14. In composed substances there are form and matter, for example, in man soul and body.

15. But we cannot say that either one of them alone may be said to be the essence. That matter alone is not the essence of a real thing is clear, since through its essence a real thing is knowable and assigned to a species or to a genus. But matter alone is neither a principle of knowledge, nor is it that by which something is assigned to a genus or to a species; rather a thing is so assigned by reason of its being something actual.

16. Neither can the form alone of a composed substance be said to be its essence, although some try to assert this. For it is evident from what has been said that essence is what is signified by the definition of a real thing. And the definition of natural substances contains not only form, but matter as well; otherwise natural definitions and mathematical ones would not differ.

17. Neither can it be said that matter is placed in the definition of a natural substance as something added to its essence or as something outside its essence, because this mode of definition is proper to accidents, which do not have a perfect essence. This is why accidents must include in their definition a subject which is outside their genus. It is clear therefore that essence includes matter and form.

18. Further, neither can it be said that essence signifies some relation between matter and form or something added to them, because this would of necessity be an accident or something extraneous to the real thing, and the real thing would not be known through it. And these are traits of essence. For through the form, which is the actuality of matter, matter becomes something actual and something individual. Whence what supervenes does not confer on matter actual existence simply, but such an actual existence; as accidents in fact do. Whiteness, for example, makes something actually white. Whence the acquisition of such a form is not
called generation simply, but generation in a certain respect. It remains, therefore, that the word “essence” in composed substances signifies that which is composed of matter and form.

19. Boethius is in agreement with this in his commentary on the *Predicaments*, where he says that *ousia* signifies the composite. For *ousia* in Greek is the same as *essentia* in Latin, as he himself says in his book *On the Two Natures*. Ibn-Sīnā [Avicenna], too, says that the quiddity of composed substances is the composition itself of form and matter. And the Commentator [Averroës], likewise, in his considerations on the seventh book of the *Metaphysics* says: “The nature which species have in generable things is something in between, i.e., composed of matter and form.”

20. Reason, too, is in accord with this, because the existence of a composed substance is not the existence of the form alone nor of the matter alone, but of the composite itself; and essence is that according to which a real thing is said to be. Whence it is necessary that the essence, whereby a real thing is denominated a being, be neither the form alone nor the matter alone, but both, although the form alone in its own way is the cause of such existence. ...

22. But matter is the principle of individuation. From this it might perhaps appear to follow that an essence which includes in itself matter along with form is only particular and not universal. And from this it would follow that universals would not have a definition, if essence is that which is signified by a definition.

23. We should notice, therefore, that the principle of individuation is not matter taken in just any way whatever, but only designated matter. And I call that matter designated which is considered under determined dimensions. Such matter is not placed in the definition of man as man, but it would be placed in the definition of Socrates, if Socrates had a definition. Rather, it is non-designated matter which is placed in the definition of man; for this bone and this flesh are not placed in the definition of man, but bone and flesh absolutely. These latter are man’s non-designated matter.

24. It is clear, therefore, that the essence of man and the essence of Socrates do not differ, except as the non-designated from the designated. ...
God is identical with his essence or nature. In order to grasp this, we must understand that, among things composed of matter and form, the nature or essence must be different from the individual subject. This is because the essence or nature comprises only those things that are included in the definition of the species. For example, humanity encompasses everything that belongs to the definition of human being; for through these a human being is a human being, and that is what ‘humanity’ signifies—that, namely, by which a human being is a human being. But individuated matter, along with all the accidents individuating it, is not included in the definition of the species, since the definition of humanity does not encompass this particular flesh, these particular bones, white, black, or anything like this. Hence this flesh and these bones, along with the accidental features that demarcate this matter, are not included in humanity. Yet they are included in any individual human. Thus an individual human contains something that humanity does not contain. And for this reason a human being is not entirely identical with humanity, but rather humanity is signified as the formal part of the human being, since the defining principle functions as the form with respect to the individuating matter. Accordingly, in the case of those things not composed of matter and form, whose individuation is not through individual matter (that is, through this matter), but rather the very forms are individuated through themselves, the forms themselves must be subsisting subjects. Hence there is no difference in them between subsisting subject and nature. And thus, since God is not composed of matter and form, as shown above, it is necessary that God be his divinity, his life, and whatever else is predicated of God in this way.
Is a universal something in things?

This question can be treated first by arguing against the position of Plato, who, according to Aristotle, posited Ideas on account of the formal entity of things..., and on account of scientific knowledge, since it is only about necessary items while singulars are corruptible ...

If this view proposes that an idea is some substance apart from motion and from accidental accidents, which has nothing in itself except the separated specific nature complete to the extent that it can be complete, and which perhaps has in itself attributes of the species (otherwise nothing would be known about it), this view cannot be validly disproved ...

And neither does Aristotle unqualifiedly disprove it. Rather ... in book VII he argues not its impossibility but its lack of necessity. For here he argues against Ideas as follows: Nothing which is not obvious is to be posited by philosophers without necessity. There is no necessity in the reasons for positing Ideas; therefore, they should simply not be posited. ...

But if someone further proposes that this idea is formally universal in such a way that it is predicated as identical with this corruptible item by a predication which says ‘this is this’, immediately a contradiction arises, because numerically the same item is the quiddity [i.e., essence, or nature] of many different items and yet is outside them (for otherwise it would not be incorruptible). ...¹

¹ Scotus is notoriously painful to read. So, I'll interpret for you. All he's said so far is this: Plato believed that things like 'humanity', 'horseness', 'circularity', and 'redness' were REAL things, existing on their own in the realm of Ideal Forms. Aristotle didn't agree. But, he wasn't really able to disprove it. He just said that we don't NEED to posit the existence of such weird entities in order to explain reality. Still, maybe there's KIND OF a proof: For instance, we say that Socrates IS human. It seems like we're saying that 'Socrates = human'. Yet, Socrates is 'corruptible' (he can die), while 'human' (or human-ness) is not. It always exists. But, 'Socrates = human' and 'human = incorruptible universal' yields the conclusion that 'Socrates = incorruptible universal', which is absurd. So, maybe 'humanity' isn't really some weird incorruptible universal thing after all.
We find here two opposed opinions:

**The first** is that the universal is in things. There are three arguments for this:

The first of these is that the universal is that which is naturally suited to be said of many. But a thing naturally suited to be said of many is so of itself. ... Moreover, the universal, about which we are speaking, is predicated of a thing, for example of a singular, by a predication that says this is this, for example, ‘Socrates is a human.’ But it is impossible for something to be predicated of a thing and not be in things.

Also, a “what” taken completely absolutely is a true thing, because it is a principle and a cause, as we see in Metaphysics VII, the last chapter. But when taken absolutely it is a universal. Proof: What is taken absolutely is expressed by a definition; but definitions are only of universals.

The way this is posited is as follows: As was said in the question on individuation, in a thing with the grade of limitation by which it is this singular, there is also a nature limited by that grade. This nature is not only intelligible without that grade but is also prior in the thing; and as such it does not reject being in something else, because as prior in this way it is not as a result limited to this. Therefore, as prior in this way it is universal.²

Against this view there are three ways of arguing [the third is omitted here].

First, as follows: The universal is a numerically single object ... But it seems to be impossible that something which is in things is numerically the same intelligible item and is attributed as such to different items.

² There are two main views about universals. View #1 (Realism): There really DO exist things like ‘human-ness’, ‘horseness’, and so on—i.e., single things that are somehow in many things (if humanity is a thing, it is a thing that is in you AND in me). Philosophers call these things ‘universals’. In favor of their existence: You can’t say that someone has some attribute (e.g., human-ness) if that attribute doesn’t exist. Furthermore, we clearly understand universals independently of individuals. For instance, ‘human’ is intelligible without reference to any specific human. So, it seems to exist independently, or prior to, any individual humans.

(His comment about “natures” being “limited” by a “grade” is referring to something he argues for elsewhere. Namely: In each individual person, your common nature (i.e., ‘humanness’)—which is a nature that many different people have—is constricted into being the humanness of THIS particular individual (i.e., YOU, and no one else). More on that later.)
This reasoning is bolstered because even this nature as prior to its limiting grade, if it were understood, would be correctly attributed to only one item. For this concept is not correctly attributed to another singular, but rather there is another concept of another nature which is in the other [singular].

Secondly, an attribute of a subject belongs to whatever its subject belongs to under the character by which it is the subject [of that attribute]. Therefore, if human belongs to Socrates under that thought by which human is truly universal, Socrates is truly universal. ...³

The other opinion is that the universal is only in the intellect. In support of this: the authority of the Commentator [Averroës] in De Anima I: The intellect makes the universality in things, otherwise the agent intellect would not seem to be necessary. ... Also Boethius, speaking about unity and ‘one’: “Everything which is is one in number.” ...

Against this opinion: The object naturally precedes the act. Therefore, the universal naturally precedes the ideation when it is ideated. But it is actually in the intellect only by an ideation. This is bolstered by the fact that if the object, as object and as prior to the ideation, were not universal, it could not be related by the intellect to the many items outside the mind.

To these points it can be said that although the object is prior by nature to the act, still this need not be in the object necessarily, especially when it is a matter not of the mode of the known but of a mode under which it is known, and especially if the object exists only at the same time as the act, as Avicenna claims of the universal.

But, contrary to this, it would follow that if no one were thinking there would not be an actual universal, and thus scientific knowledge as a competence would not be of an actually universal object. ...⁴

³ Against realism: (1) How in the heck can a single thing be in many places at once? (2) The realist seems to be saying that every human being shares one and the same nature. But surely each individual has a nature, or essence, that is distinct from everyone else’s. For, how in the heck could it be the case that MY nature also YOUR nature? (3) Also, if Socrates=man, and man=universal, then Socrates=universal, which is false (see note 1, above).

⁴ View #2 (Nominalism): Universals don’t really exist “out there” in the world. Rather, they’re just in the mind. Against nominalism: It seems like things are human, or red, or round, etc., BEFORE any mental act of thinking about them as such. Nominalism seems to entail that, if no one had ever thought about, e.g., roundness, then nothing in the world would be round (which is absurd).
Again, every difference of differences ultimately leads back to something primarily different (otherwise there would be no point at which we stop finding differences). But individuals are different in the strict sense because they are different beings with something the same. Therefore their differences lead back to some items which are primarily different. Moreover, these primarily diverse items are not the nature in this and the nature in that, because that by which items agree formally is not the same as that by which they differ really ... Therefore besides the nature in this and in that there are some items that are primarily different by which this and that differ (one of them in this and another in that). These cannot be negations—see the second question; nor can they be accidents—see the fourth question. Therefore they will be some positive entities that of themselves determine the nature. ... 

The reality of the individual is similar to the specific reality in this respect: it is a sort of act that determines the reality of the species, which is a sort of possible and potential item. ... 

This is shown by the fact that when we apprehend any quidditative entity (speaking now of limited quidditative entity), we find it is common to many and it does not reject being said of many items each of which is it. ... 

Also since in the works of the Philosopher [Aristotle] quiddity is frequently called ‘form’ ... and in his works ‘material’ means whatever has a restricted quiddity ... Certainly humanity is not the form of one or the other part of the composite, i.e. of the form or of the matter; rather it is the form of the whole composite that has a restricted quiddity or in which there is a restricted quiddity. ... 

Thirdly, when we relate the specific difference to what is on the same level as it, i.e. to another specific difference, we find that ... the ultimate specific difference is primarily diverse from another ... In this regard I say that the individual difference resembles the specific difference of the ultimate sort, because every individual entity is primarily diverse from any other. ... 

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5 You and I are different individuals. But, how? It’s not our NATURES that differ, for I have a human nature and so do you. There must exist some THING that I have, which you do not have, and vice versa. Whatever it is, it must be sort of LIKE a species (e.g., humanity). For, having
And if you ask me what is this individual entity from which we get the individual—is it matter or form or a composite?

I answer: Every partial or total quidditative entity, belonging to a genus is of itself indifferent as a quidditative entity to this entity and to that, in such a way that as a quidditative entity it is naturally prior to that entity as it is this. And since it is naturally prior, just as being this does not belong to it so it does not in virtue of its own character reject its opposite. Also, just as a composite does not insofar as it is a nature include its own entity by which it is formally this, so neither does the matter insofar as it is a nature include its own entity by which it is this matter, nor does the form insofar as it is a nature include its own. Therefore, this entity is neither matter nor form nor the composite insofar as any of these is a nature. Rather it is the ultimate reality of the being which is the matter or which is the form or which is the composite. In just the way that any common but determinable item, however much it is a single thing, can still be distinguished into several formally distinct realities of which one is not formally the other, so here the one is formally the entity of the singular and the other is formally the entity of the nature. Neither can these two realities be a thing and a thing, as can the reality from which we take the genus and the reality from which we take the difference and from both of which is taken the specific reality. Rather, in the same item (whether in a part of it or the whole of it) there are always formally distinct realities belonging to the same thing.

‘humanity’ makes you be a KIND of thing distinct from any other (e.g., it excludes the possibility of your being a horse). Similarly, having the individuating thing in question (he hasn’t said what it is yet) is just whatever it is that makes you be YOU and not any other individual. Somehow, it constricts your human-ness (an attribute that many can have) into THIS PARTICULAR HUMAN (an attribute which no one but you can have).

6 Objection: Scotus, what in the heck are you talking about? What is this “thing” that makes me be ME, and not someone else? Answer: Well, it can’t be form, or matter, or a composite of the two. (Aquinas thought it was matter. He said, I have THIS matter, and you have THAT matter, so that’s how we’re different. But, that can’t be right, for the same question still remains—it’s just that now it’s about matter instead of humans—namely: What makes this matter be THIS matter, and what makes that matter be THAT matter?) So, it must be the case that, just as I have the species-nature, humanity, which makes me be this KIND of thing, I must also have an individual-nature (e.g., ‘John Scotus-ness’), which makes be this PARTICULAR thing.

A further complication: There are not really TWO entities here, however (humanity and Scotus-ness). Scotus says they are only “formally distinct” and not REALLY distinct. Long story short, Scotus-ness JUST IS humanity, “restricted” or contracted into Scotus’s individual humanity.

(Note: The individuating entity Scotus is arguing for the existence of has come to be known as a ‘haecceity’, which translates as ‘this-ness’. So, for example, my nature or quiddity—which translates as your ‘what-ness’—is ‘human-ness’. A human being is WHAT I am. My haecceity is ‘Chad-ness’. I am THIS particular human: Chad).
William of Ockham on Universals

There is a tendency to multiply entities according to the multiplicity of terms, so that for every term there is a thing. This is a wrong-headed approach, and more than any other, it leads one from the truth. For one should not ask in the case of every term what the relevant thing is. In the case of many terms the question is what the term means. - Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, ch. 51

from *Ordinatio*, Distinction 2, Question 4 translated by Paul Vincent Spade (1994)

*Question 4: Is a universal a thing outside the soul, in individuals, really distinct from them, and not multiplied in individuals?*

As for the identity and distinction of God from creature, it must be asked whether there is something univocal common to God and creature and essentially predicable of both. But because this question, along with much of what has already been said and is about to be said in the following questions, depends on a knowledge of univocal and universal nature, therefore in order to clarify what has been and will be said I will first ask some questions about universal and univocal nature.

On this, I first ask whether what is immediately and proximately denominated by a universal and univocal intention is truly some thing outside the soul, intrinsic and essential to what it is common and univocal to, and really distinct from them. ...

*Scotus’s Theory*\(^7\)

On this question there is one theory that says every univocal universal is a certain thing existing outside the soul, really in each singular and belonging to the essence of each singular, really distinct from each singular and from any other universal, in such a way that the universal ‘man’ is truly one thing outside the soul, existing really in each man, and is really distinguished from each man and from the universal animal and from the universal substance. So too for all genera and species ...

\(^7\) Ockham says some people attributed this theory to Scotus. But in fact the view described here is not Scotus’s, but rather Walter Burley’s.
So according to this theory, however many universals are predicable ... there are that many really distinct things in that singular, each of which is really distinguished from the other and from the singular. All those things—not multiplied in themselves in any way, no matter how much their singulars are multiplied—are in each individual of the same species. ...

**Against This Theory**

This view is absolutely false and absurd. So I argue against it.

First: No thing one in number, not varied or multiplied, is in several sensible *supposita* or singulars, or for that matter in any created individuals, at one and the same time. But a thing such as this theory postulates, if it were granted, would be one in number. Therefore, it would not be in several singulars and belong to their essence. ...

Third: An individual of some species can be newly created no matter how many other individuals of the same species remain, created or produced earlier. But creation is absolutely from nothing, so that nothing essential and intrinsic to a thing absolutely precedes it in real being. Therefore, no non-varied pre-existing thing in any individual belongs to the essence of that individual, if it is newly created. For if it did, something essential to the thing would precede it, and consequently it would not be created. Therefore, there is no universal thing belonging to the essence of those individuals. For if there were, it would pre-exist every individual produced after the first one. Consequently, all those produced after the one first produced would not be created, because they would not be from nothing.

Moreover, every singular thing can be annihilated without the annihilation or destruction of any other singular thing on which it does not depend at all. Therefore, this man can be annihilated by God without any other man’s being annihilated or destroyed. But in annihilation nothing intrinsic to the thing remains in real existence, either in itself or in anything else. Therefore, there is no such universal thing common to both this man and another one. For then it would be annihilated [when this man is annihilated], and consequently no other man would remain according to his whole essence. So each man would be corrupted at once, because when any part is annihilated the whole is destroyed. . . .
Chapter 14: On the universal

... First we should consider the common term “universal.” It is predicated of every universal and is opposed to the notion of a particular.

First, it should be noted that the term “particular” has two senses. In the first sense a particular is that which is one and not many. Those who hold that a universal is a certain quality residing in the mind which is predicable of many ... must grant that, in this sense of the word, every universal is a particular. Just as a word, even if convention makes it common, is a particular, the intention of the soul signifying many is numerically one thing a particular; for although it signifies many things it is nonetheless one thing and not many.

In another sense of the word we use “particular” to mean that which is one and not many and which cannot function as a sign of many. Taking “particular” in this sense no universal is a particular, since every universal is capable of signifying many and of being predicated of many. Thus, if we take the term “universal” to mean that which is not one in number, as many do, then, I want to say that nothing is a universal. One could, of course, abuse the expression and say that a population constitutes a single universal because it is not one but many. But that would be puerile.

Therefore, it ought to be said that every universal is one particular thing and that it is not a universal except in its signification, in its signifying many things. This is what Avicenna means to say in his commentary on the fifth book of the Metaphysics. He says, “One form in the intellect is related to many things, and in this respect it is a universal; for it is an intention of the intellect which has an invariant relationship to anything you choose.” He then continues, “Although this form is a universal in its relationship to individuals, it is a particular in its relationship to the particular soul in which it resides; for it is just one form among many in the intellect.” He means to say that a universal is an intention of a particular soul. Insofar as it can be predicated of many things not for itself but for these many, it is said to be a universal; but insofar as it is a particular form actually existing in the intellect, it is said to be a particular. Thus “particular” is predicated of a universal in the first sense but not in the second. ... [T]he intention of the soul is said to be a universal because it is a sign predicable of many things, but it is said to be a particular because it is one thing and not many. ...
Chapter 15: That the universal is not a thing outside the mind

But it is not enough just to state one’s position; one must defend it by philosophical arguments. ...

That no universal is a substance existing outside the mind can be proved in a number of ways:

No universal is a particular substance, numerically one; for if this were the case, then it would follow that Socrates is a universal ... Therefore no particular substance is a universal; every substance is numerically one and a particular. For every substance is either one thing and not many or it is many things. Now, if a substance is one thing and not many, then it is numerically one; for that is what we mean by “numerically one.” But if, on the other hand, some substance is several things, it is either several particular things or several universal things. If the first alternative is chosen, then it follows that some substance would be several particular substances; and consequently that some substance would be several men. But although the universal would be distinguished from a single particular, it would not be distinguished from several particulars. If, however, some substance were to be several universal entities, I take one of those universal entities and ask, “Is it many things or is it one and not many?” If the second is the case then it follows that the thing is particular. If the first is the case then I ask, “Is it several particular things or several universal things?” Thus, either an infinite regress will follow or it will be granted that no substance is a universal in a way that would be incompatible with its also being a particular. From this it follows that no substance is a universal.

Again, if some universal were to be one substance existing in particular substances, yet distinct from them, it would follow that it could exist without them; for everything that is naturally prior to something else can, by God’s power, exist without that thing; but the consequence is absurd.

Again, if the view in question were true, no individual would be able to be created. Something of the individual would pre-exist it, for the whole individual would not take its existence from nothing if the universal which is in it were already in something else. For the same reason it would follow that God could not annihilate an individual substance without destroying the other individuals of the same kind. If He were to annihilate some individual, he would destroy the whole which is essentially that individual
and, consequently, He would destroy the universal which is in that thing and in others of the same essence. Consequently, other things of the same essence would not remain, for they could not continue to exist without the universal which constitutes a part of them.

Again, such a universal could not be construed as something completely extrinsic to the essence of an individual; therefore, it would belong to the essence of the individual; and, consequently, an individual would be composed of universals, so that the individual would not be any more a particular than a universal.

Again, it follows that something of the essence of Christ would be miserable and damned, since that common nature really existing in Christ would be damned in the damned individual; for surely that essence is also in Judas. But this is absurd. ...

[T]he general point emerges: no universal is a substance regardless of the viewpoint from which we consider the matter. ... Thus, if the term “dog” in the proposition “The dog is an animal” is used to stand for the barking animal, the proposition is true; but if it is used for the celestial body which goes by that name, the proposition is false. But it is impossible that one and the same thing should be a substance from one viewpoint and not a substance from another.

Therefore, it ought to be granted that no universal is a substance regardless of how it is considered. On the contrary, every universal is an intention of the mind which, on the most probable account, is identical with the act of understanding. Thus, it is said that the act of understanding by which I grasp men is a natural sign of men in the same way that weeping is a natural sign of grief. It is a natural sign such that it can stand for men in mental propositions in the same way that a spoken word can stand for things in spoken propositions.

That the universal is an intention of the soul is clearly expressed by Avicenna in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, in which he comments, “I say, therefore, that there are three senses of ‘universal.’ For we say that something is a universal if (like ‘man’) it is actually predicated of many things; and we also call an intention a universal if it could be predicated of many.” Then follows the remark, “An intention is also called a universal if there is nothing inconceivable in its being predicated of many.”
From these remarks it is clear that the universal is an intention of the soul capable of being predicated of many. The claim can be corroborated by argument. For every one agrees that a universal is something predicatable of many, but only an intention of the soul or a conventional sign is predicated. No substance is ever predicated of anything. Therefore, only an intention of the soul or a conventional sign is a universal ... That substance is not capable of functioning as predicate is clear; for if it were, it would follow that a proposition would be composed of particular substances; and, consequently, the subject would be in Rome and the predicate in England which is absurd.

Furthermore, propositions occur only in the mind, in speech, or in writing; therefore, their parts can exist only in the mind, in speech, and in writing. Particular substances, however, cannot themselves exist in the mind, in speech, or in writing. Thus, no proposition can be composed of particular substances. Propositions are, however, composed of universal; therefore, universals cannot conceivably be substances.

Chapter 16: Against Scotus' account of the universal

It may be clear to many that a universal is not a substance outside the mind which exists in, but is distinct from, particulars. Nevertheless, some want to claim that the universal is, in some way, outside the soul and in particulars; and while they do not want to say that a universal is really distinct from particulars, they say that it is formally distinct from particulars. Thus, they say that in Socrates there is human nature which is contracted to Socrates by an individual difference which is not really, but only formally, distinct from that nature. Thus, while there are not two things, one is not formally the other.

I do not find this view tenable:

First, in creatures there can never be any distinction outside the mind unless there are distinct things; if, therefore, there is any distinction between the nature and the difference, it is necessary that they really be distinct things. I prove my premise by the following syllogism: the nature is not formally distinct from itself; this individual difference [i.e., haecceity] is formally distinct from this nature; therefore, this individual difference is not this nature. ...
Again, if a common nature were the same thing as an individual difference, there would be as many common natures as there are individual differences; and, consequently, none of those natures would be common, but each would be peculiar to the difference with which it is identical.

Again, whenever one thing is distinct from another it is distinguished from that thing either of and by itself or by something intrinsic to itself. Now, the humanity of Socrates is something different from the humanity of Plato; therefore, they are distinguished of and by themselves and not by differences that are added to them. ...

Again, that which cannot belong to many cannot be predicated of many; but such a nature, if it really is the same thing as the individual difference, cannot belong to many since it cannot belong to any other particular. Thus, it cannot be predicatable of many; but, then, it cannot be a universal. ...

Therefore, one should grant that in created things there is no such thing as a formal distinction. All things which are distinct in creatures are really distinct and, therefore, different things. In regard to creatures modes of argument like the following ought never be denied: this is $A$; this is $B$; therefore, $B$ is $A$; and this is not $A$; this is $B$; therefore, $B$ is not $A$. Likewise, one ought never deny that, as regards creatures, there are distinct things where contradictory notions hold. ...

Therefore, we ought to say with the philosophers that in a particular substance there is nothing substantial except the particular form, the particular matter, or the composite of the two. And, therefore, no one ought to think that in Socrates there is a humanity or a human nature which is distinct from Socrates and to which there is added an individual difference which contracts that nature. The only thing in Socrates which can be construed as substantial is this particular matter, this particular form, or the composite of the two. And, therefore, every essence and quiddity and whatever belongs to substance, if it is really outside the soul, is just matter, form, or the composite of these or, following the doctrine of the Peripatetics, a separated and immaterial substance.
A universal is a thought-object [Ockham’s earlier theory]

... I maintain that a universal is not something real that exists in a subject [of inherence], either inside or outside the mind, but that it has being only as a thought-object in the mind. It is a kind of mental picture which as a thought-object has a being similar to that which the thing outside the mind has in its real existence. What I mean is this: The intellect, seeing a thing outside the mind, forms in the mind a picture resembling it, in such a way that if the mind had the power to produce as it has the power to picture, it would produce by this act a real outside thing which would be only numerically distinct from the former real thing. The case would be similar, analogously speaking, to the activity of an artist. For just as the artist who sees a house or building outside the mind first pictures in the mind a similar house and later produces a similar house in reality which is only numerically distinct from the first, so in our case the picture in the mind that we get from seeing something outside would act as a pattern. For just as the imagined house would be a pattern for the architect, if he who imagines it had the power to produce it in reality, so likewise the other picture would be a pattern for him who forms it. And this can be called a universal, because it is a pattern and relates indifferently to all the singular things outside the mind. Because of the similarity between its being as a thought-object and the being of like things outside the mind, it can stand for such things. And in this way a universal is not the result of generation, but of abstraction, which is only a kind of mental picturing. ...

[F]ictions have being in the mind, but they do not exist independently, because in that case they would be real things and so a chimera and a goat-stag and so on would be real things. So some things exist only as thought-objects.

Likewise, propositions, syllogisms, and other similar objects of logic do not exist independently; therefore they exist only as thought-objects, so that their being consists in being known. Consequently, there are beings which exist only as thought-objects.
Again, works of art do not seem to inhere in the mind of the craftsman as independent subjects any more than the creatures did in the divine mind before creation. ...

I maintain, therefore, that just as a spoken word is universal and is a genus or a species, but only by convention, in the same way the concept thus mentally fashioned and abstracted from singular things previously known is universal by its nature.

from *Expositio Super Librum Perihermenias*
translated by Philotheus Boehner (1955)

**A universal is an act of the intellect [Ockham’s later theory]**

There could be another opinion, according to which a concept is the same as the act of knowing. This opinion appears to me to be the more probable one among all the opinions which assume that these concepts really exist in the soul as a subject, like true qualities of the soul; so I shall first explain this opinion in its more probable form.

I maintain, then, that somebody wishing to hold this opinion may assume that the intellect apprehending a singular thing performs within itself a cognition of this singular only. This cognition is called a state of mind, and it is capable of standing for this singular thing by its very nature. Hence, just as the spoken word ‘Socrates’ stands by convention for the thing it signifies, so that one who hears this utterance, ‘Socrates is running’, does not conceive that this word, ‘Socrates’, which he hears, is running, but rather that the thing signified by this word is running; so likewise one who knew or understood that something was affirmatively predicated of this cognition of a singular thing would not think that the cognition was such and such, but would conceive that the thing to which the cognition refers is such and such. Hence, just as the spoken word stands by convention for a thing, so the act of intellect, by its very nature, and without any convention, stands for the thing to which it refers.

Beside this intellectual grasp of a singular thing the intellect also forms other acts which do not refer more to one thing than to another. For instance, just
as the spoken word ‘man’ does not signify Socrates more than Plato, and hence does not stand more for Socrates than Plato, so it would be with an act of intellect which does not relate to Socrates any more than to Plato or any other man ...; and so with other notions.

To sum up: The mind’s own intellectual acts are called states of mind. By their nature they stand for the actual things outside the mind or for other things in the mind, just as the spoken words stand for them by convention.

...“It is futile to do with more what can be done with fewer.”
   - *Ordinatio*, I, d. 27, q. 2

   “Plurality should not be posited without necessity.”
   - *Tractatus de Corpore Christi*, cap. 28