

The Intersubjective Sameness of Mental Concepts in Late Scholastic Thought (and some Aspects of its Historical Aftermath)

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1. The Meaning of ISC [=Intersubjective Sameness of Concepts]
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The short introductory remarks of Aristotle's *De interpretatione* contain, as unimposing as they appear, the nucleus of some of the most intense and long-lasting debates in the history of semantics and epistemology.¹ Quite a number of these discussions are more or less closely related to the Stagirite's well known statement that "mental concepts are the same for all" (eadem omnibus passiones animae sunt). What at a first glance might appear to be nothing but a rather remote issue of the scholastic exegesis of Aristotele, i.e. the attempt to provide a reasonable interpretation and account of his thesis of the intersubjective sameness of concepts (for the sake of shortness I shall refer to it in what follows as 'ISC'), on a closer look, turns out to be historically connected with topics that, from different points of view and in different perspectives, have been rated as crucial for the foundation of modern semantics as well as for the origin of modern analytical philosophy.

Many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century authors, disapproving what they called the "magical theory of names"² or, hardly more adequate, the "nominalistic view of language", considered it as "one of the glories of Locke's philosophy that he established the fact that names are not the signs of things but in their origins always the signs of concepts".³ While it had been "familiar to the naive thinking to see the word meaning as nothing but the thing designated by the word", as Meinong's disciple Eduard Martinak held, this "naive correlation of a thing and a word" was vanquished by Locke, who in his *Essay concerning Human*

¹ I am especially referring to *De interpretatione* I, 16a2-8: "Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of - affections of the soul - are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of - actual things - are also the same." The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

² Cf. C. K. OGDEN / I. A. RICHARDS: *The Meaning of Meaning* (London 1923; cited after New York 1956) 9.

³ F. M. MÜLLER: *The Science of Thought* (Oxford 1888) 77; cf. L. NOIRÉ: *Logos. Ursprung und Wesen der Begriffe* (Leipzig 1885) 21.

Understanding “unremittingly pointed to the fact that ... there is always and with strict necessity an idea (representation / Vorstellung) inserted between the thing and the word. ... And in this sense the word-meaning, up to the present day, is tantamount to the representation we have of the pertaining thing.”⁴ Although it is all but clear which authors ever should have been advocating the alleged “magical theory of names”, it is true, that in the succession of Hobbes, Descartes, and Locke post-scholastic semantics was dominated by the view that “the meaning of words ... are always conceptions of the mind”,⁵ so that words, as „stipulated signs of thoughts“ (signes d’institution des pensées),⁶ „in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him he uses them.“⁷

While this position was glorified by its promoters as an overcoming of the “magical theory of names”, it became, especially since late nineteenth century, increasingly condemned itself by those who considered it as ‘psychologism’ and as an disastrous implementation of an insuperable semantic and epistemological ‘subjectivism’. This change of appraisal is based on and referring to a fundamental alteration of the notions of idea, concept, or thought, that came about together with the enforcement of empiricist and sensualist epistemology. For whereas mental concepts or simple apprehensions, that is the bare conceptions of things, were considered by the scholastics basic mental units (acts or qualities), simply representing or signifying the “quod quid est” of the object apprehended, they were seen as structurally complex by empirist epistemology, restricting the notion of ‘simple idea’ to elementary sensory perceptions. The “conceptus simplex” of the Aristotelian tradition (as e.g. the concept of man) thus was transformed into a most “complex idea”.⁸ In this sense, for instance, David Hartley in the mid-18th century spoke of „clusters of ideas“⁹ and regarded it as the „very Essence“ of intellectual ideas „to be *complex*“.¹⁰ According to Destutt de Tracy, one of the

⁴ E. MARTINAK: *Zur Psychologie des Sprachlebens* (first published in: *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* 2, Vienna 1898), in: *Psychologische und pädagogische Abhandlungen*, ed. E. Mally / O. Tumlriz (Graz 1929) 129.

⁵ T. HOBBS: *On Human Nature*, Engl. Works, ed. G. Molesworth (London 1839-45, Reprint 1961) 4, 28.

⁶ A. ARNAULD / P. NICOLE: *L’Art de penser*, I, 4, ed. P. Clair / F. Girbal (Paris 1965) 54; cf. G. DE CORDEMOY: *Discours physique de la parole* (1666), ed. P. Claire / F. Girbal (Paris 1968) 209.

⁷ J. LOCKE: *Essay concerning human understanding* (Oxford 1975) II, 2, 2, p. 405sq; cf. II, 11, 9, p. 159; II, 31, 6, p. 378; III, 1, 2, p. 402; III, 4, 1, p. 420; III, 4, 6, p. 422. – For further references see: S. MEIER-OESER: *Signifikation*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 9, ed. J. Ritter / K. Gründer (Basle 1995) 759-795, esp. 785sq.

⁸ Cf. JOHN LOCKE: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, 23, 14: “... our specifick Ideas of Substances are nothing else but a Collection of a certain number of simple Ideas, considered as united in one thing. These Ideas of Substances, though they are commonly called simple Apprehensions, and the Names of them simple Terms; yet in effect, are complex and compounded”; II, 12, 3: “Ideas thus made up of several simple ones put together, I call complex; such as are beauty, gratitude, a man, an army, the universe; which though complicated of various simple ideas, or complex ideas made up of simple ones, yet are, when the mind pleases, considered each by itself, as one entire thing, and signified by one name.”

⁹ D. HARTLEY: *Observations on Man* (1749), Two Volumes in One. Facsimile Reproduction (Gainesville / Florida 1966) I, 74: “... the simple Ideas of Sensation must run into Clusters and Combinations, by Association; and ... each of these will, at last, coalesce into one complex Idea, by the Approach and Commixture of the several compounding Parts.”

¹⁰ *Ib.*, I, 56.

leading figures of the influential french school of “idéologues”, this complexity is such that all our ideas, except the elementary sensory perceptions, are “extremely composed assemblages” made up not only of many simple ideas but also of judgements.¹¹

It is understandable that under such conditions the intersubjective sameness of mental concepts (ISC) must lose a good deal of its plausibility. Already Locke, affirming something like the ISC regarding to simple sensible ideas,¹² considered it a mere supposition that any idea one man has is “conformable to that in other men’s minds, called by the same common name; v.g. when the mind intends or judges its ideas of justice, temperance, religion, to be the same with what other men give those names to.”¹³ Later on the ISC became more and more subject to doubt. “No one is thinking on a certain word”, Wilhelm von Humboldt claimed, “precisely what another does. ... Any understanding, therefore, is always a not-understanding, and any accordance in thoughts and feelings is a divergence”.¹⁴ Where emphasis is placed on the claim that “it is impossible that one and the same sign should have the same value for all those who are using it and even for each of them at different moments of time”,¹⁵ a view that even found its way into some late 19th-century neo-thomist textbooks on logic,¹⁶ the fundamentals of logic as well as a publicly accessible notion of meaning are getting problematic.

As a reaction against this semantic and epistemological ‘psychologism’ authors like Bolzano, Brentano, Frege, or the early Husserl attempted to reestablish semantic and epistemological objectivity by extruding, in a sort of exorcism, the concepts and thoughts from the mind, placing them into a realm of “objective concepts”. With them, the double nature of the scholastic concepts, being both particular mental qualities or acts and intersubjectively the same for all, has been split up into an internal sphere of mere subjective representations (“Vorstellungen”) and a sphere of objective concepts, in which, as a “third realm” (Frege), the “representations as such” (“Vorstellungen an sich”), concepts or thoughts (“Gedanken”) only have an “ideal being” (Husserl).¹⁷

¹¹ A. L. C. DESTUTT DE TRACY: *Éléments d'idéologie*, vol. 1 (Paris 1804) 375sq.: “... toutes nos idées sont extrêmement composées, ... toutes sont [376] des assemblages d'une foule de souvenirs et de jugemens ...”

¹² Cf. J. LOCKE: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II, 32, 15: “I am ... very apt to think, that the sensible Ideas, produced by any Object in different Men’s Minds, are most commonly very near and undiscernibly alike.”

¹³ *Ibid.* II, 32, 5, p. 385.

¹⁴ W. VON HUMBOLDT: *Ueber die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts* (1830), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. A. Leitzmann (Berlin 1903-1936) VII, 64sq.: “Keiner denkt bei dem Wort gerade, was der andere... Alles Verstehen ist daher immer zugleich ein Nicht-Verstehen, alle Übereinstimmung in Gedanken und Gefühlen zugleich ein Auseinandergehen.”

¹⁵ DESTUTT DE TRACY: *Éléments d'idéologie*, vol. 2 (Paris 1803) p. 405: “... il est impossible que le même signe ait exactement la même valeur pour tous ceux qui l’emploient, et même pour chacun d’eux, dans les différens momens où il l’emploie.”

¹⁶ Cf. TILMANN PESCH: *Institutiones logicae*, § 110 (Freiburg 1888) p. 72: “Vocabula per se significant conceptus non audientium, sed loquentium. Cum experientia teste diversi sint in diversis hominibus pro diversa cognitione de una eademque re conceptus..., necesse est, ut eadem vox ab aliis pronuntiata aliam etiam vim habeat et significationem. Ex quo evidens est in cuiuslibet ore eodem vocabulo alium tegi conceptum et exprimi multum discrepantem.”

¹⁷ In his *Wissenschaftslehre* Bolzano is undertaking the curious venture of introducing the notion

Different from the imaginative representation (*Vorstellung*), always being subjective, such that the representation of *x* of anyone is not equal to the one of anyone else, the sense of a sign (*Sinn eines Zeichens*), as Frege stated, can be the common property of many and is therefore no part or mode of the single soul.¹⁸ Correspondingly, “the thought (*Gedanke*) does not belong particularly to those who think, as the imaginative representation does to those who imagine, but rather is the same object for all those who are grasping it.”¹⁹

According to Michael Dummett’s reconstruction of the origins of analytical philosophy this anti-psychologist approach of the “philosophy of thought”, as problematic as it may be rated regarding to some of its ontological implications, “prepared the ground” for the “crucial step” towards a fully fledged philosophy of language, taken by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*:

Before the philosophy of language could be seen, not as a minor specialised branch of the subject, but as the stem from which all other branches grow, it was first necessary that the fundamental place should be accorded to the philosophy of thought. That could not happen until the philosophy of thought had been disentangled from philosophical psychology; and that in turn depended upon ... the extrusion of thoughts from the mind and the consequent rejection of psychologism.²⁰

What, however, none of the representatives of the so called “philosophy of thought” had in view while attacking ‘psychologism’ is the fact that already in the scholastic tradition, at least according to its own pretension, semantic and epistemological subjectivism was ruled out by the doctrine of ISC without taking refuge to ideal entities situated outside the realm of reality. Was therefore, as Putnam has stated, “the whole psychologism/Platonism issue somewhat a tempest in a teapot, as far as meaning-theory is concerned”?²¹ For, as he argues, “even if

of “representations as such” (“*Vorstellungen an sich*”, cf. § 48) into logic while at the same time demonstrating that it has been already frequently used there – though under different names (cf. § 51). Regarding to this point his lack of acquaintance with scholastic philosophy is regrettable the more so as he believed to have found a perfect equivalent to his notion of “representations as such” in the “*conceptus objectivus*” which, however, he only knows from the 18th-century author of the Wolffian school, Johann Gottlieb Baumgarten. After quoting a short passage of his *Acroasis logica* (“*Unum quod percipitur, est objectum conceptus, et conceptus objectivus; perceptio ipsa conceptus formalis est*”; *Acroasis logica*, Halle 1761, § 51) he remarks: “what Baumgarten designates with this name is obviously the same with that which I call thus.” This, however, is not quite correct in all respects. For Baumgarten as well as the scholastic authors held the objective concepts to owe their existence to the formal concepts (*conceptus formales*) inhering in individual minds, rather than being, as Bolzano takes it, independent of any subject representing them.

¹⁸ GOTTLIEB FREGE: *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* (1892), in: G. Frege: *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung. Fünf logische Studien*, ed. G. Patzig, (Göttingen 1994) 44: “Die Vorstellung ist subjektiv: die Vorstellung des einen ist nicht die des anderen. Damit sind von selbst mannigfache Unterschiede der mit demselben Sinne verknüpften Vorstellungen gegeben. Die Vorstellung unterscheidet sich dadurch wesentlich von dem Sinne eines Zeichens, welcher gemeinsames Eigentum von vielen sein kann und also nicht Teil oder Modus der Einzelseele ist; denn man wird wohl nicht leugnen können, daß die Menschheit einen gemeinsamen Schatz von Gedanken hat.”

¹⁹ G. FREGE: *Logik* (1897), in: *Schriften zur Logik und Sprachphilosophie*. Aus dem Nachlass. Ed. G. Gabriel (Hamburg 1990) 46: “Der Gedanke ist den Denkenden nicht so besonders zu eigen, wie die Vorstellung den Vorstellenden, sondern steht allen, die ihn auffassen, in derselben Weise und als derselbe gegenüber.”

²⁰ M. DUMMETT: *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (London 1993) 127.

²¹ H. PUTNAM: *The Meaning of ‘Meaning’*, in: *Mind, Language and Reality* (Cambridge University

meanings are ‘Platonic’ entities rather than ‘mental’ states ..., ‘grasping’ those entities is presumably a psychological state (in the narrow sense).” The strict correlation between the ‘Platonic entities’ and the mental states, ‘grasping’ them, let it “appear to be somewhat a matter of convention” whether “one takes the ‘Platonic’ entity or the psychological state as the ‘meaning’”. In addition to this point, which, looking farther back, can be seen as the reissue of Ammonius’s polemic against the Stoic semantics of the *lekton*,²² “taking the psychological state to be the meaning would hardly have the consequences that Frege feared, that meaning would cease to be public. For psychological states are ‘public’ in the sense that different people ... can be in the same psychological state.” Frege’s argument against psychologism is, in Putnam’s view, “only an argument against identifying concepts with mental particulars, not with mental entities in general.”²³

Putnam’s accentuation of the possibility that “different people can be in the same mental state” structurally corresponds to, and leads us therefore back to our main issue, the ISC as it was claimed, analysed, and substantiated in scholastic logic. For while, according to Putnam, ‘to be in the same mental state’ can be described in terms of ‘to grasp or to have the same concept’, this having the same concept precisely is what the scholastic authors felt to be in need of further explication.

1. The Meaning of ISC

The scholastic authors were especially concerned with two aspects of Aristotle’s ISC-thesis: First, what precisely is meant with it, and second, how is it to be justified. Let’s begin with the first. What, then, could reasonably be meant by the statement that mental concepts, being in any case particular mental qualities or acts of individual intellects, are the same for all? Obviously this statement does not suggest – and regarding to this point agreement was easily reached - a numerical identity of concepts²⁴ which, as John Dullaert (ca. 1480 – 1513) opined, would be

Press 1975) 222.

²² Cf. AMMONIUS: *In Aristotelis De interpretatione* 17,24-28; cf. A. A. LONG / D. N. SEDLEY (ed.): *The Hellenistic philosophers* (Cambridge Univ. Press 1987) 33N.

²³ H. PUTNAM: 222.

²⁴ Different is the case with Bolzano’s, Brentano’s and Husserl’s “representations as such” or Frege’s “thought” (Gedanke), the numerical identity of which appeared to these authors as the only way of guaranteeing the possibility that two or more persons may have the same concept. As the “objective representation” or “representation as such”, according to Bolzano, does not presuppose any subject representing it, but persists - though not as something existing but rather as a certain something – even if no thinking being should conceive it, “it is not multiplied by one, two, three or many beings thinking it.” (“Diese objective Vorstellung bedarf keines Subjectes, von dem sie vorgestellt werde, sondern bestehet - zwar nicht als etwas Seyendes, aber doch als ein gewisses Etwas, auch wenn kein einziges denkendes Wesen sie auffassen sollte, und sie wird dadurch, daß ein, zwei, drei oder mehrere Wesen sie denken, nicht vervielfacht”; B. BOLZANO: *Wissenschaftslehre* § 48, Gesamtausgabe, ed. E. Winter et. al. I/11, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1987, 29). Therefore, “the objective representation is only one while there are innumerable many subjective representations. ... We are, however, used to call all those subjective representations the same to each other which have the identical objective representation as their subject matter...” (“Die objective Vorstellung... ist deßhalb nur eine einzige: der subjectiven Vorstellungen aber, gibt es unzählige... Wie pflegen aber alle diejenigen subjectiven Vorstellungen, die einerlei objective Vorstellung zu ihrem Stoffe haben, einander

impossible even under the conditions of an averroistic intellect theory.²⁵ It rather is, as the scholastics saw it, claiming a specific sameness.²⁶ This way of spelling out the statement, however, makes the ISC only slightly more intelligible. For it still remains unclear what it means that mental concepts are specifically the same for all – because seemingly it does not simply mean that all men have concepts of the same kind - or what it is for different intellects to have specifically same concepts.

An important conceptual feature for bringing more light into the ISC-thesis was provided when in the mid-13th century mental concepts - without at first losing their status of being likenesses of the things – became to be considered primarily as being ‘signs of things’ (*signa rerum*). On this background it was now possible to render the Aristotelian dictum more intelligible and, as some felt, even more correct, by interpreting the claim of concepts “*being* the same for all” in terms of concepts “*signifying* the same for all”. For, as Scotus noted, while it is false that mental concepts (*passiones*) are in themselves (*in se*) the same for all, it is true that they are the same for all insofar as they are signs, such that any concept, remaining the very same in itself, would represent the same thing to the mind of whomsoever.²⁷ In this way Walter Burley stated:

dicendum quod ista propositio ‘*eaedem sunt passiones animae apud omnes*’ debet intelligi quod *passio animae*, scilicet *similitudo rei*, significat idem apud omnes, quoniam apud omnes significat rem cuius est similitudo.²⁸

gleich zu nennen...“; *ib.*).

²⁵ JOHANNES DULLAERT: *Quaestiones super duos libros Peri Hermeneias Aristotelis* (Paris 1515) fol. 4va: “Unus sensus illius propositionis potest esse quod eadem passiones sunt apud omnes per realem inhaerentiam: ita quod eadem notiones omnibus insint et hoc est falsum: immo licet teneretur opinio commentatoris quod idem est intellectus in omnibus hominibus adhuc non esset illud concedendum.”

²⁶ Cf. MARTINUS DACUS: *Quaestiones super librum perihermeneias*, in: *Opera*, ed. H. Roos, *Corpus philosophorum danicorum medii aevi*, 2 (Copenhagen 1961) 244: “... dicendum, quod passiones animae sunt eadem in specie apud omnes, et non numero....”; RICHARD BRINKLEY: *Summa logicae*, ed. G. Gál / R. Wood: Richard Brinkley and his „*Summa logicae*“: *Franciscan Studies* 40 (1980) 81: “Intelligendum est ... quod Aristoteles non loquitur de identitate in numero, ... sed tantum loquitur de identitate in specie...”; JOHANNES RAULINUS: *In logicam Aristotelis commentarium* (Paris 1500) fol. g4ra; PETRUS RAULEDIUS: *Commentaria in Librum Aristotelis de Interpretatione* (Paris 1519) fol. 33^{va}; LOVANIENSES: *Commentaria in Isagogen Porphyrii, et in omnes libros Aristotelis de Dialectica* (Louvain 1553) 229; CONIMBRICENSES: *Commentarii in universam Aristotelis dialecticam* (Cologne 1607) 2.6; FRANCISCUS TOLETUS: *Introductio in universam Aristotelis logicam*, in: *Opera omnia philosophica*, vol. 1 (Cologne 1615, Reprint Hildesheim, Zurich, New York 1985) 207a.

²⁷ DUNS SCOTUS: *Super librum I. perihermenias*, q. 4, *Opera omnia*, ed. Wadding, vol. 1, p. 190a: “... passiones non sunt eadem apud omnes in se, sed inquantum sunt signa rerum, omnis enim passio eadem in se, apud cuiuscumque mentem fuerit, eandem rem se repraesentat.”

²⁸ WALTER BURLEY: *Commentarius medius*, ed. S. F. Brown: W. Burleigh’s Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s *Perihermeneias*: *Franciscan Studies* 33 (1973) 56sq.

Most late scholastic authors agreed in this semantic interpretation of ISC,²⁹ which, as soon as concepts were held to be signs, was suggesting itself insofar as being “idem apud omnes”, which already for Aristotle was a reliable indicator of naturalness, was generally considered one of the basic criteria for natural signification. The understanding of concepts as being signs, it is true, does not exclude to substantiate the ISC by reference to concepts being likenesses or mental images of things,³⁰ for images (*imagines*, *picturae*, *similitudines*) were generally seen as one of the major classes of the natural sign.³¹ And so it is not surprising that Burley continued his aforementioned exposition of the ISC by taking up the example of pictorial representation:

Unde si esset aliqua vera imago Herculis, ubicumque foret ista imago semper significaret Herculem, nec esset in uno loco imago Herculis et in alio loco imago alterius, unde ista imago significaret idem apud omnes. Et eodem modo passio animae quae est similitudo rei in anima significat idem apud omnes.³²

This way of illustrating the ISC by referring to the contextual invariability of pictorial representation has been taken up frequently later on. The reformulation of Aristotle’s claim in terms of concepts being signs opened new ways not only for explaining the meaning of ISC but, as we shall see, also for giving account for it. By no means, however, has it been in itself transparent to such a degree that it would have right away provided an answer to all questions. For what, after all, does it amount to say that concepts are signifying the same for all?

Taking into account that concepts are in each case particular qualities or acts of individual intellects, it is clear that the meaning of this statement could not be explained, nor its correctness tested, in the same way as the complementary claim about spoken words not signifying the same for all. While the latter can be spelled out such that the same word or vocal sound is not connected with or subordinated to the same mental concepts among people of different languages,³³ an analogous explication is obviously not viable regarding to the concepts themselves – unless one is willing to take recourse to Bolzanian-like “objective representations” and to call “all those subjective representations the same to each other which have the identical objective representation as their subject matter...”³⁴

²⁹ Cf. PIERRE D’AILLY [?]: *Destructiones modorum significandi*, ed. L. Kaczmarek: Die modi significandi und ihre Destruktion (Amsterdam, Philadelphia 1994) 50: “... signa mentalia, scilicet conceptus et passionēs animae, sunt eadem apud omnes, id est naturaliter apud omnes idem significant...”; GEORGE OF BRUXELLES: *Quaestiones Georgii in logicam aristotelis*, in: *Logica magistri Georgii inserto textu Bricoti* (Paris 1493) fol. 40rb: “...potest intelligi quod aliquid sit idem apud omnes quoad significationem: hoc est quod omne illud quod uni significat cuilibet alteri ex significatione sive impositione quam actu habet natum est significare, et hoc modo intelligit philosophus dictum suum et verum est quod passionēs sunt eadem apud omnes...”; ANTONIUS RUBIUS: *Logica Mexicana sive commentaria in universam Aristotelis logicam* (1. ed. Alcalá 1603; cited after Cologne 1605) 11.

³⁰ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS: *In Libros Perihermeneias*, lib. 1, lect. 2, n. 9: “in passionibus autem animae oportet attendi rationem similitudinis ad exprimendas res, quia naturaliter eas designant, non ex institutione.”

³¹ ROGER BACON: *De signis* I, 5, ed. K. M. Fredborg / L. Nielsen / J. Pinborg, An Unedited Part of Roger Bacon’s *Opus Maius*: ‘De signis’: *Traditio* 34 (1978) 75-136, here 83.

³² See note 28.

³³ It has to be noted, however, that this explanation is problematic in itself because it finally inherits the difficulties involved in the notion of ISC.

³⁴ See note 24.

Without such a *tertium comparationis*, however, it is not possible to substantiate the ISC by describing the concepts in different intellects as tokens of the same type. While the sameness of word meaning for different people is easy to be tested by confronting each of them with the same word, or with word tokens of the same type, and letting them respond to it in a certain prescribed way, e.g. by pointing to its significatum, the difficulty with mental concepts is that within the normal course of nature it is impossible to confront different intellects with the very same concept. An analogous test regarding to mental concepts, therefore, is possible only in form of a thought experiment formulated in an abbreviated counterfactual conditional. This, I think, is clearly reflected in Scotus's formulation that ISC means that a concept or *passio* would represent the same thing to the mind of whomsoever (*"apud cuiuscumque mentem fuerit, eandem rem se repraesentat"*).³⁵ Interpreted such, "the assertion of the Philosopher", as the Conimbricenses noted, explicitly referring to Scotus, "is not absolute but conditioned in the following way. A concept is of such kind, that in whosever's mind it exists it always represents the same thing." And they hasten to add that "for the truth of this, it makes no difference whether one person's concept can be transferred into the mind of another or not."³⁶

A corresponding though somewhat different explanation of ISC has been given by Petrus Rauledius (fl. 1519) who obviously was anxious to avoid the metaphysical problems involved in this fictional concept-transplantation.³⁷ But his own solution is problematic as well when he states that a certain concept, existing in the soul of someone, would still signify the very same thing, even if it were formed by another intellect. The truth of this counterfactual conditional, however, Rauledius stresses, does not result from the antecedent being impossible according to the logical principle *"ex impossibili sequitur quodlibet"*. For, as he declares, he does not want to be understood such as to be supposing that the very concept in one intellect could have been actually formed by another. What he rather is trying to express, I guess, is that the concept of *x*, it may have been formed by

³⁵ See note 27. Cf. JOHANNES DULLAERT: *Quaestiones super duos libros Peri Hermeneias Aristotelis* (Paris 1515) fol. a 4va: "...potest intelligi aliquam passionem eandem esse apud omnes in representando sic videlicet quod ipsa sit talis nature quod in quocumque intellectu ponatur semper idem representabit: et hoc pacto intelligenda est propositio philosophi. Et sic claret differentia vocum et passionum anime: non enim sunt sic voces eedem apud omnes dato quod coram multis proferatur hec vox homo non oportet quod idem omnibus representet... Nec ex isto sequitur omnes esse eque scientes..."

³⁶ CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.47: "respondetur iuxta mentem Scoti, propositionem Philosophi non esse absolutam, sed conditionatam: ad hunc modum. Conceptus eiusmodi est, ut in cuiusvis mente ponatur, idem semper repraesentet. Ad cuius veritatem nihil refert, an conceptus unius transferri possit in mentem alterius, nec ne."

³⁷ In an objection against this way of spelling out the ISC the Conimbricenses point to the fact that "a concept formed by one person, since it is an accident, cannot migrate into the mind of another person" and argue, that, "even if it were to be transferred by God, it would not serve that other person any more, since, just as no one can live by the life of another, so neither can anyone understand by another's concept." CONIMBRICENSES: ib. 2.43: "...conceptus ab uno formatus, cum sit accidens, nequit migrare in mentem alterius; ergo non potest alteri repraesentare. Imo tametsi transferretur a Deo, nihilo magis inserviret alteri ad cognitionem, quoniam, ut nemo vivere potest per alterius vitam, ita nec intelligere per alterius conceptum." The solution of this argument is unfortunately deferred to their – never written – Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Cf. The Conimbricenses, *Some Questions on Signs*, transl. with an Introd. and Notes by JOHN P. DOYLE (Marquette Univ. Press 2001) 120sq.

whomsoever, always is apt to signify x.³⁸ In other words: Any intellect, forming a concept of x, is forming it such that this concept would signify x in any other intellect, too. Insofar Rauledius's way of explaining the meaning of ISC agrees with what Scotus and Dullaert said. What they are after with their labored and seemingly strange way of spelling out the ISC-thesis is a formulation that, by taking into account that conceptual signs are three term relations (a concept signifies ... to ...), gives a stronger version of sameness than the bare claim that any intellect, forming a concept of x, is forming a concept that is signifying x (i.e. to the intellect forming it). For this would leave open the possibility that the concepts of x in two distinct intellects A and B would be different from each other to such a degree that the concept produced by A would not be apt to function as a concept of x for B and vice versa.

Interpreted along these lines, the ISC is reduced to a sameness in reference, claiming that the concept of x in intellect A is such that it would refer to x in any other intellect. Altogether, however, this makes up a rather weak version of the ISC-thesis, because it neither does imply that all men are equal in knowledge (*aeque scientes*) or have the same set of concepts such that for each and every concept in mind A there would exist a corresponding concept in mind B – many people, Scotus remarks, have knowledge about simple substances of which others do nothing apprehend³⁹ – nor does it mean that all men are conceiving the same things in the same way. For, as the Conimbricenses point out:

Not only are diverse concepts formed by different men about the same thing, as can be seen in the case of a peasant and a mathematician, one of whom understands the sun to be greater than the whole earth, while the other thinks it less than the wheel of a wagon — not only do I say 'diverse' but even opposite concepts [are formed], since about one proposition many may think opposite things.⁴⁰

The ISC, therefore, does not entail conformity of opinions or convictions regarding to the same things; it is nothing but a sameness in reference, for Aristotle by no means wanted to claim that all men are apprehending the same things in the same way.⁴¹ How diverse ever the actual knowledge of different

³⁸ PETRUS RAULEDIUS, see note 26, fol. 33va: "Per passionem ... animae esse easdem non intelligimus esse easdem numero... Sed intelligimus eas naturaliter proprie significare, quod est idem apud omnes designare, ad hunc sensum: quod si conceptus aliquis existens in anima alicuius fuisset formatus ab alio quovis intellectu idem penitus ei repraesentaret quod illi animae, cuius nunc est passio. Si dicas hoc verum esse: quia antecedens illius conditionalis est impossibile: Possibile siquidem non est saltem naturaliter conceptum sortis in anima platonis existentem fuisse formatum ab alio quovis intellectu, male me intelligis. Nolo enim dicere quod idem conceptus numero fuisset ab alio formatus. Sed si eiusdem rei conceptus formetur ab alio quovis intellectu non nisi illam rem significabit."

³⁹ SCOTUS, see note 26, 191a: "... multi ... sciunt aliqua simplicia, de quibus alij nihil apprehendunt."

⁴⁰ CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.43: "De eadem re non modo finguntur diversi conceptus a diversis hominibus, ut videre est in rustico, et Mathematico, quorum unus apprehendit solem maiorem tota terra, alter minorem rota plaustrum, non modo inquam, diversi; sed etiam oppositi: cum de una propositione plerique contraria opinentur." The english translation is from J. P. Doyle, see note 37.

⁴¹ Ib. 2.6: "... non vult [sc. Aristoteles] omnes eodem modo apprehendere easdem res, nam alius perfectius, alius imperfectius eadem rem cognoscit. Sed ubicunque sit interna alicuius rei imago, qualiscunque illa formeretur retinere eandem representationem, et secundum se aequè aptam esse omnibus idem repraesentare."

people about a certain object may be, the mental concept or mental image they form of the object is in any case retaining the same representation, i.e. is in itself apt to represent the same for all. In other words: intension does not determinate extension. The simple concept, in this view, seems to be primarily as it were a referential kernel to which opinion and knowledge is or can be attached without changing its reference. This mainly Scotist and Jesuit interpretation of the ISC, diverges by emphasizing the sameness in reference or *extension* from the Thomistic position, which, on grounds of a different epistemological belief regarding to the cognizability of substances,⁴² tends to keep up with an *intensional* sameness of concepts aquired in simple apprehension. Thus the Jesuit Balthazar Tellez (1595-1675) rates the Scotistic way of spelling out the ISC, according to which mental concepts because of being natural signs are representing the same anywhere (*ubicumque ponantur, idem repraesentat*) to be more adequate than the Thomistic claim that all men are forming the same concepts on the same thing (“*omnes formant eosdem conceptus de eadem re*”), because it frequently happens that different people, on hearing the same word, are forming totally diverse concepts (*diversis omnino conceptus*).⁴³ The Thomist Didacus Masius (1553-

⁴² See below, notes 71sqq.

⁴³ BALTHAZAR TELLEZ: *Summa universae philosophiae* (Lisbon 1642: 100): “Cum Philosophus asserit, conceptus esse eosdem apud omnes, idem est ac dicere, conceptus esse signa naturalia, ita ut ubicumque ponantur, idem repraesentat; ita explicant Aristotelem nobiliores interpretes cum Scoto in hoc loco, q. 3 ut videre est apud patres Conimbricenses in Logica cap. 2 de Signis q. 4 art. 1. Quae interpretatio accomodatior videtur, quam ea, quae ab aliquibus affertur, qui asserunt, ideo dici conceptus eosdem apud omnes, quia omnes formant eosdem conceptus de eadem re, quod falsum est, nam audito eodem nomine, saepe diversis omnino conceptus formantur circa eadem rem, audito enim nomine ‘Solis’, Mathematicus, et rusticus toto caelo diversi abeunt circa conceptus ...” - This passage directly refers to the answer, the Conimbricenses have given to the question “Utrum conceptus iidem sunt apud omnes”. Cf. CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.47: “... ad argumentum initio articuli positum [challenging the ISC by pointing to the divergence of human opinions] respondet Boetius. Philosophum intelligere conceptus esse eosdem apud omnes priori modo: hoc est, omnes formare similes conceptus de una re. Quem D. Thomas exponit de conceptibus simplicibus; nam propositiones constat apud varios esse omnino discrepantes. Verum Scotus hic q. 3 [sic! actually it is q. 4] limitationem D. Thomae non admittit: et merito, ut ostendit impugnatio de conceptu solis in argumento posita: nisi D. Thomas intelligat ab omnibus formari eosdem conceptus simplices, si omnia sint paria; at hoc modo etiam propositiones sunt eadem, quod impugnat. Quamobrem posteriori modo accipienda est mens Philosophi, videlicet conceptus natura sua habere vim significandi, ut ubicumque ponantur, idem repraesentent: quod non habent voces, et scripta, cum quibus Aristoteles conceptus comparavit.” - The Conimbricenses, in turn, are referring to Scotus’s discussion of the ISC in quaestio 4 of his first commentary on *Peri hermeneias*, where he is – though without giving names – directly referring to Thomas’s interpretation of the ISC, which, in his view, results in a too strong version of sameness. Presenting Thomas’s position as an answer to the objection that from the ISC follows that all know the same things (“apud omnes sunt easdem res cognitae”), so that all are equal in knowledge (“omnes sunt aequae scientes”), he insists that the limitation Thomas is trying to make by pointing out that the sameness only regards the mode of conceiving the simplicia but not the composition or division, is not practical for ruling out the problematic consequence of a sameness in knowledge. For still it would hold that all men were equally knowing in respect to the objects of simple apprehension, i.e., according to Thomistic epistemological assumptions, regarding to the definitions of simple substances. Cf. SCOTUS, see note 27, 190b: “ad primam rationem dicitur, quod licet omnes eodem modo simplicia concipiant, non tamen eodem modo componunt, et dividunt, unde 3. de Anima, context. 36. et 21 dicitur, quod intellectus circa quod quid est non decipitur nisi secundum accidens, et hoc est secundum ipsos, non in absoluta apprehensione, sed in componendo quod quid est cum altero. Contra, saltem

1608), on the contrary, arguing in favour of the sameness in intension, is answering to the problem of the diversity of human opinions by drawing a distinction between a „conceptus certus“ and a „conceptus opinativus et dubius“. Whereas, according to Masius, a concept formed in simple apprehension is a “conceptus certus” and therefore intersubjectively the same for all – people of all nations conceive a line as longitude without latitude -, there can be a multiplicity of “conceptus opinativi”. The concept of quantity, for instance, is not the same for all in the sense that all would decide the question of whether or not quantity is distinct from the res quanta in the same way.⁴⁴ The variant interpretations of the meaning of ISC are, thus, connected with different approaches to its rationale.

2. The Rationale of ISC

It is but natural that the scholastic authors, striving for a substantiation of the ISC-thesis, tried to develop the rationale of ISC from the text in which it was stated. It has to be noted, however, that Aristotle in *De interpretatione*, different to his scholastic commentators who explicitly posed questions like “utrum passiones in anima sunt eadem apud omnes”,⁴⁵ “utrum sit verum quod passiones animae sunt apud omnes eadem”,⁴⁶ or “quo sensu verum sit conceptus esse eosdem apud omnes”,⁴⁷ is not introducing the ISC as something to be justified or proven. The ISC is rather taken as a matter of fact, providing an argument for the naturalness of mental concepts in contrast to the conventionality of spoken and written words.⁴⁸ For what is the same everywhere cannot be but natural.⁴⁹ But even

sequitur, quod omnes erunt aequae scientes, quantum ad apprehensionem simplicium [191a], et ita erunt omnes aequae scientes definitive, quia definitio est via cognoscendi simpliciter; sed hoc manifeste est falsum, multi enim sciunt aliqua simplicia, de quibus alij nihil apprehendunt.” – Scotus, finally, is referring to THOMAS: *In lib. periherm.* I, lect. 2, n. 10. See note 68.

⁴⁴ Cf. DIDACUS MASIUS: *Commentum in duos libros Aristotelis de interpretatione* (first ed. Valencia 1592, cited after Cologne 1617) 6b-7b: “... conceptus de quantitate non est unus, et idem apud omnes... quidam enim concipiunt quantitatem distinguere ipsam a re quanta, alii vero econtra concipiunt non distinguere: ergo ...[7b] ... dicimus ..., duplicem esse conceptum, certum unum, alium vero opinativum: conceptus certus, qui praecipue fit in prima operatione intellectus, idem est apud omnes, nam quemadmodum Latini concipimus lineam esse longitudinem sine latitudine, ita et id ipsum aliae gentes concipiunt: conceptus nihilominus opinativus et dubius non est idem, et ita cum hic conceptus, num scilicet quantitas distinguatur a re quanta sit conceptus opinativus, poterit esse multiplex et diversus.”

⁴⁵ Cf. MARTINUS DACUS, see note 26, 244; CONIMBRICENSES, see note 2.42.

⁴⁶ Cf. GRATIAEI ESCULANUS (D’ASCOLI): *Commentaria Gratiadei esculani Ordinis praedicatorum in totam artem veterem Aristotelis* (Venice 1491) fol. 5ra; GEORGE OF BRUXELLES: *Quaestiones Georgii in logicam aristotelis*, in: *Logica magistri Georgii inserto textu Bricoti* (Paris 1493) fol. 40ra.

⁴⁷ CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.47; FRANCISCUS TOLETUS, see note 26, 207a: “... ..dubium posset esse, quomodo idem sint conceptus apud omnes, cum constet aliquem conceptum me habere hominis, alium habere Petrum, alium Ioannem?”

⁴⁸ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS: *In Libros Perihermeneias* I, lect. 2 n. 9: “... quorum autem etc., ostendit passiones animae naturaliter esse, sicut et res, per hoc quod eadem sunt apud omnes.”; RICHARD OF CAMPSALL: *Quaestiones super librum Priorum Analeticorum*, ed. E. A. Synan (Toronto 1968) 2.18: “passiones significant a natura, quia sunt eadem apud omnes.”; CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.43: “...idem esse apud omnes nihil est aliud, quam natura sua tale esse, non ex hominum arbitratu.”

⁴⁹ Cf. BOETHIUS: *Commentarius in librum Aristoteles Perihermeneias*, prima editio, ed. C. Meiser (Leipzig 1877) 39: “Quod uero addidit: quorum autem haec primorum notae, eadem omnibus passiones animae et quorum hae similitudines, res etiam eadem ad hoc pertinet, ut

though Aristotle is not explicitly offering a proof of the ISC, the passage concerned seems to comprise at least some hints on how such a proof could be build up. So it is obvious that the ISC, in Aristotle's account of the matter, has something to do with the sameness of things,⁵⁰ such that the latter is providing the reason for the former: Our concepts of things are the same because the things of which they are concepts are the same.⁵¹ This, however, as already Abelard seems to have noticed, leaves open – at least – two ways of deducing the ISC from the sameness of things. For it can be deduced either “a simili” or “a causa”,⁵² that is, in other words, concepts can be said to be the same for all because of being either 1) “similitudines rerum”, i.e. likenesses (*homoiomata*) of things, or 2) “passiones animae”, i.e. affections of the soul (*pathemata*), caused or con-caused by the things. If the first option is chosen it might appear as if the underlying argument of Aristotle's remarks would go like this:

things are the same for all,
concepts are likenesses of things,
therefore concepts are the same for all.

Such a reasoning, however, which Aristotle is not explicitly offering neither in *De interpretatione* nor anywhere else, would hardly be conclusive, because from the bare fact that 1) a certain a concept (c1) in a certain intellect (i1) is a likeness

naturales esse res intellectusque declarat.”- Boethius: *Commentarius in librum Aristoteles Perihermenias*, secunda editio, ed. C. Meiser (Leipzig 1880) 23: “...dicendum est res et intellectus, quoniam apud omnes idem sunt, esse naturaliter constitutos.”

⁵⁰ Any attempt to explain the ISC by referring to the sameness of things is confronted with the problem that the sameness of things is no less in need of explanation than the ISC itself. For, as Ockham remarked, things are not the same for all in the sense that all would have the same things (“quascumque res habent aliqui habeant omnes alii...” *Expositio in Librum Perihermenias Aristotelis*, ed. A. Gambatese / S. Brown, OP II, 372). The solution that Scotus has offered for this problem is based on the notion of signification as well. For just as the concepts are not in themselves (in se) the same for all, but only insofar as they are signs of things, so the things, too, are the same for all only insofar as they are signified by concepts: “...res in quantum significantur per passionem, sunt eadem apud omnes.” (SCOTUS, see note 27, 191a; cf. ANTONIUS ANDREAE: *Scriptum super librum perihermenias*, Venice 1508, fol 63vb). Ockham explained that things are the same for all such that people using different languages call the specifically or numerically same things by different names (“sic sunt eadem apud omnes quod diversi easdem res secundum speciem vel numerum vocant diversis nominibus”; *Expos. in Lib. Periherm.* OP II, 372) If this sentence shall make any sense or give any information about the sameness of things it must be, I think, understood such that Ockham is trying to give account of the sameness of things by recourse to the extensional sameness of corresponding words in different languages (e.g. “man” and “homo”, or “moon” and “luna” are of the same extension, i.e. are referring to the same things).

⁵¹ Cf. PETER ABELARD: *Logica ingredientibus. Glossae ... super Peri ermenias*, in: Peter Abaelards Philosophische Schriften, ed. B. Geyer (BGPhThMA 21,3) Munster 1927, 68: “... dicit intellectus eosdem omnibus permanere et hoc per suprapositam rerum similitudinem ostendit, quia uidelicet quemadmodum res de quibus habentur intellectus, eadem sunt, ita etiam intellectus.”; RICHARD BRINKLEY, see note 26, 81: “Aristoteles ... assignat causam quare conceptus sunt idem apud omnes, dicens quod conceptus sunt idem apud omnes quia res sunt eadem apud omnes. Quae auctoritas aequivalet huic consequentiae: res sunt eadem apud omnes, ergo conceptus rerum sunt idem apud omnes.”

⁵² Cf. Peter Abelard, see note 51, 72: “Per identitatem rerum ostendit a simili vel a causa identitatem intellectuum.”

of a certain thing or kind of things (r), and 2) that c2 in i2 is a likeness of r, too, it does not follow that c1 and c2 are “the same”, viz the “same likeness” (eadem similitudo).⁵³ For what is justified in case of equality, namely to conclude with Euclide, that “if two things are each equal to a third thing then they are equal to each other”, does not hold for likeness, because it is well possible that there are two or more likenesses of a third, which are by no means similar to each other (as e.g. the ground plan and the elevation of a building). Though, therefore, something more than mere likeness in an unspecific sense seems to be required for properly substantiating the ISC, this nevertheless seems to have been the prevalent way of reading the passage,⁵⁴ so that, as the Conimbricenses remark, the claim of concepts being images or likenesses of things is the principal argument by which the interpreters of Aristotle are trying to prove the ISC.⁵⁵ Especially it is the case where, as with Burley, the contextual invariance of an artificial image, always and anywhere representing the same object, is referred to in order to illustrate the ISC. For, as Menghus Blanchellus (ca. 1440 - ca. 1520) noted, if something is a Caesar-picture, it will represent Caesar everywhere and not Caesar in one place and

⁵³ For the formulation of “same likeness” see SIGER OF COURTRAI: *In I Perihermeneias Zeger van Kortrijk, Commentator van Perihermeneias*, ed. C. Verhaak, Brussels 1964: 9f: “passiones animae et res quarum similitudines sunt in anima, sunt eadem apud omnes; eadem enim similitudinem et conceptum rei apprehensae habet graecus et latinus.” Cf. Nicolaus Tinctoris in the following note.

⁵⁴ Cf. PETER ABELARD: *Introductiones parvulorum*, ed. Mario dal Pra, in: Pietro Abelardo: *Scritti di logica* (2nd ed. Florence 1969) 74: “Passiones, id est intellectus, sunt iidem apud omnes et caeterae res sunt eadem apud omnes, quorum, id est quarum rerum, hae passiones, id est intellectus, sunt similitudines, id est imaginationes, quia intellectu imaginamur esse rei sicuti est.”; AEGIDIUS ROMANUS: *Expositio in Artem veterem* (Venice 1507) fol. 48ra: “... dicit (sc. Aristoteles) quod passiones in anima sunt eadem apud omnes. Nam idem est asinus apud nos et apud grecos: similiter et similitudo asini est eadem.” MENGHUS BLANCHELLUS: *Commentum cum quaestiones super logicam Pauli Veneti* (1476) fol. a2vb: “... causa quare terminus vocalis vel scriptus non significat idem apud omnes est quia non significat rem ex aliqua convenientia et similitudine quam habet cum rem quemadmodum terminus mentalis significat ex similitudine et convenientia cum re sed solum ex impositione primi impositoris...”; NICOLAUS TINCTORIS: *Dicta super Summulas Petri hispani* (Reutlingen 1486) fol. Q5rb: “... conceptus sive passiones animae sunt idem apud omnes. Eadem enim est similitudo naturalis repraesentans lapidem in mente greci et latini.”; JOHANNES DE MAGISTRIS: *Questiones subtiles et peritiles ... super totum cursum logice* (Venice 1490) fol. F5rb: “... sicut res sunt eadem apud omnes ita passiones animae quae sunt naturales similitudines rerum sunt eadem apud omnes.”; PETRUS TARTARETUS: *Expositio super textu logices Aristotelis* (Paris 1495: fol. 307ra): “... sicut res ad extra sunt eadem apud omnes ita passiones anime seu conceptus qui sunt naturales similitudines rerum sunt eadem apud omnes.”; B. TELLEZ, see note 43, 100: “...conceptus sunt essentialiter imagines, quae transcendentaliter feruntur in obiecta, et quae repraesentant obiecta naturaliter: sed imagines naturales sunt eadem semper apud omnes, ubicumque ponantur: ergo ubicumque ponantur conceptus, sunt iisdem apud omnes.”

⁵⁵ CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.43: “Ad explicationem huius dubitationis [sc. “quo sensu verum sit conceptus esse eosdem apud omnes”] est supponendum ex supra dictis conceptum perinde, ac speciem intelligibilem, esse imaginem ad vivum experimentem suum obiectum; ad illudque referri transcendentaliter tanquam ad mensuram, et exemplar sui esse quae vero ita referuntur, per suammet essentiam et naturam tendunt in terminos: cum autem rerum essentiae mutari non possint, fit consequenter, ut huiusmodi conceptus ubique retineant suam repraesentationem, et per eam ducant potentiam in cognitionem obiecti. *Et haec est praecipua ratio, qua interpretes hoc loco probant conceptus esse eosdem apud omnes.*” (Italics mine).

someone else in another.⁵⁶ And this, of course, holds too where concepts are compared to mirror images.⁵⁷

While, as Franciscus Toletus (1533? - 1596) says, the same image will be an image of the king independently of whether it is located in Rome or in Mantua,⁵⁸ the ISC, in the view of others, requires a different explanation. According to Richard Brinkley (fl. 1365) it rather has to be illustrated such that a man in Rome will naturally effect a concept which is specifically the same with the concept effected by a man elsewhere. This, of course, makes another story and results in a different approach to the ISC. For in this case, without taking any direct reference to the notions of image or likeness, stress is laid on the fact that anything, just as it is but one, does naturally effect but one sign in respect to one cognitive power.⁵⁹ Even if, under the conditions of the *species*-theory, concepts are held to be caused (or at least con-caused) through species that are likenesses of things, their likeness as such regarding to the things can appear as being functionally irrelevant for the foundation of the ISC. For all that is needed is the regularity of the natural process in which the concepts are effected, because, as already Martinus Dacus has claimed in this context, any effect resulting from principles that are specifically the same for all, will be specifically the same for all as well.⁶⁰ Still earlier, Albert the Great established the sameness of concepts on grounds of their being generated by specifically identical things in intellective powers of the same nature. So, even

⁵⁶ MENGHUS BLANCHELLUS, see note 54, fol a2rb: "... terminus mentalis est similitudo rei in intellectu sive conceptus rem representans ad extra. ... Cuius ratio est. similitudo (add. Venice 1492: ubique representat idem) sicut si esset imago Cesaris. illa ubique representaret Cesarem et non representaret in uno loco unum et in uno (1492: alio) loco alium. sic autem est de conceptibus et similitudinibus in anima..."; cf. CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLUS: *Logicae compendium* (Venice 1555) 17: "Terminus per se significativus naturaliter est ille, qui apud omnes homines idem ultra seipsum repraesentat intellectui, ut homo et animal in mente. est autem homo in mente species, sive similitudo, sive conceptus hominis. se habet enim huiusmodi similitudo sive conceptus ut vera imago, puta Caesaris, quae apud omnes ex sui natura repraesentat Caesarem".

⁵⁷ BONAVENTURA COLUMBUS: *Novus Cursus Philosophicus Scotistarum* (Lyons 1669) p. 214a: "Conceptus rerum sunt idem apud omnes. Probatur ... quia conceptus sunt naturales rerum imagines, ipsasque res naturaliter exprimentes, quarum sunt imagines, et similitudines naturales, et ubique servant suam naturalem repraesentationem, ut ad oculum cernitur, in imaginibus obiectorum per specula oblatis."

⁵⁸ FRANCISCUS TOLETUS, see note 26, 207a: "...dicitur eadem imago Regis, quae est Romae, et quae est Mantuae, quia sub eadem forma, et ratione idem significat: per sensus enim eadem re omnibus proposita omnes eundem conceptum eius in mente habebunt, si intelligant eam..."

⁵⁹ RICHARD BRINKLEY, see note 26, 81: "Voluit [sc. Aristoteles] ergo dicere quod sicut eadem est res in specie, ut sicut homo qui est Romae est idem in specie cum homine qui est hic, ita homo qui est Romae naturaliter est causativus conceptus, qui conceptus est eiusdem speciei cum conceptu hominis qui est hic. Consequentia Philosophi tenet per hoc medium quod 'quaelibet res sicut est una, ita naturaliter est tantum unius signi causativa respectu unius potentiae.' Quia causat aliud signum respectu potentiae intellectivae quam potentiae sensitivae vel signum quod eidem potentiae illam rem repraesentat."

⁶⁰ Cf. MARTINUS DACUS, see note 26, 244sq.: "... dicendum, quod passiones animae sunt eadem in specie apud omnes, et non numero.... nam passio ... est dispositio derelicta in passo ex impressione principii agentis. Cum igitur res per suam speciem agant in animam imprimendo suam cognitionem in ipsam, et illa impressio sit dispositio derelicta in passo, tunc oportet, cum res imprimentes sunt eadem in specie apud omnes, quod passiones sunt eadem <in> specie apud omnes. ... [245] ...effectus in specie est idem apud omnes, cuius principia effectiva sunt eadem in specie apud omnes. Sed passio est effectus, res autem ipsae et animae rationales sunt principia effectiva, et illa sunt eadem apud omnes."

though he is by no means denying that concepts are “*similitudines rerum*”, the argumentative function of their likeness to external objects is to explain the mode in which the latter are present to the mind rather than to give reason for the ISC. For the sameness of concepts cannot be founded in bare likeness but has to be substantiated by some sort of identity which Albert sees to be given with the sameness of the external and internal conditions of their generation.⁶¹

Though the production of a simple concept is always a particular act it is not a subjective act (in the modern sense) but rather a process altogether natural, which, as natural processes in general, under the same conditions is always coming about in the same way and leading to results that are (in their relevant aspects) the same. Under the condition of specifically identical cognitive faculties it is, therefore, ultimately irrelevant for my concept to have been effected by my own intellect - for any other intellect would have formed it in a similar way.

It is possible and certainly illuminating to distinguish two fundamental scholastic models of explaining the form of concept acquisition, viz a „formal causality model”, paradigmatically represented by Thomas Aquinas, and an “efficient causality model”, typically ascribed to Ockham.⁶² While the former “is based on the idea that the natures informing the things of external reality, and making them to be what they are, are the very same natures that inform our minds when we have the concepts of these things“, the latter is characterized by fixing „the relation of natural signification on the basis of natural laws systematically connecting causes with their effects.“⁶³ Seen in the perspective of our topic, however, the historical situation is more complex than this distinction may suggest. For on the one hand is Ockham by no means renouncing the idea that concepts are “likenesses” (*similitudines*) of things but rather feels to be in need of this notion to which he is ascribing an important and indispensable epistemological function: General concepts of natural entities are always caused by particular objects. In order that a certain concept of x does not only signify that particular being by which it has been caused, but also (though confusedly) all individuals of the same kind, there must be something in the concept of x that, being different from its bare being caused by x, makes it – under the condition of a normal course of nature - to be a concept or sign of all and only things of the

⁶¹ Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS: *De interpretatione*, in: Opera Alberti Magni ad logicam pertinentia (Venice 1494) fol. 82rb: “... conceptiones ... apud omnes eedem sunt: sicut anime passionēs. quia *generata quae unius forme habent generandi eadem* (fol. 82va) *sunt in forma et specie*. passionēs sunt similitudines rerum in anima. Res vero se habent in anima per similitudinem generantis: cum ergo ubique et apud omnes sunt eedem, easdem in specie generabunt passionēs. et ideo conceptiones ad omnes res recte concipiendas eedem sunt in specie. Et similiter etiam res apud omnes et ubique eedem sunt in specie, quarum passionēs animae sunt notae quia rerum sunt similitudines in animabus a rebus generatae.” Cf. ibid. fol. 83rb: “... *passionum in anima generatio est ad modum naturae in hoc quod ad speciem moventis generatur in anima passio*: et res similiter non a nobis est sed a natura: ideo res et passionēs manent eadem apud omnes: *non eadem numero vel proprio vel genere sed natura causante: vel extra vel in anima* et a voluntate hominis non diversificatae. Et quod dicitur quod non est una anima apud omnes: dicendum est quod hoc modo loquendi falsum est. Est enim una anima apud omnes unitate naturae producentis: sed non unitate numeri.” (Italics mine).

⁶² Cf. G. KLIMA: Ontological Alternatives vs Alternative Semantics in Mediaeval Philosophy, in: *S-European Journal for Semiotic Studies* 3 (1991) 587-618; online-edition with minor corrections by the author: <http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/ontalt.htm>.

⁶³ Ib.

same kind of x. And this ‘something’ is such as to allow to characterize the mental act or concept as “similitudo obiecti” and to render the concept suitable to fulfil semantic and logical functions in mental propositions. For it is, as Ockham explicitly states, its being a likeness (similitudo) of the object that enables the concept to signify or to stand for things outside the mind, as well as to function as subject or predicate in a proposition, or to be a genus or species and so on.⁶⁴

On the other hand even in the Thomistic tradition authors like Lambertus de Monte (1430/35-1499) or Johannes Versor († after 1482) have described the similitude of concepts to their objects in terms of concepts being natural effects of things.⁶⁵ Therefore, it seems to be rather a difference in emphasizing the role of formal or efficient causality than a clear cut distinction of two alternative and mutually exclusive ways that characterizes the variant epistemological conceptions⁶⁶ underlying the modes of substantiating the ISC-thesis.

3. ISC and infallibility of simple apprehension

Aristotle did not offer any explicit justification of ISC in his *De interpretatione*. At the crucial point he rather referred to his *De anima* as the proper place for treating such issues. Even though no explicit discussion of ISC is to be found in this text, the third book entails at least some epistemological remarks that could be – and actually have been – read as arguments corroborating the ISC. Many authors, therefore, took the reference to *De anima* such as if Aristotle wanted to substantiate his assertion by claiming that intellectual cognition of simple substances, just as the sense in grasping its proper object, is “never in error or admits the least possible amount of falsehood.”

This way of endorsing ISC goes back to Boethius’s refusal of Aspasius, who, in the face of the divergent views about the good and the just, wanted to limit the range of ISC to the objects of sensory perception. Boethius, harshly refusing this proposal, argued that whoever conceives what is good to be otherwise, may

⁶⁴ Cf. OCKHAM: *Quod*. IV, q. 35, ed. J. C. Wey, OT IX (1980) 474: “... eo quod actus est similitudo obiecti, potest significare et supponere pro rebus extra, potest esse subiectum et praedicatum in propositione, potest esse genus, species etc...”

⁶⁵ Cf. LAMBERTUS DE MONTE: *Copulata supra veterem artem Aristotelis secundum viam thomistarum* (Cologne 1488) fol 136ra: “... quod passiones animae naturaliter significant, patet quia *effectus naturale rei est naturale similitudo suae causae*, sed passiones in animae natura causantur per aliquam similitudinem impressam ab ipsis rebus modo naturae. ergo sunt ipsarum rerum naturales similitudines, et per consequens naturaliter significant.”; JOHANNES VERSOR: *Quaestiones super totam veterem Artem Aristotelis* (Cologne 1494, Reprint Frankfurt/M. 1967) fol. 41ra: “passiones animae sunt ipsarum rerum extra animam existentium naturales similitudines naturaliter ipsas repraesentantes. Prima pars patet. quia passiones in anima nostra causantur ab ipsis rebus modo naturale. *Effectus autem naturalis rei alicuius est naturalis similitudo suae causae*. ergo ipsae passiones sunt ipsarum rerum naturales similitudines et per hoc patet secunda pars.” (Italics mine).

⁶⁶ Both models, by the way, agree in that they are applicable only to a limited range of objects. Both are leading to a, as it were, ‘stones and trees’-semantics, unsuitable for giving account of what Locke later has called “mixed modes”. The limited explanatory value of taking concepts as either images or natural effects of what is conceived by them can be easily tested by asking in which sense the concepts corresponding to the nouns listed on any single dictionary’s page (as, for example, ‘prayer’, ‘praech’, ‘preamble’, ‘prebend’, ‘precaution’, ‘precedence’, ‘precedent’, ‘precentor’, ‘precept’, ‘preceptor’, ‘precession’, ‘preciosity’, ‘precipe’) could be characterized as images or effects of what they represent.

perhaps be said to have some ‘passio animi’ but surely not to have an understanding of the good, for who opines the good to be bad cannot have a concept of the good that could be characterized as a likeness thereof.⁶⁷ In Thomas Aquinas’s report, Boethius’s argument sounds more concise, reading such: “Aristotle calls here the passions of the soul concepts of the intellect who never is deceived; and therefore its conceptions must be the same for all: for if someone deviates from the true he does not know.” (“...aristoteles hic nominat passiones animae conceptiones intellectus, qui numquam decipitur; et ita oportet eius conceptiones esse apud omnes easdem: quia, si quis a vero discordat, hic non intelligit.”)⁶⁸

Thomas points out, to be sure, that Aristotle’s claim of undeceivability does not hold for the composing and dividing intellect but rather is confined to the simple concepts corresponding to quidditative definitions. Only in regard to these the ISC-thesis is valid.⁶⁹ As we have seen, Scotus and some later Jesuits criticized the form of this limitation as insufficient to rule out the absurdity of all men being equal in knowledge.⁷⁰ Thomas, however, advocated a close analogy between the sense being informed by the likeness (i.e. species) of its proper object and the intellect being informed by the likeness of the essence of a thing, so that both cannot be deceived in the knowledge of their proper objects.⁷¹ According to those who shared this view, simple concepts of essences or quiddities of things are therefore always true⁷² - and thus the same for all.

Here, again, a fundamental difference between the Thomistic and Scotistic epistemology appears. While, according to Thomas, a cognitive faculty cannot fail

⁶⁷ BOETHIUS: Comment. in lib. Arist. Perihermeneias, secunda editio, see note 49, 41: “In hoc vero Aspasius permolestus est. Ait enim: qui fieri potest, ut eadem apud omnes passiones animae sint, cum tam diuersa sententia de iusto ac bono sit? Arbitratur Aristotelem passiones animae non de rebus incorporalibus sed de his tantum quae sensibus capi possunt passiones animae dixisse. Quod perfalsum est. Neque enim intellexisse dicitur, qui fallitur, et fortasse quidem passionem animi habuisse dicitur, quicumque id quod est bonum non eodem modo quo est sed aliter arbitratur, intellexisse uero non dicitur. Aristoteles autem cum de similitudine loquitur, de intellectu pronuntiat. Neque enim fieri potest, ut qui quod bonum est malum esse arbitratur boni similitudinem mente conceperit. Neque enim intellexit rem subiectam.”

⁶⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS: *In libros perihermeneias* I, lect. 2, n. 10.

⁶⁹ Ib.: “sed quia etiam in intellectu potest esse falsum, secundum quod componit et dividit, non autem secundum quod cognoscit quod quid est, idest essentiam rei, ut dicitur in iii de anima; referendum est hoc ad simplices intellectus conceptiones (quas significant voces incomplexae), quae sunt eadem apud omnes: quia, si quis vere intelligit quid est homo, quodcunque aliud aliquid, quam hominem apprehendat, non intelligit hominem. huiusmodi autem simplices conceptiones intellectus sunt, quas primo voces significant. . huiusmodi autem simplices conceptiones intellectus sunt, quas primo voces significant. unde dicitur in iv metaphysicae quod ratio, quam significat nomen, est definitio. ”

⁷⁰ See note 43.

⁷¹ THOMAS AQUINAS: STh 1 q. 17 a. 3co: “sicut ... sensus informatur directe similitudine propriorum sensibilium, ita intellectus informatur similitudine quidditatis rei. unde circa quod quid est intellectus non decipitur, sicut neque sensus circa sensibilia propria.”

⁷² Cf. GAETANUS DE THIENIS (1387-1465?): *Super libros de anima* (Venice 1493) fol 69ra: “... non omnis intellectus est verus vel falsus. sed intellectus simplex qui est ipsius quid quod erat: secundum hoc quod aliquid erat esse idest ipsius quidditatis et essentie rei verus est, scilicet semper: sed intellectus compositus in quo aliquid dicitur de aliquo non semper est verus, sed est aliquando verus et aliquando falsus. Et hoc declarat per simile diciens: quod sicut videre respectu proprii obiecti visus semper est verus: sic intellectus simplex de ipso quod quid est semper est verus.”

in knowledge of a thing the likeness of which it is informed with (“virtus cognoscitiva non deficit in cognoscendo respectu illius rei cuius similitudine informatur”),⁷³ Scotus generally denied the human intellect to be informed by a proper species of substance (“substantia non habet propriam speciem in intellectu possibili”),⁷⁴ so that the intellect has an immediate cognitive access only to the properties and accidents of substances but not to the substances as such.⁷⁵ Many Jesuits adopted this view - Franciscus Suárez, for instance, fully accepted Scotus’s doctrine of the human incapability to know any substance directly (“ratio Scoti est optima, quia non cognoscimus substantiam ut sic per propriam speciem”),⁷⁶ taking it as a matter of fact, testified by experience⁷⁷ – so that for them, too, the direct object of intellectual apprehension is not substance in itself but rather its sensible accidents.⁷⁸

On the objection that it well may be the case that different people differ in conceiving the same object (“de eadem re diversi diversa concipiunt”), the Thomist Gratiadei of Ascoli († 1341) underlines that, though they may have variant conceptions of one and the same thing regarding to its different aspects, it is impossible that they might have different concepts of the very same thing regarding to the same (“non tamen de una et eadem re et secundum idem possunt habere conceptionem nisi unam veram”). Whoever, therefore, has a notion of man, necessarily conceives man in the very same way as being essentially composed of body and rational soul, whereas all those having a different concept do not have a false concept of man but rather do not have a concept of man at all.⁷⁹

⁷³ STh 1 q. 17 a. 3co.

⁷⁴ DUNS SCOTUS: *Lectura* I, 3, 1, q. 1, Opera omnia, ed. Vaticana, 16, 265, 110.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 266, 112. For the consequences on the account of the simplicity of mental concepts see note 96.

⁷⁶ FRANCISCUS SUAREZ: *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. 35, sect. 3, n. 4, cf. DUNS SCOTUS: 1 *Sent.* d. 3. q. 1.

⁷⁷ F. SUAREZ: *Disp. met.*, 35, 3, 5: “Nec censeo inconueniens concedere nullam substantiam cognosci a nobis quidditative in hac vita; quin potius existimo sufficienti experimento id notum esse. Quod enim a tantis philosophis et tanta adhibita diligentia compertum non est, satis verisimile est excedere naturalem facultatem ingenii humani; non video autem adhuc inventam esse hanc quidditativam cognitionem alicuius substantiae; quam enim maxime videmur cognoscere est humana species vel anima, et illamet cognitio tam est imperfecta, ut quidditativa dici non possit.”

⁷⁸ Cf. ANTONIUS RUBIUS S.J.: *Commentaria in libros de anima* (Alcalá 1611) 722: “... accidens per se sensibile, et nihil aliud, est objectum per se adaequatum eius [sc. intellectus], tam motivum, quam terminativum. Nam licet substantiae corporeae, et rerum spiritualium formemus proprios conceptus, hoc est, illis solis, et non aliis convenientes cum eisque convertibiles, non tamen eas per se repraesentantes, sed illa tantum praedicata eis propria ex similitudine rerum per se sensibilibus per discursum collecta; quare non dicuntur objecta per se et directe terminativa intellectus.”

⁷⁹ GRATIADEI ESCULANUS, see note 46, fol. 5ra: “... quaeramus, utrum sit verum quod passiones animae sunt apud omnes eedem. videtur enim quod non. Quia sicut modo diximus: passio animae sumitur pro ipso dicto intellectuali: quod nihil est aliud quam quaedam conceptio sapientis. sed de eadem re diversi diversa concipiunt. ergo non est verum quod animae passiones sint apud omnes eedem. Ad istam questionem est dicendum quod quamvis de [5rb] una et eadem re secundum diversa possint habere diversi homines varias conceptiones: non tamen de una et eadem re et secundum idem possunt habere conceptionem nisi unam veram. Cuius ratio est: quia res secundum unum et idem se habet uno et eodem modo. intellectus autem tunc est verus cum rem intelligit sicut se habet: qui autem ipsam intelligit aliter quam se

Among the Thomists we thus find two main arguments for the ISC: One grounding in the alledged indeceivability of simple apprehension regarding to its proper object, and another based on an axiom that may be termed ‘bivalence principle of representation’. Whereas the ‘classical’ bivalence principle, referring to the second mental operation, says that any proposition is either true or false, the bivalence principle of representation says with regard to the first mental operation of simple apprehension that any mental concept either is or is not representing x. In the first case it is a true image of x while in the latter it is not a false image of x but rather a true image of something different from x and therefore simply not an image of x.

Does the first argument claim that simple apprehension is always true regarding to its proper object, that is, to simple essence, and thus leads to a strong version of ISC, as it has been criticized by Scotist and Jesuit authors,⁸⁰ the second argument, which was accepted by most of them, is just claiming that simple apprehension cannot be false, because every representation necessarily conforms to what it represents, for otherwise it would not represent it,⁸¹ the conformity to x being the ground of representing x.⁸² Thus it is resulting in a weaker version of ISC, attesting nothing more than that those whose simple apprehension of x is conform to x are apprehending x in the same way and therefore can be said to have the same concept of x. In other words: those who actually do have a concept of x have the same concept of x, which, in turn, at least with the Jesuits and Scotists, may be interpreted such, that they have concepts signifying the same in the sense specified above.⁸³

habeat: non est verus intellectus sed falsus. Quia ergo res una secundum unum et idem uno et eodem modo se habet: et intellectus non est verus: nisi cum rem ut se habet ita concipit: necesse est ut omnes vere intelligentes de re una et eadem et secundum idem: unam et eadem conceptionem habeant. Quemadmodum patet manifeste in exemplo de homine quantum ad eius compositionem essentialem. Omnes enim homines vere hoc intelligentes concipiunt quod homo componitur essentialiter ex suis principijs quae sunt corpus et anima rationalis: Quicunque autem concipit aliter: talis non intelligit essentialem compositionem hominis.“

⁸⁰ See note 43.

⁸¹ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS: STh 1, q. 17 a. 3 conc.: “... in cognoscendo quidditates simplices non potest esse intellectus falsus, sed vel est verus, vel totaliter nihil intelligit.” Cf. CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.61: “Qui simpliciter cognoscit, vel rei naturam attingit, vel non: si attingit, conformatur obiecto, et est verus: si non attingit, non est falsus, sed ignorat illud, quod non percipit; quia non recte dicitur falso cognoscere id, quod re vera non cognoscit, sed illud ignorare.” Cf. PETRUS HURTADO DE MENDOZA, S.J.: *Disputationes de universa philosophia* (Lyons 1617) 823sq: “...in apprehensione subiecti, vel praedicati solius nulla potest esse falsitas. ... Probatur, quia actus ille repraesentat aliquid, hominem, v.g. aut animal: aut ergo repraesentat rationem hominis, vel animalis, aut non. Si primum: ergo conformatur cum obiecto: si secundum, ergo non apprehendit hominem, sed aliud obiectum, respectu cuius non erit falsus.” Cf. PAULUS VALLIUS, S.J.: *Logica* (Lyons 1622) 625a: “... conceptus simplex vel est similis rei conceptae, vel non est. Si est similis, non est falsus, sed verus. Si vero non est similis, non est conceptus illius rei, sed alterius: ergo non potest esse diffinitas inter simplicem conceptum et rem, cuius est ille conceptus.”

⁸² It has to be noted, however, that in order to eliminate a too narrow interpretation of concepts being likenesses or images of things, there have been several attempts in fifteenth and sixteenth century scholastic logic to reverse the foundational relation between likeness or image and representation; see S. MEIER-OESER: Mental Language and Mental Representation in Late Scholastic Logic, in: John Buridan and Beyond, ed. R. L. Friedman / S. Ebbesen (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel 2004) 257sq.

⁸³ See note 35sq.

The issue of ISC, thus, meets with another standard topic discussed in the scholastic textbooks: with the so called ‘veritas simplex’. The question under debate was whether and in what sense truth (or even falsity) may be ascribed to the level of first mental operation, that is to simple apprehension.

4. The late-scholastic debate on incomplex truth (“veritas simplex”) and falsity (“falsitas simplex”)

While it has been always uncontroversial that truth and falsity, taken in the proper sense (*proprie*), formally (*formaliter*), simply (*simpliciter*), or ‘as such’ (*‘absolute et secundum se’*), is a matter of judgements or propositions, and therefore belonging to the second mental operation of the composing and dividing intellect, there was a large spectrum of variant views regarding to the question of whether, and under which qualifications, truth and falsity may be ascribed to simple apprehension.

Whereas those who preferred to restrict the notion of truth to its proper sense primarily referred to the authority of *De interpretatione* I,1, 16a12-13 (“truth and falsity imply combination and separation”), to *De anima* III,6, 430b27-28 (“where the alternative of true or false applies, there we always find a putting together of objects of thought in a quasi-unity”), and built their argument on the correspondence between concepts and single words,⁸⁴ the view that there is some kind of simple or incomplex truth (“veritas simplex”, “veritas incomplexa”), pertaining to the first operation of the mind, was primarily based on 1) the analogy between sensory perception of its proper object, being always true, and the simple apprehension of the intellect, as it was mentioned by Aristotle in *De anima*, 2) on Aristotle’s explicit statement that the conception of the essence (i.e. the ‘quod quid est’) of a thing is always true, and, last but not least, 3) on the definition of truth as conformity of the intellect to its object.⁸⁵ Those who generally acknowledged the existence of some sort of truth on the level of simple apprehension – and this was the majority – subdivided truth of cognition (“veritas cognitionis”) regarding to the two first operations into simple truth (“veritas simplex”) of simple apprehension and complex truth (“veritas complexa”) of proposition.

⁸⁴ Cf. BOETHIUS: *Comment. in lib. Arist. Periherm.*, secunda editio, see note 49, 41sq.: “...similitudo est ... quaedam inter se intellectuum [42] atque vocum: quemadmodum enim sunt quaedam simplicia quae ratione animi concipiuntur constitunturque intellegentia mentis, in quibus neque veritas ulla neque falsitas invenitur, ita quoque in vocibus est. Simplex enim intellectus, ut verbi gratia hominis vel equi, neque falsitatem ullam retinet neque veritatem.”

⁸⁵ Cf. RADULPHUS BRITO: *In lib. III De anima*, ed. Winfried Fauser: Der Kommentar des Radulphus Brito zu Buch III De anima, BGPhThMA, NF 12 (Munster 1974) 266: “... quaeritur, utrum circa intellectum componentem et dividendum solum sit veritas. (1) Arguitur quod non. Quia sensus respectu proprii sensibilis semper est verus. Ergo veritas habet esse circa apprehensionem sensus et pari ratione circa apprehensionem intellectus. Et ita non solum est circa compositionem et divisionem intellectus. (2) Item PHILOSOPHUS dicit quod intellectus ipsius ‘quod quid est’ semper est verus. Et iste intellectus est simplex. Ergo circa simplicem apprehensionem intellectus consistit veritas. (3) Item veritas est quaedam conformitas ad rem. Sed intellectus apprehendens ita bene est conformis rei sicut intellectus componens. Ideo etc.” For a detailed discussion of these arguments see GABRIEL VAZQUEZ, S.J.: *Commentariorum, ac disputationum in Primam partem S. Thomae t. 1*, disp. 75: “An veritas intellectus solum sit in compositione, et divisione” (Ingolstadt 1609) 446a-452b.

The different accounts on simple truth, i.e. on truth on the level of simple apprehension, therefore, are to a certain extent ruled by two paradigmatic models that have been underlying the epistemological debates ever since antiquity: the propositional paradigm on the one hand, and the pictorial paradigm on the other.⁸⁶ While the view that there can be neither truth nor falsity in simple apprehension – and therefore no ‘veritas simplex’ – is based on the parallelism between simple concepts and single words, the view that there is, and always is, some kind of truth (i.e. ‘veritas simplex’) but no falsity in simple apprehension is motivated by the image-paradigm and the aforementioned ‘bivalence principle of representation’. For under the conditions that 1) mental concepts are taken to be mental images, 2) that truth is defined, in the traditional manner, as adequation of intellect and its object and thus essentially characterized by conformity, and 3) that the form of an image alone pins down what it is an image of – or, in other words, if intension determinates extension –, it is clear, that images, and simple concepts as well insofar as they are seen as some kind of images, always must be true. For no image whatsoever can be dissimilar to its subject regarding to that in respect to which it is an image, because in case of its difformity to x it is not a false image of x but rather is not an image of x.⁸⁷

What would be conceded to any material image, namely that it conforms to its object in some respects while not so in several others, does not hold, according to this view, for the simple concept. For if it is taken as a “simple”, that is as some kind of atomic, unanalysable image,⁸⁸ always referring to what it is a likeness of, any talk of difforming details is ruled out, so that the bivalence principle of representation is valid. Simple truth, thus, was guaranteed either by the alledged simplicity of mental concepts or by sharpening the notion of image, supposing that something is an image of its object only regarding to these moments in which it conforms to it. Thus, any representation can be dissimilar or difform to its object only regarding to moments which it does not represent, as for instance an image of Caesar, representing Caesar’s colours and shape, though not his essence,

⁸⁶ According to these paradigms the two kinds of truth are characterized as adequateness of representation (“adaequatio repraesentationis”) or conformity “per modum repraesentationis” and as adequateness of saying (“adaequatio dictionis”) or conformity “per modum dictionis”. Cf. MARTIN SMIGLECIUS, S.J.: *Logica* (first ed. 1616, cited after Oxford 1634) 103: “Veritas cognitionis ... consistit in conformitate cognitionis cum re ipsa; estque duplex; alia simplex et incomplexa, absque ulla affirmatione et iudicio, alia complexa, hoc est cum affirmatione et illatione... Prior veritas est conformitas cognitionis cum obiecto *per modum repraesentationis*: Posterior vero veritas est conformitas cognitionis cum obiecto non pure per modum repraesentationis sed *per modum dictionis*.” cf. CONIMBRICENSES in the following note.

⁸⁷ Cf. CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.127: “... non est praetermittendum insigne discrimen inter veritatem simplicem, et complexam; quamvis enim utraque posita sit in adaequatione intellectus ad rem, nihilominus veritas simplex primo, et per se consistit in adaequatione repraesentationis cum obiecto repraesentato. Unde oritur, ut nullam habeat oppositam falsitatem, quia nullius rei imago potest esse illi difformis, quoad ea, in quibus est illius imago... complexa autem veritas, etsi fiat per conceptus repraesentativos, non est posita primo in adaequatione repraesentationis, sed dictionis...”; cf. P. HURTADO DE MENDOZA, see note 81, 823sq.: “Dico primo, in apprehensione subiecti, vel praedicati solius nulla potest esse falsitas. ... Probatur, quia actus ille repraesentat aliquid, hominem, v.g. aut animal: aut ergo repraesentat rationem hominis, vel animalis, aut non. Si primum: ergo conformatur cum obiecto: si secundum, ergo non apprehendit hominem, sed aliud obiectum, respectu cuius non erit falsus.”

⁸⁸ Cf. SUAREZ in note 106.

is an image of Caesar regarding to the exterior figure but not so regarding to his essence, for, in general, to represent and to be represented are correlatives and thus always corresponding to each other.⁸⁹

On grounds of suchlike arguments most authors acknowledged the existence of simple truth (*veritas simplex*) on the level of first mental operation. Only a few, however, have spoken in this context of a truth proper, as Martin Smiglecius did with reference to the definition of truth in terms of conformity of knowledge to its object. For as any image is always a true image of what it represents, there is, without reference to any judgement, a representational conformity in the simple concept, being “in *repraesentando*” such as the thing represented is “in *essendo*”.⁹⁰ It was generally agreed on that ‘*veritas simplex*’ is truth only in a more or less improper sense. Incomplex truth, therefore, was terminologically differentiated from the formal truth of propositions by being characterized as a virtual⁹¹ or material truth.⁹² The consequence, however, seemingly following from all this, namely that there can be no room for falsity regarding to simple apprehension, was by no means universally accepted. Even if there, again, have been only very few authors who advocated the existence of falsity proper on the level of simple apprehension, many authors accepted, though under strict qualifications, the possibility of false concepts. This was partly motivated by the Scotist view on the human incapacity of knowing the substance of things.⁹³ Scotus had limited the claim that the intellect is always true regarding to the “*quod quid*

⁸⁹ M. SMIGLECIUS, see note 86, 109sq.: “... sciendum est, primam operationem referri ad suum obiectum per modum repraesentationis: consistit enim apprehensio in sola repraesentatione obiecti absque ullo iudicio: quare et conformitas ipsius vel diffinitas cum obiecto est per [110] modum repraesentationis. Repraesentatio autem si referatur ad id obiectum quod repraesentatur, et quoad ea quae repraesentantur, semper est vera et conformis obiecto repraesentato; repraesentans enim et repraesentatum sibi correspondent. Quod si est dissimilitudo aliqua et diffinitas inter ista, ea solum erit in iis quae non repraesentantur: Verbi gratia imago Caesaris repraesentat Caesarem in coloribus et forma exteriori, non in essentia, quocirca est conformis Caesarem in forma exteriori, diffinitas in essentia. Et universe loquendo. Imago in eo in quo est imago, est conformis ei cuius est imago, repraesentare enim et repraesentari sunt correlativa, et sibi correspondentia.” Cf. F. SUAREZ: *Disp. met.* 9, 1, 15.

⁹⁰ M. SMIGLECIUS, see note 86, 106sq.: “Dicendum ... est dari in prima operatione veritatem incomplexam eamque esse proprie veritatem [107]. ... probatur ratione. Veritas cognitionis est conformitas cognitionis cum re: atqui conformitas cognitionis cum obiecto potest esse simplex absque omni affirmatione et negatione. ... imago est vere imago ejus quem repraesentat. Ergo etiam similiter conceptus simplex erit verus conceptus rei... Cum enim possit cognitio dupliciter conformari rei. Primo per repraesentationem, quia cognitio talis est in repraesentando, qualis est res in essendo. Secundo, per affirmationem quia affirmatur esse conformis, non sequitur si non est conformis per affirmationem quod non possit esse conformis per repraesentationem.”

⁹¹ P. HURTADO DE MENDOZA, see note 81, 824q.: “... simpliciter non est veritas, aut falsitas nisi in iudicio, quia ... communior usus vocis est pro veritate complexa. In specie impressa productiva iudicij reperitur veritas, aut falsitas, non formaliter, sed virtualiter, quia illa non est formalis, sed virtualis repraesentatio obiecti.” Cf. also note 96.

⁹² Cf. D. MASIUS, see note 44, 18a: “Veritas in actu exercito, materialiter, aut tamquam in subiecto, in sensibus reperitur Haec eadem veritas reperitur in intellectu in prima illius apprehensione.... Confir. ... intellectus in simplici rerum apprehensione est adaequatus, et conformis rebus cognitis, cum igitur veritas significet huiusmodi adaequationem, veritas proculdubio reperietur in prima functione intellectus. ... [18b]: Veritas in actu signato, formaliter, et tanquam in cognoscente, in solo iudicio intellectus...”

⁹³ See notes 74-78.

est” to what he called the “conceptus simpliciter simplices”, i.e. the absolutely unanalysable concepts of the highest genera and last differences,⁹⁴ different from the notions of simple substances.⁹⁵ Therefore, according to Scotus and his followers, the simple understanding (intellectus simplex) of any concept which is not “simpliciter simplex”, can be, though not formally (formaliter), at least virtually false (virtualiter falsus) if the intellect is apprehending it under inadequate determinations, that is, under determinations not pertaining to what the apprehension apprehends.⁹⁶ While “veritas simplex” is supported by the simplicity – or, as with Scotus, by the “simple simplicity” - of mental concepts, a further gateway for letting in the notion “falsitas simplex” was the taking into account that the actual form of mental life and the structure of mental operations – fortunately – is more complex than the clear cut distinction of a first, second, and third operation of mind may suggest. Not only is the simple apprehension (apprehensio simplex) not necessarily an apprehension of the simple (apprehensio simplicium), so that propositions, too, can be objects of apprehension;⁹⁷ conceptions of simple objects are normally embedded in a more involute situational context of mental operations, such that in many cases a concept is not formed “praecise et abstracte”⁹⁸ but rather on the occasion of a certain object being present,⁹⁹ or with the intention to conceive a certain object,¹⁰⁰ or else is

⁹⁴ DUNS SCOTUS: *Quaestiones subtilissimae in Metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis* 6.3, in: B. Ioannis Duns Scoti opera philosophica, ed. Girard J. Etzkorn et al., Franciscan Institute Publications: St. Bonaventure, New York 1997–. Vols. 3–4: “... illud, De anima, quod intellectus circa ‘quod quid est’ semper est verus, sicut sensus circa proprium sensibile ... est intelligendum praecise circa conceptum simpliciter simplicem.”

⁹⁵ On Scotus’ distinction between ‘conceptus simplices’ and ‘conceptus simpliciter simplices’ see *Ordinatio* I d. 3 p. 1 q. 1-2 (Opera omnia, Civitas Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950-) 3.49 n. 71: “... conceptus ‘simpliciter simplex’ est qui non est resolubilis in plures conceptus, ut conceptus entis vel ultimae differentiae. Conceptum vero simplicem sed ‘non-simpliciter simplicem’ voco, quicumque potest concipi ab intellectu actu simplicis intelligentiae, licet posset resolvi in plures conceptus, seorsum conceptibiles.” Cf. *Lectura* I d. 2 p. 1 q. 1-2 (Opera omnia, ed. Vaticana) 16.118-9 n. 24: “Ille est conceptus simpliciter simplex qui non reducitur in priorem aut simpliciore, nec omnino in plures conceptus resolvitur, sicut est conceptus entis et conceptus ultimae differentiae. Conceptus autem non simpliciter simplex est ille qui licet apprehenditur sine affirmatione et negatione, tamen resolvitur in plures conceptus quorum unus potest concipi sine alio, ut est conceptus speciei in genus et differentiam resolubilis. ...; sed non sic in simplicibus, quia vel totum ibi apprehenditur vel nihil”.

⁹⁶ Cf. SCOTUS, see note 94: “... intellectus simplex circa conceptum non simpliciter simplicem, licet non possit esse formaliter falsus, potest tamen esse virtualiter falsus, apprehendendo aliquid sub determinatione sibi non convenienti.”; cf. (nearly verbatim) ANTONIUS ANDREAE: *Scriptum in arte veteri* (Venice 1508) fol. 64r-v; cf. P. HURTADO DE MENDOZA, see note 91.

⁹⁷ Cf. RAPHAEL AVERSA: *Logica institutionibus praevis quaestionibus contexta* (Rome 1623) 489: “Primus actus intellectivae cognitionis solet appellari Simplicium apprehensio. Sic etiam Aristoteles 3. de Anima text. 21 appellavit indivisibilium intellectionem. Verum quia simplicitas quae huius actui attribuitur, magis se tenet ex parte ipsius actus, quam obiecti; dicimus enim apprehendi etiam complexa et integras propositiones; simplici tamen actu....”; see SUAREZ, note 133.

⁹⁸ See VALLIUS, note 110.

⁹⁹ Cf. CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.62: “... cognitio auri comparata occasione auricalchi praesentis habet pro obiecto aurum; et cum illo conformatur; cum aurichalcho vero, nec conformationem habet, nec difformitatem, quia illud non respicit.”

¹⁰⁰ See note 113.

providing the matter for judgement,¹⁰¹ so that there is, as already Thomas Aquinas conceded, a certain accidental admixture of compositeness to the intellectual apprehension of the “quod quid est” and thus a possible, though accidental, falsity in the first mental operation. According to Thomas, this can take place in two ways: either by attributing to one thing the definition proper to another, wherefore the definition is false with regard to the object to which it is applied, or by composing a definition of parts that are mutually exclusive, so that definition is false in itself (e.g. “a reasonable four-footed animal”). Because, however, falsity in this case results from adding a predicate which is impossible with the particles of the essential definition, the infallibility of the intellect in its knowledge of simple essences, based on the bivalence principle of representation is, as he sees it, not affected but rather supported by this.¹⁰²

These two cases of false ascription and impossibility have been considered as the main reasons for some kind of improper falsity in simple apprehension.¹⁰³ The notion of false ascription allowed to explain the common talk of ‘false images’ and false simple concepts.¹⁰⁴ Just like Gottlob Frege, who later noted that “when we characterize an image as false, falsity does not properly pertain to the image itself but rather to our estimation of that image as being an image of this or that object, which it actually does not represent”,¹⁰⁵ Suárez claimed that the alleged falsity of an image consists rather in our attributing the image to a subject it does not represent. And this falsity is not falsity proper but is only objectively in

¹⁰¹ See note 124.

¹⁰² THOMAS AQUINAS: STh 1, q. 17 a. 3 conc. : “... falsitas intellectus per se solum circa compositionem intellectus est, per accidens etiam in operatione intellectus qua cognoscit quod quid est, potest esse falsitas, inquantum ibi compositio intellectus admiscetur. quod potest esse dupliciter. uno modo, secundum quod intellectus definitionem unius attribuit alteri; ut si definitionem circuli attribuat homini. unde definitio unius rei est falsa de altera. alio modo, secundum quod partes definitionis componit ad invicem, quae simul sociari non possunt, sic enim definitio non est solum falsa respectu alicuius rei, sed est falsa in se. ut si formet talem definitionem, animal rationale quadrupes, falsus est intellectus sic definiendo, propterea quod falsus est in formando hanc compositionem, aliquod animal rationale est quadrupes. et propter hoc, in cognoscendo quidditates simplices non potest esse intellectus falsus, sed vel est verus, vel totaliter nihil intelligit.”

¹⁰³ Cf. RADULPHUS BRITO, see note 85, 267, who stated that falsity of simple apprehension “non est aliud nisi quidam error et deceptio in apprehensione ipsius ‘quod quid est’; quando aliquis componit ‘quod quid est’ alicuius rei ex partibus impossibilibus sicut dicendo ‘animal insensibile’; vel, ut dicunt alii, quando aliquis accipit ‘quod quid est’ alicuius rei cum alia re, sicut quando aliquis intelligit ‘quod quid est’ hominis est ‘animal hinibile’ vel aliquid huiusmodi. Hoc est error in apprehensione ipsius ‘quod quid est’ propter impossibilitatem partium ipsius ‘quod quid est’ ad illud cui assignatur.”

¹⁰⁴ See for instance ISAAC WATTS, better known as the “father of English hymnody”, who in his *Logic: or, the right use of reason in the inquiry after truth* (first ed. 1725; cited after London 1792) states, that “Our ideas are either true or false; for, an idea being the representation of a thing in the mind, it must be either a true or a false representation of it”, and, after his discussion of some of the logical difficulties conjoined to this position, still holds that “since ideas are pictures of things, it can never be very improper to pronounce them to be true or false, according to their conformity or nonconformity to their exemplars.” (42sq.).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. GOTTLIEB FREGE: *Logik* (1897), in: *Schriften zur Logik und Sprachphilosophie*. Aus dem Nachlass, ed. G. Gabriel (Hamburg 1990) 42sq.: “Wenn wir ein Bild als ‘falsch’ kennzeichnen, dann liegt die Falschheit nicht eigentlich beim Bild selbst, sondern in unserer Bewertung dieses Bildes als ein Bild von dem und dem Gegenstand, den es faktisch gar nicht repräsentiert.”

the intellect and denominated after the intellectual act.¹⁰⁶ The differentiation between a concept or idea in itself and the very same concept or idea insofar as it is ascribed to certain things is still effective in John Locke's claim of the falsity of our ideas of substances. While Locke, on the one hand, agrees to the propositional approach to truth and falsity, according to which "the ideas in our minds, being only so many perceptions or appearances there, none of them are false", because "truth or falsehood lying always in some affirmation or negation, mental or verbal, our ideas are not capable ... of being false, till the mind passes some judgment on them",¹⁰⁷ he concedes, on the other hand, that "ideas referred to anything extraneous to them may be true or false" or are at least are "capable to be called true or false". Such a referring of ideas to what is extraneous to them is, as he sees it, by no means a marginal aspect of mental life. For the range of suchlike tacit suppositions covers the whole areas of other men's ideas, real existence, and real essences. While the former of these suppositions, by which "the mind supposes any idea it has conformable to that in other men's minds, called by the same common name",¹⁰⁸ is directly referring to the ISC, the latter, by which "the mind refers any of its ideas to that real constitution and essence of anything, whereon all its properties depend", refers to simple apprehensions of substance, as the scholastics took them. And in respect to these, Locke claims, "the greatest part, if not all our ideas of substances, are false."¹⁰⁹

The works of post-tridentine scholastic philosophy offer quite a number of variant accounts and terminological determinations of falsity of simple apprehension in distinction to falsity in the proper sense. Paulus Vallius, referring to Thomas Aquinas, is advocating an "accidental" truth or falsity based on the virtual composition that is taking place when the intellect apprehends a thing not absolutely and abstractly but as falling under this or that species, as for instance when brass is apprehended as a kind of gold.¹¹⁰ According to Franciscus Murcia

¹⁰⁶ F. SUAREZ: *Disp. met.* 9, 1, 15: "... quando appellamus aliquam falsam imaginem, falsitas revera existit in attributione vel compositione nostra, quia scilicet attribuimus talem imaginem ei, quem non repraesentat, existimantes esse imaginem ejus et ita illa falsitas solum est objective in intellectu, seu denominative ab actu intellectus, eodem modo censendum est de simplicibus conceptibus seu actibus cognoscendi, quia ita se habent, sicut simplices imagines."

¹⁰⁷ JOHN LOCKE: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II, 34, 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* II, 34, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ P. VALLIUS, see note 81, 625a-b: "Secunda pars conclusionis [i.e.: "per accidens, possit esse veritas et falsitas"] probatur. Quia quamvis in prima operatione absolute, et secundum se nulla sit veritas intellectiva, et nulla falsitas, quatenus tamen in illa virtute est compositio, vel divisio, seu affirmatio aliqua, aut negatio, potest esse veritas vel falsitas aliqua intellectiva, immo etiam [625b] complexa. Quia ... duobus modis possumus intelligere compositionem admisceri simplici apprehensioni. Primo formaliter, formando scilicet aliquam propositionem, qua affirmemus, vel negemus praedicatum de subiecto. Secundo, virtualiter, quia videlicet ex ipsa apprehensione apta est sequi propositio, et consequenter compositio, vel divisio. Quando enim intellectus rem aliquam apprehendit, duobus modis potest se habere: Primo, praecise, et abstracte illam apprehendendo. Secundo, concipiendo sub aliqua compositione, ut concipiendo illam tanquam individuum, sub hac, vel illa specie contentum. V.g. quando obiicitur intellectum aurichalcus, potest primo concipere aurum abstracte omnino, et simpliciter; et tunc nulla est omnino compositio, vel divisio. Secundo, potest concipere aurichalcum tanquam individuum sub auro contentum, atque ideo concipere aurum tanquam speciem, vel genus aurichalci: quod est aliquo modo componere, quia quando intellectum conceptum auri per simplicem apprehensionem applicat huic individuo sibi subiecto, aliquo modo componit, quia

de la Llana there is at least a “fundamental” falsity to be found in the first mental operation or definition.¹¹¹ Martin Smiglecus establishes the falsity of representation by distinguishing between the immediate and the ultimate object of mental concepts (obiectum immediatum – obiectum ultimum), so that, for instance, the representation of a flying ass – even though it conforms to its immediate object, the flying ass, – can be characterized as false because it does not conform to its ultimate object, the real ass.¹¹² Johannes Lalemandet actually acknowledges a proper falsity of simple apprehension by pointing to the fact that the mental operation of apprehending something is regularly executed with the intention to apprehend some certain thing. If therefore “I intend to conceive man, but do not conceive him as he is, there is a inconveniency (inconvenientia) and therefore falsity.”¹¹³ Most scholastic authors, however, would deny “falsitas simplex” to be falsity proper. The Conimbricenses, for instance, characterize the accidental falsity as a “radical and most improper falsity” resulting from “a sensation which is so confused that it gives an occasion to the internal sense or to the intellect to perceive one thing for another and to make a false judgment.”¹¹⁴

concipit illud ut individuum auri, atque virtualiter affirmat aurum de illo; quod est vere, et proprie componere. Dicimus ergo, in simplici apprehensione, ratione huius virtualis compositionis, posse esse falsitatem, et veritatem propriam, et intellectivam, sed per accidens. Quia non sunt in illa, quatenus est formaliter simplex apprehensio, sed quatenus est virtualis compositio. Et hoc voluit indicare S. Thomas, quando dixit 1 par. q. 17 ar. 3 propterea intellectum formando hanc definitionem ‘Animal rationale quadrupes’ esse falsum, quia falsitas est formando hanc propositionem ‘Aliquod animal rationale est quadrupes’”

¹¹¹ FRANCISCUS MURCIA DE LA LLANA: *Selecta circa Aristotelis dialecticam subtilioris doctrinae quae in Complutensi academia versatur* (first ed. Madrid 1604, cited after Ingolstadt 1621) 392: “Veritas et falsitas solum reperiuntur in propositione, quae sit per secundam operationem intellectus, distinguo. Formaliter concedo. Fundamentaliter tamen reperiuntur in prima operatione intellectus, ad quam pertinet definitio (nam definitio non est propositio) et ad hoc, ut definitio dicatur vera aut falsa sufficit, quod in ea reperiatur veritas et falsitas fundamentaliter.”

¹¹² M. SMIGLECIUS, see note 86, 110: “Veritas repraesentationis per se sumitur ex conformitate cum obiecto ut est in re ipsa: si enim aliter sit in re ipsa quam repraesentatur, repraesentatio erit simpliciter falsa: sic repraesentatio asini volantis est falsa, quia licet conceptus asini volantis sit conformis asino volanti, qui est obiectum immediatum: quia tamen non est conformis asino a parte rei qui est obiectum ultimum, idcirco talis conceptus simpliciter non est conformis rei: obiectum enim immediatum refertur per conceptum ad obiectum ultimum, et idcirco debet illi conforme. Quia igitur simplex apprehensio per se, et ratione repraesentationis potest esse difformis obiecto ultimum, ideo per se non per accidens convenit illis difformitas, et ex consequenti falsitas. Quod etiam a simili explicatur in secunda operatione. Nam cum affirmo hominem esse quadrupedem, talis affirmatio est quidem conformis obiecto immediato, nempe homini quadrupedi affirmato, quia tamen non est conformis homini a parte rei simpliciter et per se non vero per accidens est falsa.”

¹¹³ JOHANNES LALEMANDET: *Cursus philosophicus* (Lyons 1656) 226a: “Ubi potest esse inconveniencia, et difformitas, ibi potest esse falsitas: sed in prima mentis operatione potest esse inconveniencia, seu difformitas, ergo et falsitas, maior patet ex definitione falsitatis, dicitur enim falsitas, difformitas aut inconveniencia quaedam: minor manifestatur, v.g. quando concipio hominem ut animal irrationale, nonne est inconveniencia et difformitas in illa cognitione de homine? Respondent non esse inconvenientiam, sed tantum ignorantiam, et nescientiam, sed esto sit ignorantia, ea tamen, ut ita dicam, est positiva, quia intendo concipere hominem, attamen non concipio ut est, ergo est inconveniencia, et proinde falsitas...”

¹¹⁴ CONIMBRICENSES, see note 26, 2.65: “... est ... aliquando sensatio adeo confusa, ut praebeat occasionem sensui interiori, vel intellectui percipiendi unum pro alio, et ferendi falsum iudicium, quod vocamus habere falsitatem per accidens...”

5. The Descartes-Arnauld debate on material falsity

The issue of falsity on the level of simple apprehension has more recently attained attention among the scholarly accounts of Descartes's position on the "material falsity" of adventitious ideas. Descartes, as is known, holds in his third Meditation that adventitious ideas, as for instance "heat and cold, ... are not thought by me except very confusedly and obscurely, so that I do not even know if they are true or false, that is, whether the ideas, which I have of them, are ideas of particular things, or of non-things." Therefore, he says: "Although falsity properly speaking, or 'formal' falsity, cannot be found except in judgments ..., still there is ... another 'material' falsity in ideas, when they represent a non-thing as a thing: thus, for example, the ideas I have of heat and cold are so far from being clear and distinct that from them I cannot say whether cold is just a privation of heat or heat a privation of cold, or both are real qualities, or neither."¹¹⁵

These remarks are the starting point of a *prima facie* puzzling debate with Antoine Arnauld on material falsity that has been criticized, especially with regard to Descartes's part of it, as confused and incoherent by quite a number of contemporary commentators.¹¹⁶ Already a short look at the aforementioned scholastic discussions on incomplex truth and falsity, however, will confirm Norman J. Wells's claim, that "when Descartes' position on material falsity is understood in the light of late Scholastic sources, especially Suarez ..., the alledged confusion and incoherency vanishes."¹¹⁷ For the arguments exchanged in the Descartes-Arnauld debate on material falsity indeed are strictly ranging within the boundaries of these discussions.

While Arnauld is advocating the position of those - predominantly Thomistic - authors who, on grounds of the bivalence principle of representation, claimed the truth of concepts but denied the possibility of any falsity on the level of simple apprehension, Descartes's position comes close to the one of those - predominantly Jesuit and Franciscan - authors who on the one hand acknowledged truth and falsity proper exclusively as a matter of judgement, but on the other hand used terminological determinations like 'virtual', 'fundamental' or - as Suarez - 'material' falsity in order to characterize certain defects of our simple concepts in their functional relation to the second mental operation of judgement. When Arnauld argues against Descartes by stating that "... if cold is merely a privation, then there cannot be an idea of cold which represents it to me as a positive thing, and so our author here is confusing a judgement with an idea",¹¹⁸ he is in accordance with the commonly accepted scholastic position, supposing that any idea always conforms to what it represents,¹¹⁹ so that, as Arnauld holds, "if cold is merely a privation, there cannot be a positive idea of it,

¹¹⁵ DESCARTES: *Oeuvres*, ed. Ch. Adam / P. Tannery (= AT) 7.43,22-44,3.

¹¹⁶ For references to the various critical assessments on Descartes's position on 'material falsity' see the brilliant article of NORMAN J. WELLS: Material Falsity in Descartes, Arnauld, and Suarez: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22 (1984) 25-50, here 25-27. A good account of Descartes's position has been recently given by LILLI ALANEN: *Descartes's Concept of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press 2003) 156-164.

¹¹⁷ N. J. WELLS, *ib.* 25-26.

¹¹⁸ AT 7.206, 16-18.

¹¹⁹ See note 81.

and hence there cannot be an idea which is materially false.”¹²⁰ For “the idea in question may perhaps not be the idea of cold, but it cannot be a false idea”,¹²¹ so that the alledged falsity has to be explained in terms of false ascription: “But, you may reply, it is false precisely because it is not the idea of cold. No: it is your judgement that is false, if you judge that it is the idea of cold. The idea itself, within you, is completely true.”¹²²

Descartes’s rejoinder makes clear that in this context he does not – as Arnauld – consider the idea in the formal sense as a representation of this or that object but rather ‘materially’, that is, as an operation of the intellect insofar it is embedded in the complex framework of the different types of mental operations. The material falsity of ideas, as Wells has already pointed out, must therefore, be seen “in terms of a relationship between the pre-judgemental level and the judgmental level wherein the former occasions, but does not cause, the shortcomings of the latter.”¹²³ For it is characterized as an idea’s being so obscure and confused that it is providing subject-matter for error (*praebere materiam erroris*).¹²⁴ Thus, it closely corresponds to what Suarez considered the improper or denominative falsity or the imperfection of a simple apprehension that occasions falsity of judgement¹²⁵ – and even more closely to what the Conimbrincenses have said about the accidental falsity of a “sensation which is so confused that it gives an occasion to ... the intellect to perceive one thing for another and to make a false judgment”.¹²⁶

Descartes’s position on material falsity, therefore, is neither, as Arnauld has claimed, in conflict with his epistemologico-metaphysical principle that the idea of *x* is *x* itself as it is objectively in the intellect, nor does he confuse an idea with a judgement. For while he clearly is acknowledging the difference between material falsity of adventitious ideas and proper falsity of judgements, his principle mentioned – which, by the way, conforms to the older tradition in which a mental term, notion, or cognition, signifying the same for all, was characterized as a natural objective likeness (*naturalis similitudo obiectiva*) because of being such in

¹²⁰ AT 7.206, 22-24.

¹²¹ AT 7.207, 9-10.

¹²² AT 7.207, 11-13.

¹²³ N. J. WELLS, see note 116, 45.

¹²⁴ AT 7.232–233; cf. AT 7.234, 13-18, where Descartes declares that his “only reason for calling the idea [of cold] ‘materially false’ is that, owing to the fact that it is obscure and confused, I am unable to judge whether or not what it represents to me is something positive which exists outside of my sensation. And hence I may be led to judge that it is something positive though in fact it may merely be a privation.”

¹²⁵ Cf. F. SUAREZ: *Disp. Met.* 9, 1, 16, where he reads Thomas Aquinas’s claim on the accidental fallibility of the intellect (see note 102) such that he “non intelligit falsitatem proprie sumptam in ipsa simplici apprehensione reperiri, sed esse in his apprehensionibus occasionem erroris et deceptionis et inde falsas nominari. ... quia sensus exterior movetur ab exteriori obiecto et apprehendit illud per modum intuitionis atque adeo per modum praesentis et existentis, ideo, quando apprehendit rem quae revera non est, vel non eo modo quo est, falli dicitur, quia discrepat ab illa re quam pro obiecto habere videtur, quamvis revera ad illam vel ad talem modum eius non terminetur eius apprehensio, et ideo non sit in eo propria falsitas sed imperfectio quaedam, quae est occasio falsitatis.” Cf. ib. 9, 1, 19; 25, 319: “falsitas improprie dicta, quae rebus, vel simplicis conceptibus attribuitur, solum est denominatio extrinseca, vel signi, vel causae, seu occasionis...”

¹²⁶ See note 114.

the mode of a sign as the thing is in the mode of a significate,¹²⁷ or because of being such in representing as the thing represented is in being (“cognitio talis est in repraesentando, qualis est res in essendo”)¹²⁸ - is valid only in regard to perfect ideas, that is, to ideas which, according to Descartes – here again concordant with the scholastic tradition¹²⁹ – are characterized as clear and distinct.¹³⁰

While Descartes is surely right in claiming that his calling obscure and confused ideas materially false “does not in any way violate my fundamental principles”, the question, however, remains, whether his explicit terminological appeal to Suárez is justified when he maintains to have “found the word ‘materially’ used in an identical sense to my own in Suarez’s *Metaphysical Disputations*, part 9, section 2, number 4.”¹³¹ For, at a first glance, it may seem as if Suárez in this rather intricate passage is using the term ‘material falsity’ in a somewhat different sense.

What Suarez, generally arguing in favour of a strict correlation between truth and falsity proper and judgment,¹³² in the passage referred to is aiming at, is to give evidence that, even though there may be some sort of composition and division in pre-judgmental apprehensive cognition of an assertive proposition, representing a judgment, there is no falsity in the proper sense in it, but only an improper falsity “as where in a sign” (*tamquam in signo*). No one, therefore, how false the judgemental composition he apprehends ever may be, is to be held as erring or being deceived until he judges. And yet, just as it is possible to say that there is

¹²⁷ Cf. PETRUS A SPINOSA: *Tractatus terminorum*, fol. 3v, see V. MUÑOZ DELGADO: Pedro de Espinosa y la logica en Salamanca hasta 1550: *Anuario filosofico* 16 (1983) 152: “Significare naturaliter proprie est esse noticiam anime quo modo soli termini mentales significant. Significant idem apud omnes. Terminus mentalis dicitur naturalis similitudo obiectiva. Notitia vocatur naturalis similitudo obiectiva, quia talis est in genere signi qualis res ad extra in genere significati...” Cf. Gregory of Rimini: *Lectura super primum et secundum sententiarum*, t. 1, ed. A. D. Trapp and V. Marcolino (Berlin, New York 1981), p. 415: “...conceptus naturaliter repraesentativus praecise eam rem repraesentat et significat, pro qua etiam potest supponere. Nam... conceptus huiusmodi talis est in esse ficto et imaginario, qualis res cuius est conceptus est in esse reali extra animam.... Quapropter conceptus connotativus ... nihil repraesentat naturaliter sed ex institutione tantum.” Hugolino of Orvieto: *In librum primum physicorum*, ed. W. Eckermann (Berlin, New York 1972), p. 78: “Aliqui sunt conceptus in nobis aliter se habentes in esse repraesentativo et intentionali quam res ipsae in esse reali. Igitur sunt aliqui conceptus in nobis ad placitum instituti.”

¹²⁸ M. SMIGLECIUS, see note 86, 107.

¹²⁹ Cf. R. AVERSA, see note 96, 18: “Tunc [simplex apprehensio] est recta et perfecta, cum intellectus clare et explicite rem apprehendit: cum per se et distincte concipit et apprehendit ea quae in se distincta sunt. [...] Sic enim intellectus perficitur, ut clare res concipiat, et distincte, singulas sui proprias et essentielles rationes.”

¹³⁰ Cf. AT 7.233, 6-15: “Cum autem ait Vir C., *ideam frigoris esse frigus ipsum prout est objective in intellectu*, distinctione arbitror opus esse: hoc enim saepe contingit in ideis obscuris et confusis, inter quas hae caloris et frigoris sunt numerandae, ut ad aliud quid referantur quam ad id cuius revera ideae sunt. Ita, si frigus sit tantum privatio, frigoris idea non est frigus ipsum, prout est objective in intellectu, sed aliud quid quod perperam pro ista privatione sumitur; nempe est sensus quidam nullum habens esse extra intellectum.” Descartes’s position, however, sharply differs from the one maintained by the scholastic authors in his tendency to restrict the commendation of ideas as clear and distinct to the mind’s innate ideas as well as in his denial of any immediate likeness between the sensory perception and its object.

¹³¹ AT 7.235, 5-14.

¹³² F. SUAREZ: *Disp. Met.* 8, 4, 8: “... omnis veritas cognitionis, eo modo quo est, in iudicio existit.”

“falsitas ut in signo” in a mere composition of spoken words, it can be admitted that a non-judgmental apprehension, too, includes falsity, though “as it were materialiter” (quasi materialiter) and in the mode of a sign that by itself is signifying something false (tamquam in signo quod secundum se falsum significat).¹³³

The doctrinal background for these remarks is this: Suárez, like the most scholastic authors of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, adopted Gregory of Rimini’s view on mental language,¹³⁴ according to which a mental proposition in the proper sense is to be seen as a simple mental act regularly including the assent to what is asserted in the proposition. In other words: when we *think that x* we mentally *say that x* and do *mean that x*. This entails that for Gregory a mental representation of propositions regarding to the truth value of which the intellect is undecided cannot be instantiated by mental propositions in the proper sense. Gregory’s solution to the problem of how, then, the intellect is representing propositions to which it has no definite propositional attitude (a commonly used example is the sentence “the number of stars is even”) is such, that in this case the mind is performing an “enuntiatio mentalis improprie dicta”, that is, he is nonassertively entertains the proposition by internally representing the corresponding spoken utterance.

This is the point of reference of Suarez claiming the existence of improper and ‘material’ falsity on the level of simple apprehension.¹³⁵ The pre-judgmental apprehension, for him, corresponds to a nonassertively entertained proposition. And here we regularly apprehend the concepts of the spoken words (conceptus vocum) rather than the concepts of the things (conceptus rerum), so that, just as falsity is commonly said to be in a spoken sentence as in a sign (ut in signo), it is justified to ascribe falsity, though not in the proper sense but “tamquam in signo” and “materialiter”, to the pre-judgmental apprehension. The term “materialiter”, therefore, in this context is more than just a counter-notion to “formaliter” in an unspecific sense, and is not simply indicating the impropriety of the falsity in question. It rather seems to be motivated by and allude to the semantic terminology of material supposition (suppositio materialis) when Suarez compares the pre-judgmental apprehension with a spoken proposition which is not used but mentioned (materialiter prolata).¹³⁶

In what sense, then, can Descartes claim that here the “word ‘materially’ is used in an identical sense to my own”? There is, of course, a general analogy in

¹³³ Ib. 9, 2, 4: “Unde nemo censetur decipi seu errare donec iudicet, quantumvis falsas compositiones apprehendat. Quoniam autem apprehensio illa quae fit sine iudicio regulariter fit per conceptus vocum potius quam rerum, ut supra dixi, sicut in compositione vocum est falsitas sicut in signo, ita admitti potest in illa apprehensione, quamvis in ea sit quasi materialiter, id est, non tamquam in affirmante vel proferente falsum, sed tamquam in signo quod secundum se falsum significat.”

¹³⁴ Cf. S. MEIER-OESER: *Mental Language and Mental Representation in Late Scholastic Logic*, in: John Buridan and Beyond. Topics in the Language Sciences 1300-1700, ed. R. L. Friedman / S. Ebbesen, Copenhagen 2004, 237-65.

¹³⁵ Cf. SUAREZ’ remarks on pre-judgmental apprehension in *Disp. Met.* 8, 4, 8.

¹³⁶ The passage cited in note 133 continues: “Sicut est falsitas in hac propositione: Non est Deus, vel scripta vel materialiter prolata ab eo qui refert: Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus; et ideo de huiusmodi falsitate eadem ratio est quae de falsitate quae est in compositione vocali, ut in signo.”

the way Descartes and Suárez are both taking the term to designate a kind of improper falsity in simple apprehension. But there is still another accordance which, based on the reference to the concept of linguistic signs, is leading deeper to the roots of Descartes's gnoseology.¹³⁷ For Descartes, sharply rejecting the scholastic species-theory and its assumption that the relation of a sensory idea to its external object is determined by effective causality and likeness, refers to the model of arbitrary linguistic signification in order to give an account of the perceptive cognition of external material reality.¹³⁸ Thus, just as for Suárez the mere apprehension of a false proposition is not formally false unless it is connected with assent, that is, unless it is judged as actually indicating what is the case, sense perceptions, with Descartes, though being obscure and confused, are not formally – but rather ‘materialiter’ – false as far as they are not taken as signs indicating of how things really are. ‘Material falsity’, thus, is – as the scholastics would say – a ‘virtual’ falsity, inscribed in the adventitious idea of sense perception, that becomes effective by giving occasion to a formal or proper falsity, when the mind is induced by it to judge that things really are as the idea seems to indicate. In Descartes's view, however, it is not god, the originator of that ‘language’ of perceptual signs of which the sensory ideas are elements of, who is to blame for these shortcomings but rather the human misunderstanding of the cognitive function of perceptual signs and the resulting misinterpretation of them. For these are “given me by nature merely to signify to my mind what things are beneficial and hurtful to the composite whole of which it is a part. ... and are sufficiently clear and distinct for that purpose.” If they are used, however, as “infallible rules by which to determine immediately the essence of the bodies that exist out of me, ... they can of course afford me only the most obscure and confused knowledge”; for “this they signify only in a very obscure and confused way.”¹³⁹

It is clear that, different to at least parts of the Aristotelian tradition, with Descartes the alledged infallibility of sensory perception regarding to its proper object cannot function as a paradigmatic model for the truth or adequateness of intellectual apprehension. Intersubjective sameness alone is by no means guaranteeing truth or adequateness in representing the nature and essence of things. For, as the material falsity shows, we all may easily err in the same way, too. While sensory perception, formerly regulated by the image paradigm is now explained after the model of arbitrary linguistic signs (having been considered originally as it were the antipodes of intersubjectively same concepts), the image

¹³⁷ For the function of the notion of sign for Descartes's theory of perception see JEAN-LUC MARION: *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes* (Paris: PUF 1981) 253sq.; J. W. YOLTON: *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press 1984) 22sq.

¹³⁸ Cf. S. MEIER-OESER: Descartes' Occasionalismus des Zeichens, in: *Die Spur des Zeichens. Das Zeichen und seine Funktion in der Philosophie des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter 1997) 354-360.

¹³⁹ DESCARTES: *Med.* VI, 15, AT 7.83,14-23: “... video me in his aliisque permultis ordinem naturae pervertere esse assuetum, quia nempe sensuum perceptionibus, quae proprie tantum a naturâ datae sunt ad menti significandum quatenam composito, cujus pars est, commoda sint vel incommoda, & eatenus sunt satis clarae & distinctae, utot tanquam regulis certis ad immediate dignoscendum quatenam sit corporum extra nos positorum essentia, de quâ tamen nihil nisi valde obscure & confuse significant.”

paradigm is still operative on the level of intellectual cognition. And here the doctrine of the innateness of clear and distinct ideas shows Descartes as standing in the long tradition of the ISC. For whenever Descartes is appealing to the evidence of clear and distinct ideas and to the impossibility of thinking them otherwise he is invoking a strong version of ISC, not describing an actual state but rather a normative ideal, according to which the sameness of ideas, if these were only attentatively considered, finally leads to a sameness of opinion about the objects represented.

With Descartes, the rationale of ISC is not based on the sameness of things or on our cognitive contact with an external reality being the same for all, but only in the truthfulness of its creator, having inscribed a certain set of fundamental ideas into the minds of men, or, in other words, having provided them with the cognitive faculty they actually have.¹⁴⁰ With this, Descartes still is trying to give an account of the reason for the existence of ISC, while for Locke, discarding the doctrine of innate ideas, the ISC, now being reduced to the most simple sensible ideas, regarding to any abstract idea is nothing but a supposition we make, and perhaps – following some kind of ‘principle of charity’ - have to make in order to be able to communicate successfully.

In any case, it is the medium of language alone we can rely on in order to find out and to test, whether and how far the claim of ISC is valid. And it is not unlikely that without this medium there would be very few to be tested. But the issue of ISC itself still seems to be far from being sufficiently settled already.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. DESCARTES: *Notae in Programma quoddam*, AT 8/2.357: “Non ... umquam scripsi vel judicavi, mentem indigere ideis innatis, quae sint aliquid diversum ab ejus facultate cogitandi...”