatem absolutam sive accipiat ut categorea sive ut adiectivum, quod idem est, sic haec est vera 'tantum unum est', et ista via via 'unum' est terminus communis sicut 'hominis', et haec via non tenet improbatio. Sicut enim non sequitur 'tantum homo, non ergo homines', ita haec via non sequitur 'tantum unum, non ergo multa'. Si autem unum dicat unitatem respectivam sive sumatur ut syncategorea sive ut signum, quod idem est, sic prima falsa est, et hoc modo sequitur 'tantum unum; non ergo multa'."

31Also called 'synonymous with being' with an expression borrowed from Averroes, *In Metaph.* 10.

32Cf., e.g., Anonymous Erfordensis, ms Erfurt Amplon. f328: 60rA: "Ad istud sophisma diversi diverse respondent. Quidam enim dicunt primam esse duplicitatem, haec scilicet 'tantum unum est', sicut dicebatur prius, ex eo scilicet quod hoc quod est unum potest accipi prout est convertibile cum ente vel prout est principium numeri, et ratio eorum talis est: nam unum, secundum quod est principium numeri addit [addit] quondam discretionem supra ens, secundum vero quod est convertibile cum ente non addit aliquam discretionem supra ens, et idcirco sicut haec est vera 'tantum ens est', ita haec via haec ert vera 'tantum unum est'; alio vero sensu, scilicet secundum quod est principium numeri, falsa est propositio, tunc enim sequeretur quod multa non essent, sicut visum fuit prius, cum tunc importet li 'unum' discretionem."


34Anonymous Liberanus, ms. Paris BN lat. 16135: 20rB: "notandum quod materia ante receptionem formae habet esse essentiae, nec adhuc meretur dici ens; forma vero ei adveniens dat esse materiae et composito, et esse est actus entis, et ideo dat ei entitatem et indivisionem entitatis, quae est unitas; et ideo prima forma adveniens materiae est causa in ea duplicis unitatis, sc. substantialis, quae est indivisio essentialis quae non est alia ab essentia rei nec alia a forma entis, nec cadit in alio genere in quo cadit illud cuius est, et haec est indivisio essentialis; ulteriorius dat ei unitatem accidentalem, quae non est de eadem linea cum re cuius est, immo est de genere quantitatis discretae, quae multiplicata procedit ex se in numerum, numerus vero existens de tali genere est unum de genere accidentalis, et ideo quantitas discreta, et sicut est duplex unitas, sic est unum duplex. Unum autem a < b > unite primo modo dictum convertitur cum ente, et sicut nomen entis per prius reperitur in substantia, sic et unum primo modo dictum; famosius tamen in quantitate. Et ita patet quod est aliud unum quod est principium numeri et aliud unum quod convertitur cum ente. Unum autem quod cum ente convertitur non dict aliam rem ab ente, sed solum eandem rem, sub modo tamen alio vel sub modo discretionis, qui modus nullam rem addit." In the same vein, Collector Secundus, mss Paris BN lat. 16135: 40rA & München BSB clm 14522: 41vB.
arts faculty.

3.6 Double Truth

The 1250s seems to be the time when the last theory I want to mention was invented. And we know the name of the inventor, or at least of a major proponent, of it. He was John of Secheville or Sackville or Drytown, rector of the University of Paris in 1256. Let me quote one of the main sources for the theory:38

Some say that ‘unum’ primarily signifies indivision, secondarily that in which that indivision occurs, whereas it is the other way round with ‘ens’. [. . .] The denotata of ‘ens’ and ‘unum’ are the same whichever way ‘unum’ is taken. So if we consider that the predicate is attributed to the denotata of ‘unum’ precisely under the form that it primarily signifies, then this proposition is impossible ‘tantum unum est’, and that is how Aristotle employs it in Physics I, taking ‘unum’ for its primary significate. For in that way it follows that all things are one thing. But if we consider the secondary significate, then the proposition is true, even necessary. For then the predicate “to be” is attributed to the denotata of ‘ens’ which are the same as the denotata of ‘unum’, to which this predicate belongs, and to no others. And therefore they say that the sense of ‘tantum unum est’ according to its primary significate is ‘being is only under indivision’, but that is false since many things are under division. According to its secondary significate the sense is [. . .] “Being belongs only to the denotata of ‘unum’, which are < precisely > the denotata of ‘ens’, and not to any others”, and that is true. They therefore say that according to its primary significate, or in itself and primarily, this proposition is impossible, secondarily and implicitly, it is true. And this, <they claim, > is not objectionable.

The following text identifies the man who held that this was unobjectionable and gives his reason:39

A great and quite well-known contemporary, that is Master Drytown, said that it <i.e. ‘tantum unum est’> was false in itself but true per accidens, and in support of his view he appealed to a parallel, though reverse, case. Aristotle says that this proposition is true ‘everything that moves moves faster and slower’. Avicenna has great doubt about that proposition and gives the first mobile as a counter-instance, since it is uniform and neither moves faster nor slower. But he solves the problem by saying that the proposition is true in itself, that is, through the nature of the mobile qua mobile, but false per accidens, i.e., through the nature of the mobile qua such a mobile.

The author of the text just quoted made a slip by making Avicenna provide the inspiration for the theory of double truth. Other texts correctly identify the authority appealed to as Averroes.40 In fairness to Averroes it should be noted that he only claimed that a proposition’s being possible per se is compatible with

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its being impossible per accidens, not that it could be false per se and true per accidens. Drytown, alias Secheville, must carry the responsibility for this development of Averroes' ideas.

Secheville's interpretation of 'tantum unum est' depends on a distinction between primary and secondary signification. Such distinctions help preserve conflicting intuitions about what constitutes the meaning of a linguistic expression: (1) what can be grasped in one act of the mind, (2) whatever is in some way deductible from it. The twelfth century had made room for both direct and implied meaning by adding connotation to signification; in the late thirteenth century there was a new wave of attempts to systematize various intuitions about implied meanings, and the distinction between primary and secondary meaning became a favourite conceptual tool to solve logical and ontological

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37Its relevance to the sophisma was denied by Anonymus Erfordensis, ms cit., f. 60rrB: “Sed istud nihil est quoniam nullatenus potest accipi unum quin supposita unius et entis convertantur. Aequa enim sunt supposita entis et unius. Unde convertibilias entis et unius attenditur penes eorum supposita non penes eorum significata. Unde significatum unius differens est a significato entis per se loquendo de significato unius, saltem sicut significatum superioris differt a significato inferioris vel saltem sicut significatum analogi a significato suppositi analogat[ . . .] Unum tenen includit in se significatum entis tum quia significatum unius est per modum conceptionis tum quia inferius est ad ens. Illud enim a quo formaliter imponitur unum ad significandum est natura discretionis, per quam discretionem unum reductur ad naturam quantitatis tamquam principium ad principium; propter hoc igitur impossibile est quod significatum unius et entis sint convertibilia: quia vero illa natura discretionis quam importat unum reperitur in qualibet supposito entis [. . .], idcirco eorum convertibilias attenditur quod supposita, et ideo unum semper est convertible cum ente quod supposita, etiam secundum quod est principium numeri accipiendo ipsum in quantum significat aliquid finitum, et ideo distinctio nulla, quia semper erit convertibiliter < e > cum ente le 'unum', saltem quod supposita". Similarly Anonymus Paris3572, ms Paris lat. 3572: 171rrB: "dico quod haec distinctio non valet ad propositum. Unitas enim prout est principium numeri adhuc reperitur in omnibus. Et fortasse etiam haec distinctio non est bona in se."

38Anonymus Liberanus, ms Paris BN 16135: 20ra: “Dicunt quidam quod 'unum' primo divisionem significat, secundo illud in quo reperitur illa indivisio; 'ens' autem eversens — aliter non sequeretur 'ens, ergo unum', nisi 'ens' aliquo modo illam significationem significaret; eadem autem sunt supposita entis et unius, quocumque modo accipiat unum. § Ideo, si attendamus quod praecise attribuitor praedicatum suppositorius unius sub illa individuione quam primo significaret, sic est haec impossibilis 'tantum unum est', et sic utitur ea Aristoteles primo Physicorum accipiendo 'unum' pro suo primario significato. Sic enim sequitur omnia esse unum. Si autem consideremus secundarium significatum, sic est vera, immo necessaria. Tunc enim appellatis entis, quae eadem sunt cum appellatis unius, attribuitor praedicatum quod est esse, quibus convenit et non alius. Et ideo dicunt quod sensus istius 'tantum unum est' quantum ad primarium significatum est iste 'tantum ens sub individuione est'; hoc autem falsum est, multa enim sunt sub [indivisione. Quantum ad secundarium significatum est sensus talis 'tantum unum', id est "tantum appellatis unius quae sunt appellata convenit esse et non aliis", et hoc est verum. Unde dicunt isti quod haec quantum ad eius primarium significatum est impossibilis sive per se et primo, secundario et ex consequenti est vera, nec est inconveniens. Sexto enim Physicorum habetur ab Aristotele quod omne quod movetur velocius vel tardius moveretur, et Averroes dubitat de illa conclusione, instantia enim est de octava sphaera, ut ipse dicit, et dicit quod illa conclusio primo et per se est impossibilis, ex consequenti et per accidens vera. § Ista solutio videtur dicere quid dicendum sit de praeenti oratione."
puzzles. In the sources, the name of Averroes keeps coming up in such contexts, and often it is clear that the main or original motivation for the graduated distinction is to assert the primacy of form over matter. ‘Man’ signifies human form first for example, secondarily matter or the compound of matter and form. One text from about 1260 even develops a crude alternative to standard supposition theory on the basis of a distinction between primary and secondary significates. Interestingly, this text has similarities to a section of Secheville’s *De principiis naturae*.

The distinction between primary and secondary signification had deep roots in the Western tradition, and when it became extensively used, deep problems in standard ways of thinking were revealed. The author to whom we owe the information that the primary-secondary signification solution of ‘tantum unum est’ was Secheville’s pinpoints its weakness in the words:

If I were to dare not to submit to such a great man’s opinion, I would say that the proposition is simply false, for, as it seems to me, if the sentence were to be judged <true or false>, according to the significate that is given to be understood implicitly, it seems to me that the proposition ‘a donkey is a man’ would have to be judged true because the proposition ‘a donkey is an animal’ is true (or because ‘an animal is man’ or ‘an animal is an animal’ is so), because “animal” is secondarily given to be understood by the words ‘a donkey is a man’.

In other words, we would have to accept an argument of the type:

\[
\begin{align*}
p &= \text{‘a donkey is an animal’} \\
q &= \text{‘a donkey is a man’}
\end{align*}
\]

(1) Verification for a secondary significate suffices to make a proposition true. [Hypothesis]

(2) \(p\) brings out the secondary signification of \(q\) [By definition of man].

(3) If \(p\) is true, so is \(q\). [By 1 + 2]

(4) \(p\) is true. [Uncontroversial fact]

(5) \(q\) is true. [By 3 + 4]

The inescapable consequence of basing the logic of inference on meaning-inclusion between terms and having both primary and secondary meanings was a theory of double truth — though not the sort of double truth that “Averroists” have traditionally been accused of introducing, but one which allows the same proposition to have different truth-values *per se* and *per accidens*. In 1988 I published evidence that some 13th-century texts actually contain such a theory, though embryonically only. It has come my way again, in the texts about ‘tantum unum est’. So perhaps I do, after all, have a thesis to present. It would be this:

There was indeed, in the second half of the 13th century, a theory of double

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truth, and it did owe some inspiration to Averroes. It was linked to a use of the conceptual apparatus of primary and secondary or implicit significate. It was never systematically developed but it was not just a theory in the sense that we may say it was *implicit* in some of the things the medievals say. It was explicitly stated and it was discussed for some decades, at least. Its first or most important advocate was John of Secheville.

30Collector Secundus, mss Paris lat. 16135: 40rB–vA, München clm 14522: 42rB: “Quidam autem maximus et famosior tempore nostro, videlicet magister de Arida Patria dixit quod erat falsa per se, vera autem per accidentes, et ad hoc inducebat quoddam simile per oppositum. Aristoteles enim dicit quod haec propositionis est vera ‘omne quod movetur velocius et tardius movetur’. Avicenna autem valde dubitat de ea et ponit instantiam in primo mobile quoniam est uniforme: nec velocius nec tardius movetur. Et ipsa solvit quod illa propositionis vera est per se, i.e. per naturam mobilis unde mobile, falsa autem per accidentes, i.e. per naturam mobilis unde tale mobile; et ita simili modo per oppositum dicit istam falsam per se et impossibilem, veram autem per accidentes, quia haec dicit ‘unum’ de suo primo significato imponitur ad significantum ens sub individuione et particularitate; unde cum iste modus formale sit in suo significato, primo et per se apprehenditur per istam dictionem, et ex consequenti illud circa quod significatur ista individuio, scilicet ens. Et ideo dicitur quod debet iudicari simpliciter quantum est de primario significato, per accidentes quantum est de secundario, ideo iudicatur ipsam veram per accidentes, falsam autem per se. Unde haec ‘tantum unum est’ primo et per se significatur tantum ens in se individuum et particular[m], et ideo est falsa, per consequens autem significatur tantum ens esse, et ideo per accidentes est vera.”


35Collector Secundus, mss München clm 14522: 42rB, Paris lat. 16135: 40vA: “Sed quid debeamus dicere valde dubito. Si enim auderem opinioni tanti et talis viri non oboedire, dicerem eam falsam simpliciter, quoniam, ut mihi videtur, si esset iudicanda oratio quantum ad significatum datum intelligi ex consequenti, mihi videtur quod iudicanda esset ista vera ‘asinus est homo’ quia haec est vera ‘asinus est animal’ vel ‘animal est animal’ vel ‘animal est homo’ quia animal secundario datur intelligi per istas voces ‘asinus est homo.’”

36Ebbesen, “Concrete Accidental Terms . . .” (cf. note 14).

*It is a subject of a separate question in Peter of Auvergne’s sophisma ‘Omnis homo est omnis homo’ (1270s), ms Firenze Laur. St. Croce 12 sin.,3: 77rB–vB. The question asked is *Utrum aliqua propositionis possit esse vera per se et falsa per accidentes vel eversum falsa per se et vera per accidentes.*

*I wish to thank Mr Russell Friedman who saw this paper before publication. His vigilant eye discovered several instances of bad English and unclear phrasing before it was too late to do anything about it.*
Appendix. Catalogue of ‘Tantum unum est’ sophismata from the 13th or very early 14th c

References to manuscript folia should be understood in each case to indicate the location of the sophisma ‘Tantum unum est’, not of a whole collection of which it forms a part. Qu.: = Question(s)/Problem(s) discussed in the sophisma. The dates in [...] are all very uncertain.

**Anonymus**, *Sophismata determinata a maioribus magistris Parisius*, ms Vat. lat. 7678: 36rB-36vA. [Before 1250].


**Anonymus Erfordensis** (= Robertus Kilwardby?), *Sophismata*, ms Erfurt WAB 4°328: 59rA–61vA. Qu.: 1. De distinctione ex eo quod haec dictio ‘unum’ potest accipi prout est convertibile cum ente vel prout est principium numeri; 2. De veritate et falsitate; 3. de modo probandi et improbandi. [1250s?]

**Anonymus GC611**, *Sophismata*, ms Cambridge, Gonville & Caius 611/341: 50rA–51vA. Qu.: De veritate. [Before ca. 1280].

**Anonymus Falconarensis**, *Sophismata*, ms Falconara Marittima 11: 213vA–224vA. [Late 13th c.].


**Anonymus Matritensis**, *Sophismata*, ms Madrid BN 1565: 80vB. Fragmentary; breaks off early in treatment of the first question. Qu.: 1. De fallacia accidentis, quae solet assignari in improbatione, quia in prima hoc quod dico ‘unum’ supponit pro sua natura, in secunda vero supponit pro supposito; 2. De distinctione ex eo quod hoc quod dico ‘unum’ potest accipi in quantum est convertibile cum ente vel in quantum est principium numeri; 3. De alia distinctione, sc. quod dictio exclusiva potest facere exclusionem ratione materiae vel ratione formae; 4. De veritate et falsitate; 5. De probatione et improbatione. [Late 13th or early 14th c.].

**Anonymus Oriel33(2)**, *Sophismata*, ms Oxford BodlL Oriel 33: 408vA–409vA. [Ca. 1300].

**Anonymus Paris3572**, *Sophismata*, ms Paris BN lat. 3572: 171r. [Before 1250?].
Anonymus Paris16618, Sophismata, ms Paris BN lat. 16618. This collection contains three versions of 'tantum unum est', viz:

(I) 137r (mutilated at the end). Qu.: 1. U. posset fieri exclusio ratione materiae vel ratione formae; 2. U. ratione formae substantialis vel ratione formae accidentalis; 3. U. unum possit distinguui prout est principium numeri vel prout est convertibile cum ente; 4. De veritate. [Before ca. 1265].

(II) 138v (mutilated at the end). Qu.: 1. De ista distinctione u. unum possit sumi prout est convertibile cum ente vel prout est principium numeri; 2. De distinctione ex eo quod hoc quod est 'tantum' potest facere suam exclusionem ab hoc quod est 'unum' respectu formae substantialis vel accidentalis; 3. De veritate etc. [Before ca. 1265].


Collector Secundus, Sophismata, mss Paris BN lat. 16135: 37vA–42rB & München BSB clm 14522: 37vA–43rA. I quote from my forthcoming edition and omit information about variant readings. Qu.: 1. De distinctionibus quae hic solent assignari, sc. (1.1) quod li 'unum' possit sumi ut signum vel ut adiectivum, (1.2) quod potest sumi prout est principium numeri vel prout est convertibile cum ente; (1.3) quod 'tantum' additum huic termino 'unum' potest facere exclusionem suam circa ipsum gratia materiae vel gratia formae; 2. De veritate et falsitate primae; 3. De probatione; 4. De improbatione. [Before 1275].

Guillelmus Dalling, Sophisma, ms Cambridge, Gonville & Caius 512/543. 78vA–80vA. Qu.: De veritate. [About 1300?].

Nicolaus Parisiensis, Syncategoremata, ed. H.A.G. Braakhuis, De 13de Eeuwse Tractaten over Syncategorematische Termen, Diss., Leiden: Meppel, 1979; at vol. 2 p. 120. [Ca. 1250].


Henricus Gandavensis, Syncategoremata, ms Brugge SB 510: 230vB. [1260s?].

Petrus de Alvernia, Sophismata (to be published in CorpusPhilosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi IX, where the present sophisma will be No. 198.
The text of the two mss is only partially identical. Only ms F carries the attribution to Peter.
