

SEMANTICS AND ONTOLOGY IN ROBERT KILWARDBY'S  
COMMENTARIES ON THE *LOGICA VETUS*

Alessandro D. Conti

Robert Kilwardby is one of the most remarkable thinkers of the thirteenth century among the champions of the traditional approach to philosophy and theology. His activity is set in the very crucial period of middle scholasticism, when the diffusion of Aristotle's system in both the Faculties of Arts and Theology caused a sharp conflict between the followers of the old Patristic tradition, such as Kilwardby himself, and the supporters of the new Aristotelian way, such as Thomas Aquinas. Kilwardby used all of his intellectual resources and ecclesiastical authority in fighting against the new Aristotelian trend. All the same, as far as purely logical or philosophical subjects were concerned, he strove to reconcile the teaching of Augustine with his recent extensive reading of Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> trying to save Aristotle's opinion where he judged that he could.

His Parisian course on the *Logica vetus* is a good example of this attitude. We can find in it in germ that Augustinianism that is present and fully developed in his later writings (such as the questions on the *Sentences* and the *Responsio de 43 quaestionibus Iohannis Vercellensis*) together with a close familiarity with the texts of Aristotle. In his commentary on the *Sentences* he maintains—and defends against the attack of the supporters of the Aristotelian way—many theses proper to the Augustinian tradition: for instance, (1) a plurality of substantial forms in composite substances; (2) the presence of seminal reasons in matter; (3) universal hylomorphism; (4) individuation by matter and form; (5) a mere notional distinction between the soul and its faculties; and (6) the necessity of divine illumination in order to grasp the eternal truths. As a matter of fact, the first four of those theses are somehow already present in his commentaries on the *Logica vetus*, where his attempt to show the unity and consistency of Aristotle's thought and to apply to logic and philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> On Kilwardby's effort to reconcile Augustine with Aristotle see Patrick Osmund Lewry, OP, "Robert Kilwardby on Imagination: The Reconciliation of Aristotle and Augustine," *Medioevo* 9 (1983): 1–42.

grammar principles and modes of analysis drawn from Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics* is quite evident as well.<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, a glimpse into Kilwardby's logico-metaphysical doctrines as they appear from his course on the *Logica vetus* shall be provided.<sup>3</sup> The first section of this chapter will contain a short description (main divisions, sources, and literary form) of Kilwardby's Parisian commentaries on the *Logica vetus*, that is, Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Praedicaementa* and *Perihermeneias*, the anonymous *Liber sex Principiorum*, and Boethius's *Liber Divisionum*. The second section will be dedicated to Kilwardby's theory of meaning and truth. The third section will explore his general ideas about being and categories. The fourth section will expound his conception of universals and singulars. The fifth section will discuss Kilwardby's theory of individuation by matter. The sixth section will deal with his chief theses on the nature and status of the main categories of accidents, those of quantity, quality, and relatives (*ad aliquid*). And finally, in the last section, some conclusions on both the inner consistency and historical value of Kilwardby's semantic and metaphysical doctrines developed in his commentaries on the *Logica vetus* will be drawn.

### *The Parisian Course of Logica vetus*

The precise dating of Kilwardby's Parisian teaching remains a matter for conjecture; however, on the basis of the studies of D.A. Callus and P.O. Lewry, it is commonly assumed that Kilwardby was regent-master at Paris from circa 1235 to circa 1245.<sup>4</sup> It is known that while he was teaching in the Faculty of Arts in Paris, he wrote, besides his commentaries on the *Logica vetus*, a set of *Sophismata grammaticalia* and *logicalia*; commentaries on *Priscianus minor*, *De accentibus*, *Barbarismus Donati*, and Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and the first three books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*—an impressive series of writings. The commentaries on the *Logica vetus* appear to be the work of

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Osmund Lewry, OP, introduction to Robert Kilwardby, OP, *On Time and Imagination*, ed. Lewry (Oxford: 1987), xiii–xvii.

<sup>3</sup> On Kilwardby's commentaries on the *Logica vetus* studied with regard to their teaching and method see Patrick O. Lewry, OP, "Robert Kilwardby's Writings on the *Logica vetus*" (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1978), esp. 204–352.

<sup>4</sup> D.A. Callus, OP, "The *Tabulae super Originalia Patrum* of Robert Kilwardby, OP," in *Studia Mediaevalia in honorem Adm. R.P. Raymundi Josephi Martin*, OP (Bruges: 1948), 243–70, at 247; Lewry, "Kilwardby's Writings on the *Logica vetus*," 6.