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THE AVICENNIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMONNESS OF NATURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

La concepción aviceniana del carácter común de la naturaleza y su influencia en John Duns Escoto

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María José Jaramillo Gómez[*]

Abstract

The concept of common nature in Duns Scotus is generally recognized for taking inspiration from the same concept of the philosopher Avicenna. While the proposals of the philosophers regarding common nature are similar, the difference between them and the contributions made by Scotus may not be immediately clear. This article examines the profound influence of Avicenna's proposal on Scotist theory and elucidates Scotus' contributions and the evolution of the concept of common nature from a Scotist perspective. This study explores the questions: Is Scotus' theory simply a reflection of Avicenna's proposal? And what are the contributions that Scotus introduces to the concept of common

[*] Doctora en Filosofía. Docente de la Facultad de Filosofía y Ciencias Humanas de la Universidad de La Sabana. Chía, Colombia. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7127-563X, Correo electrónico: maria.jaramillo10@unisabana.edu.co

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nature that were previously presented by Avicenna? The article will demonstrate that Scotus adds valuable ideas to the concept of common nature that were not initially present in Avicenna's proposal, which helps create a clearer distinction between the common and the universal and will eventually serve as the basis for the realist epistemology proposed by Scotus and his views on the understanding of reality and its relationship with knowledge.

Keywords

Avicenna; Common Nature; Duns Scotus; Medieval Metaphysics; Medieval Philosophy; Metaphysics.

Resumen

El concepto de naturaleza común en Duns Escoto es generalmente reconocido por tomar inspiración en el mismo concepto del filósofo Avicenna. Si bien las propuestas de los filósofos con respecto a la naturaleza común son similares, la diferencia entre ellos y los aportes planteados por Escoto pueden no ser muy claros a primera vista. En el presente artículo se examina la profunda influencia de la propuesta de Avicenna en la teoría escotista, también dilucidando los aportes de Escoto y la evolución del concepto de naturaleza común desde la mirada escotista. En el artículo se exploran los interrogantes de ¿es simplemente la teoría de Escoto un reflejo de la propuesta de Avicenna? Y ¿Cuáles son los aportes que introduce Escoto al concepto de naturaleza común que previamente presentó Avicenna? El artículo demostrará que, efectivamente, Escoto añade ideas valiosas al concepto de naturaleza común que inicialmente no se encontraban en la propuesta de Avicenna, lo cual ayuda a crear una distinción más clara entre lo común y lo universal, y servirá eventualmente como las bases para la epistemología realista que propone Escoto y su propuesta con respecto a la comprensión de la realidad y su relación con el conocimiento.

Palabras clave

Avicenna; Duns Escoto; Filosofía Medieval; Metafísica; Metafísica Medieval; Naturaleza Común.

Introduction

The doctrine of common nature attributed to Duns Scotus is widely recognized as influenced by Avicenna's ideas.[1] Scotus himself references Avicenna in his discussion on the individuation of things, echoing Avicenna's characterization of nature as common (Scotus, 1973, pp. 402-403).[2] However, the exact manner in which Scotus adopted and potentially transformed Avicenna's theory remains somewhat opaque. This raises the question of whether Scotus made an original contribution to the concept of commonness that is distinct from universality. This inquiry delves into Avicenna's conception of commonness as applied to nature, Scotus' interpretation of Avicenna's theory, and ultimately, Scotus' unique perspective on common nature. This study delineates the nuances between these two theories, which, despite their shared foundation, diverge significantly. Drawing primarily from the Avicenna Latinus, a text accessible to Scotus despite his lack of proficiency in Arabic, this study aims not only to explore Avicenna's theory but also to elucidate how his concept of commonness profoundly shaped Scotus' philosophical framework. The distinction Avicenna makes between commonness and universality elevates the notion of common nature in Scotus' philosophy to a pivotal position in his understanding of the relationship between reality and knowledge, forming the bedrock of his realist epistemology (Jaramillo, 2017, pp. 415-432).

In this light, my approach is structured as follows: Firstly, I will elucidate Avicenna's (2005) theory of commonness as outlined in the Fifth Treatise of the Metaphysics of The Healing within the Avicenna Latinus corpus. Secondly, I will delve into Scotus' theory, drawing from his discussion in the second book of the Ordinatio, particularly focusing on his exploration of the principle of individuation. Finally, I will conclude with a comparative analysis of both theories, synthesizing the insights gleaned from the preceding sections. Central to this concluding reflection will be two pivotal inquiries: 1. What precise influence did

[1] It is evident that Avicenna's influence extended significantly into the Latin Medieval Philosophy of the 13th Century. As Pini notes, Avicenna's impact was not limited to Duns Scotus; rather, it reverberated across other prominent figures such as Henry of Ghent and Thomas Aquinas (Pini, 2011, pp 365-366); Janos (2020, p. 50 ff.); Owens (1957).

[2] "Qualiter autem hoc debeat intelligi, potest aliqualiter videri per dictum Avicennae V *Metaphysicae,* ubi vult quod 'equinitas sit tantum equinit as'" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 402-403, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 31).

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Avicenna have on Scotus' conceptualization of common nature? 2. Did Scotus introduce novel elements to this conception, or did his portrayal merely echo Avicenna's perspective?

The Avicennian theory of the commonness of nature

Avicenna (1980) dedicates the initial chapters of the fifth treatise of his Metaphysics to expounding upon the notions of "common" and the intricate relationship between universals and particulars (pp. 227-245). Throughout his discourse, Avicenna employs the term "common" with nuanced meanings, subtly delineating between two distinct conceptions. Firstly, there exists the common in its strict sense, a concept I will delve into later, which stands apart from both the universal and the individual or remains undetermined by or indifferent to these categories. Secondly, Avicenna refers to the common in contrast to the particular, denoting attributes that are not unique to individuals but are shared among many. This latter interpretation closely aligns with the concept of universality. Notably, the former notion of the common requires a consideration of the thing independent of the common inherent in the second sense of the term.

Avicenna's elucidation of the universal at the onset of the fifth book of the *Metaphysics* aligns closely with the classical characterization of universals as "that, which, being in the understanding, is not impossible to be predicated of many" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 228)[3], drawing from the discussions initiated by Aristotle (1965)[4], Porphyry (1887)[5], and later expounded upon by Boethius

[3] "universale est id quod in intellectu non est impossibile praedicari de multis" (p. 228, 20-21, Met. V, 1.).

[4] Aristotle's theory on universals remains a subject of considerable debate, characterized by numerous complexities and unresolved questions. While his treatment of universals is fraught with challenges and lacks clarity in certain respects, it undeniably serves as the foundation upon which subsequent discussions by Porphyry and Boethius are built. Aristotle's exploration of universals emerges organically from his broader theories of substance and form, which themselves contain ambiguities across his various works. However, a comprehensive examination of Aristotle's theory on universals exceeds the scope of this discussion. (Cf.) Aristoteles, De Interpretatione, cap. 7, 17a38-39 "dico autem universale quod in pluribus natum est praedicari" (1965, p. 9, 21). (Cf.) Regis (1976); Sykes (1975); Studtmann (2021); Cohen & Reeve (2021).

[5] "Eorum enim quae praedicantur alia quidem de uno dicuntur solo, sicut individua, sicut Socrates et hic et hoc, alia vero de pluribus, quaemadmodum genera et species et differentiae et propria et accidentia communiter sed non proprie alicui" (Porphyry, 1887, Isagoge, 2). (Cf.) Emilsson (2022).

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(1877)[6]. Avicenna embarks on his exploration of universals and particulars by distinguishing three nuanced meanings of the universal, all of which resonate with the fundamental notion of *aliquid de multis*, which means something that, at least potentially, can be predicated of many things:

1) "The universal as actually predicated of many" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 227)[7]. In this sense, the universal manifests as a term, word, or concept applicable to a multitude of individuals.

2) "The universal intention, predicable of many without actual being" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 227)[8]. Here, the universal refers to something theoretically conceivable, devoid of inherent contradiction that would render its existence impossible. Avicenna illustrates this with the example of a house with seven angles.

3) "The universal intention, potentially predicable of many, but hindered by external causes" (Avicenna, 1980, p, 227)[9]: This interpretation arises in cases where only one object of a certain type is known at present, yet there exist external factors preventing the predication of the universal to multiple instances. Avicenna exemplifies this with references to celestial bodies such as the moon or the sun, which, while logically conceivable to be predicable of many, are restricted by external constraints.

These three delineations of the universal underscore Avicenna's conceptualization of it as a logical principle or abstract concept, rather than a tangible reality inherent in the things themselves. For Avicenna, the universal exists as something predicable of many (Janos, 2020, pp. 89-90), distinct from being an intrinsic quality within individual entities. Predicability, whether actualized or potential, suffices for universality; what matters is the absence of

[6] While Boethius does not explicitly formulate the universal as "one of or in many" (unum de multis et in multis), his descriptions of universals implicitly align with this formula—a notion widely propagated in medieval thought. Boethius (1877), "universale est quod de pluribus praedicatur, ut homo de pluribus dicitur et est universalis" (p. 82, 18, In De int. I, 7). (Cf.) Marenbon (2021); Klima (2022); Libera (1996, pp. 29-131).

[7] "universale secundum hoc quod praedicatur in actu de multis" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 227, Met. V, 1, 8).

[8] "universale intentio quam possibile est praedicari de multis, etsi nullum eorum habeat esse in effectu" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 227, Met. V, 1, 9-10).

[9] "universale intentio quam nihil prohibet opinari quin pradicetur de multis, quod tamen, si aliquid prohibet, prohibebit causa qua hoc probatur" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 227, Met. V, 1, 13-15).

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any inherent contradiction preventing its predication across multiple instances, regardless of whether it currently applies to one or no objects at all (Marmura, 1992, pp. 77-88). This potential for predication may be purely logical or have real-world implications. Avicenna (1980) staunchly asserts that individuals, by contrast, are utterly non-predicable —they defy universalization.[10] Thus, Avicenna provides a negative definition of the individual: it is simply that which is not universal.

The formulation of these three meanings of the universal prompts a crucial inquiry: what underpins the predication of universals onto individual entities? In essence, what metaphysical principle accounts for the presence of universals within many things, thereby serving as the foundation for their predication across multiple instances? This inquiry delves into the intricate relationship between universals and individuals, seeking to elucidate the underlying mechanism by which universals manifest in the realm of reality. Avicenna implicitly addresses this question by introducing a further distinction in the first chapter of the fifth book of the Metaphysics.

In the subsequent elaboration of his argument, Avicenna (1980) introduces a crucial distinction between two intentions: firstly, the universal concept, which we predicate across numerous individuals, such as "man" or "horse." On the other hand, there exists an intention distinct from universality, exemplified by "humanity." Importantly, the definition of this latter term does not inherently encompass universality. Therefore, universality is not an intrinsic attribute of humanity; rather, it is something that befalls or is superimposed upon humanity.[11]

Avicenna encapsulates the abstract nature of the common thing in a renowned statement: "equinitas non est aliquid nisi equinitas tantum" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 228, 33) ("equinity is nothing but equinity itself"). This concept, distinct from universality, transcends plurality, individuality, and even the realms of sensible existence or the soul, existing independently of actuality

[10] "Individuum vero est hoc quod non potest intelligi posse praedicari de multis" (Avicenna, 1980, pp. 228, Met. V, 1, 22-23).

[11] "Ergo universale ex hoc quod est universale est quiddam, et ex hoc quod est quiddam cui accidit universalitas est quiddam aliud; ergo de universali, ex hoc quod est universale constitutum, significatur unus praedictorum terminorum, quia, cum ipsum fuerit homo vel equus, erit hic intentio alia praeter intentionem universalitatis, quae est humanitas vel equinitas" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 228, Met. V, 1, 24-29); (Cf.) Janos (2020, p. 149).

or potentiality.[12] Avicenna characterizes humanity or "horseness" (equinity) as inherently common, possessing the capacity to be defined by numerous characteristics.[13] The essence of a thing resides solely in its nature, which, in itself, is nothing beyond that nature, yet can manifest as singular or universal. Commonness, therefore, denotes the inherent indeterminacy of nature, implying its potential to assume universality or individuality, contingent upon further determinations. Avicenna explicitly asserts the indifferent nature of the common:

> Rather, animal when looked upon inasmuch as it is animal is neither particular nor non-particular – namely, that which is general. On the contrary, both [alternatives] are denied to it because, from the direction of its animality, it is only animal. And the meaning of animal inasmuch as it is animal is other than the meaning of the particular and the general, these two, moreover, being not included in its quiddity. (Avicenna, 1980, p. 235)[14]

Avicenna's discourse on essence extends beyond substantial objects to encompass accidental properties, each possessing its own intrinsic essence. Whether it is whiteness or unity, these properties exist in themselves, independent of their instantiation in specific substances or their mode of existence, whether real or intentional. Furthermore, Avicenna emphasizes the distinctness of essences among different entities, rejecting the notion of their identity due to their combination with other principles within real things. He clarifies this point by asserting that:

> For this reason, if someone were to say, «Is the humanity of Zayd, inasmuch as it is humanity, [something] other than the one in 'Amr?» he must answer, «No.» From his conceding this, it does not follow that he should say, «That [humanity] and this [humanity] are numerically the same,» because this has been an absolute negation.

[12] "Et sic est quiddam quod est animal vel homo, consideratum in seipso secundum hoc quod est ipsum, non accepto cum eo hoc quod est sibi admixtum, sine condicione communis aut proprii aut unius aut multi nec in effectu nec in respectu etiam potentiae secundum quod est aliquid in potentia: animal enim ex hoc quod est animal et homo ex hoc quod est homo, scilicet quantum ad definitionem suam et intellectum suum absque consideratione omnium aliorum quae comitatus illud, non est nisi animal vel homo. Sed animal commune et animal individuum, et animal secundum respectum quo est in sensibilibus vel intellectum in anima, est animal et aliud, non animal consideratum in se tantum" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 233, Met. V, 1, 22-33). (Cf.) Marmura (1992, pp. 77-88, p. 79); Janos (2020, p. 22).

[13] "ipsa enim in se nec est multa nec unum, nec est existens in his sensibilibus nec in anima, nec est aliquid horum potentia vel effectu, ita ut hoc contineatur intra essentiam equinitatis, sed ex hoc quod est equinitas tantum" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 228, Met. V, 1, 33-36).

[14] "Animal enim consideratum ex hoc quod est animal et secundum eius animalitatem nec est proprium nec improprium, quod est commune; utrumque enim removetur ab eo, nam ipsum, ex animalitate sua, tantum est animal. Intentio vero animalis, ex hoc quod est animal, est praeter intentionem proprii et communis nec sunt intrantia in suam quidditatem" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 235, Met. V, 1, 74-79). The translation from the Arabic into English is by Marmura: *The Metaphysics of The Healing.* A parallel English-Arabic Text (Avicenna, 2005, p. 154, 23-29).

> By this negation we meant that this humanity inasmuch as it is humanity, is simply humanity. Its being other than the one in 'Amr is something extraneous.[15] (Avicenna, 1980, p. 231)

Marmura (1992) interprets this distinction in essences among individuals as arising from the essence being considered not in isolation but as existing across multiple individuals, albeit not strictly in numerical terms but solely according to its definition (p. 82, 77-88). Avicenna's mention of absolute negation underscores that this negation does not pertain to a specific individual or numerical unity, but rather to numerical unity as a concept, akin to the negation of universality.

Avicenna's perspective on nature suggests that it functions as an abstraction, a mode of consideration rather than an entity that exists as we commonly perceive it. Nature, in this context, is a conceptual framework through which we understand reality. Avicenna (1980) delineates two modes of considering things: in themselves and in relation to other things.[16] According to Avicenna, humanity, for example, is the same whether considered in itself or as instantiated in individuals like Socrates or Plato, as the presence of humanity in specific individuals is extrinsic to its essence. Thus, considering humanity in Socrates or Plato entails a relative perspective on nature, rather than an absolute one.[17]

[15] "Unde, si quis interrogaverit an humanitas quae est in Platone, ex hoc quod est humanitas, sit alia ab illa quae est in Socrates et necessario dixerimus non, non oportebit consentire ei ut dicat «ergo haec et illa sunt una numero», quoniam negatio illa absoluta fuit et intelleximus in ea quod illa humanitas, ex hoc quod est humanitas, est humanitas tantum, sed ex hoc quod ipsa est alia ab humanitate quae est in Socrates quiddam extrinsecum est." (Avicenna, 1980, p. 231, Met. V, 1, 74-80). The translation from the Arabic into English is by Marmura: The Metaphysics of The Healing (2005, p. 150, 34-151,4).

[16] "Ergo universale ex hoc quod est universale est quiddam, et ex hoc quod est quiddam cui accidit universalitas est quiddam aliud; ergo de universali, ex hoc quod est universale constitutum, significatur unus praedictorum terminorum, quia, cum ipsum fuerit homo vel equus, erit hic intentio alia praeter intentionem universalitatis, quae est humanitas vel equinitas." (Avicenna, 1980, p. 228, Met. V, 1, 24-29).

[17] "Unde, si quis interrogaverit an humanitas quae est in Platone, ex hoc quod est humanitas, sit alia ab illa quae est in Socrate et necessario dixerimus non, non oportebit consentire ei ut dicat «ergo haec et illa sunt una numero», quoniam negatio illa absoluta fuit et intelleximus in ea quod illa humanitas, ex hoc quod est humanitas, est humanitas tantum, sed ex hoc quod ipsa est alia ab humanitate quae est in Socrate quiddam extrinsecum est" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 231, Met. V, 1, 74-80).

Avicenna (1980) elucidates the individuality of nature within real existent entities through the concepts of accidents and other dispositions.[18] While nature itself is neither universal nor individual, it is the accidents that confer individuality upon a thing, granting it real existence. Thus, the individual entity emerges as a composite of nature and accidents.

Avicenna (1980) employs the concept of nature to denote quiddity taken in isolation, emphasizing its inherent commonness. Additionally, he posits that nature, in its essence, precedes both its instantiation in real entities as individual entities and its apprehension in the intellect as universal concepts.[19] This precedence stems from the fact that both manifestations of nature, whether in reality or in the intellect, are composed of nature itself along with certain principles or properties that govern its existence as either real or intelligible, individual, or universal.

Avicenna, in alignment with the theory outlined here, elucidates at the beginning of the Logic of The Healing, which precedes his Metaphysics, that quiddity can be apprehended in three distinct ways: 1. Quiddity taken in itself: As discussed earlier, this entails considering quiddity in isolation, independent of its instantiation in individual entities or its conceptualization as a universal. Avicenna sometimes refers to this mode as common or universal in an improper sense. 2. Quiddity as it exists in real, existent individual things: Here, quiddity is understood in its concrete manifestation within actual entities, where it confers upon them their unique identities and characteristics. 3. Quiddity as it exists in the mind as a universal. In this mode, quiddity is conceptualized as a universal, existing within the intellect and applicable across multiple instances of individual entities (Janos, 2020, pp. 28-29).[20]

[18] "Quae vero ex istis naturis eget materia, non habet esse nisi cum materia fuerit praeparata; unde ad eius esse adveniunt accidentia et dispositiones extrinsecus per quae individuatur." (Avicenna, 1980, p. 240, Met. V, 1, 80-85).

[19] "Poterit autem animal per se considerari, quamvis sit cum alio a se; essentia enim eius est cum alio a se; ergo essentia eius est ipsi per se; ipsum vero esse cum alio a se est quiddam quod accidit ei vel aliquid quod comitatur naturam suam, sicut haec animalitas et humanitas; igitur haec consideratio praecedit in esse et animal quod est individuum propter accidentia sua et universale quod est in his sensibilibus et intelligibile, sicut simplex praecedit compositum et sicut pars totum." (Avicenna, 1980, p. 233, Met. V, 1, 36-234, 42).

[20] Janos (2020), refers to this threefold consideration of quiddity, which is present in the fifth book of the Metaphysics, but that is mentioned so explicitly in the *Introduction of The Healing*. This classification is also present in the Isagoge of The Healing, as Marmura quotes it (1992, p. 84).

The concept of modulation, as Janos highlights, "modulation is a crucial, yet understudied, notion that Avicenna applies to many key concepts of his philosophy, be it universality, oneness, form, matter, necessity, priority, and, of course, existence" (Janos, 2020, p.5). The concept of nature is indirectly an object of modulation through the modulation of being and universality (Janos, 2020, p. 60). Avicenna posits that nature exhibits diverse modes of being, both in physical entities and in the intellect. In its abstract form, nature as a universal exists as an intelligible form in the intellect. This universal form pertains to a plurality of individuals in reality. However, this same universal form, when instantiated in the soul, assumes a singular existence (Janos, 2020, p. 182). In this context, nature is not universally present within the soul; rather, its universality lies in its conceptual association with a plurality of individuals. Thus, universality emerges as a relational concept within Avicenna's framework, linking the abstract form in the intellect to its instantiation across multiple individual entities in reality.

In Avicenna's theory, the concept of common nature or pure quiddity implies that any further characterizations or determinations of nature, in its various forms of existence, are external attributes. These attributes, whether concomitants, properties, or accidents, are distinct from the essence of nature itself. While some of these attributes may be added to nature, others remain external to its essential concept, although they invariably accompany it by virtue of being co-extensional. For instance, attributes such as existence or unity, while not inherently part of the essence of nature, are inseparable from it and are always associated with it (Janos, 2020, p 163 ff).

Avicenna's treatment of the universal and the common introduces a nuanced distinction, albeit one complicated by his occasional interchangeability of terms and ambiguous usage. While Avicenna often employs the term "common" to refer to the universal, and conversely, refers to the universal as common in some contexts, this ambiguity (Janos, 2020, p. 61; Marmura, 1992, p. 78) poses challenges precisely in delineating the difference between commonness and universality. The concept "common" is used by Avicenna (1980) as ambiguously as he uses the concept "universal".[21] Avicenna's initial definition of the universal

[21] Just to refer one example: "Equinitas ergo, ex hoc quod in definitione eius convenius multa, est communis" (Avicenna, 1980, p. 229, Met. V, 1, 39-40).

in Book V suggests a logical interpretation, yet his examples and discussions surrounding the common imply a metaphysical principle. It becomes evident that while the common is related to the universal, it is not strictly identical to it; rather, it emerges as an abstraction of the metaphysical principle that pervades both reality and thought. Consequently, the common lacks an independent ontological status and exists solely as a conceptual framework derived from the underlying metaphysical principle (De Haan, 2020, p. 251)[22].

The interpretation of quiddity in Avicenna's theory indeed presents a rich source of debate among scholars, with two distinct perspectives emerging. On one hand, some scholars argue that quiddity in itself lacks independent existence, viewing it as a conceptual abstraction that finds its reality only in the instantiation within individual entities or as universals in the intellect. On the other hand, another camp contends that there must be a third ontological status of quiddity, one that corresponds specifically to quiddity in itself, distinct from its instantiation in reality or its conceptualization as universals (Janos, 2020, p. 32). Avicenna's own writings offer valid arguments and passages supporting both interpretations, contributing to the complexity of the discussion. Indeed, it appears that Avicenna himself may not have a fully clear position on this topic or may exhibit inconsistencies in his own stance.

According to the first position, De Haan (2020) affirms:

> Avicenna takes the quiddity in itself that is prior to its existence in natural things or its mental existence in the intellect, not to have any existence in itself. The essence considered in itself does not exist at all; rather, for Avicenna existence (*wujūd*), like matter, particularity, universality, and so on, is a concomitant of the essence or quiddity in itself. (p. 240)

Similarly, Wisnovsky (2011) contends that there is not a third ontological status of quiddity. However, he acknowledges that certain texts may suggest otherwise, implying a distinct ontological status for quiddity beyond its instantiation or conceptualization. Wisnovsky observes that in some passages, the concept of quiddity appears to encompass more than just existence, hinting at a broader conceptual scope (2011, pp. 30-31; 2005, p. 110).

[22] Based on the co-extensionality of being and thing and the primacy of existence over thing, defends De Haan the viewpoint, that the quiddity in itself does not exist as such, but it is only an abstraction (Haan, 2020, p. 251).

Indeed, Janos presents a robust defense of the second theory, which posits that there is a distinct ontological status for quiddity beyond its instantiation or conceptualization:

> The analysis in chapters II and III indicates that pure quiddity should be granted a special mode of existence and that Avicenna appears to have elaborated a sophisticated and full blown ontology of essence, whose exact characteristics nevertheless remain to be elucidated. (Janos, 2020, p. 424)

Janos' (2020, p. 10) argument for the idea of a third ontological status of quiddity rests on two main pillars: firstly, certain passages in Avicenna's writings that suggest the existence of quiddity in itself or a divine existence of quiddity; and secondly, the concept of the co-extensionality of being and thing, or essence and existence (Janos, 2020, pp. 133-134). Janos contends that defending the co-extensionality of being and thing implies ascribing some form of existence to quiddity in itself. Otherwise, quiddity would be reduced to a mere abstraction or a mode of consideration, devoid of intrinsic existence. Janos proposes that this special form of existence of quiddity in itself exists within the mind, constituting a kind of intentional existence distinct from the existence of quiddity as a universal concept (p. 185). Consequently, Janos argues that quiddity in itself should be understood as an intelligible form, possessing a unique ontological status beyond mere abstraction or conceptualization (p. 124).

Indeed, while Janos' position is supported by explicit references in Avicenna's texts, it poses significant challenges and raises several problematic points. Among these challenges are the difficulties in determining the location (Janos, 2020, p. 10) and ontological status of these pure quiddities (p. 29).

Indeed, the argument regarding the co-extensionality of being and thing serves as a central point in the discussion surrounding the ontological status of quiddity in Avicenna's philosophy. However, this argument gives rise to numerous complexities and challenges, leading to diverse interpretations and debates within both Avicenna's own writings and the Latin reception of his thought. In the Latin reception of Avicenna, scholars grappled with various aspects of his philosophy, leading to differing interpretations and understandings. For example, the concept of *esse essentiae* found in different

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authors reflects the attempt to articulate the relationship between existence and essence in Avicenna's thought. Additionally, the distinction between common and universal, or their identification, presents a point of contention among scholars, as does the analogous use of both concepts and their inherent ambiguity (Galluzzo, 2011, pp. 332-335; Janos, 2020, pp. 431-432).

The open questions left by Avicenna's metaphysical framework have been the subject of extensive discussion among scholars in recent decades, highlighting the complexity and depth of his philosophy. These discussions often revolve around differing interpretations of Avicenna's metaphysics, shaped by the emphasis placed on various aspects of his theory and the interpretation of the diverse texts in which Avicenna addresses the concept of nature. One central point of contention is the ontological status of common nature: whether it exists in some manner, is solely a mode of consideration, or possesses universality in any sense. Additionally, scholars debate the locus of common nature: whether it resides in the human mind or the divine mind, as Avicenna denies its separate existence (Janos, 2020, pp. 172-173). Moreover, there is the question of whether the nature existing in individual things is identical across instances or so individuated that there is no shared relation among individuals of the same species. This question is closely tied to the nature of unity inherent in nature itself. These open questions reveal a tension within Avicenna's theory, particularly regarding the relationship between quiddity and existence. The idea of the co-extensionality of both concepts presents a challenge in reconciling these differing aspects of Avicenna's metaphysical framework (Wisnovsky, 2013, p. 202).

Scotus' doctrine of common nature

In the elucidation of the principle of individuation within his commentary on the sentences, Scotus delves into the intricate notion of common nature, unveiling its significance in the metaphysical framework. The essence of his inquiry lies in discerning whether a distinct principle of individuation is imperative or superfluous. At the heart of this inquiry lies the fundamental question: Are entities individual by nature, or does their individuality stem from external

factors?[23] A positive answer to this question would imply a cosmos populated solely by discrete entities, obviating the need for supplementary principles to expound upon their singularity. It posits a reality wherein our conceptual universals, the very bedrock upon which we construct our understanding of the tangible world, teeter precariously on the brink of mere fabrications of the mind. Scotus' pursuit diverges markedly from Avicenna's, steering away from exploring the nature and existential essence of common entities. Instead, his focus sharpens on the existential autonomy of real entities, probing whether they stand as individuals in and of themselves or whether they need external delineation. Implicit in this ontological discourse is a pronounced epistemological thrust that mirrors Avicenna's scholarly trajectory. Scotus does not merely grapple with metaphysical quandaries; he unfurls an epistemological tapestry, weaving together threads of inquiry into the very fabric of nature. Moreover, his conception of common nature not only navigates the labyrinth of metaphysical intricacies but also endeavors to circumvent the pitfalls ensnaring Avicenna's theoretical edifice.

At the genesis of his inquiry, Scotus ventures into the realm of the nature of things, a terrain illuminated by Avicenna's theory of the common, distinct from the universal. The very fabric of Scotus' discourse, as he embarks on the labyrinthine journey of individuation, is interwoven with echoes of Avicenna's insights. In the very contours of the question itself, the term "nature" emerges, implicitly invoking Avicenna's conceptual architecture. Scotus, cognizant of the debt owed to Avicenna's intellectual legacy, explicitly references him within the text.

In his initial stride, Scotus (1973) swiftly rebuffs the assertion of an anonymous theorist positing that things inherently exist as individuals by nature or in and of themselves, purportedly owing their singularity to the essence of nature. This advocate contends that the intelligible or intentional existence of things is a byproduct of intellectual action, rendering them universal solely in the realm of the intellect. Under this framework, universality becomes a property

[23] "Circa distinctionem tertiam quaerendum est de distinctione personali in angelis. Ad videndum autem de ista distinctione in eis, primo quaerendum est de distinctione individuali in substantiis materialibus, de qua sicut diversi diversimode dicunt, ita consequenter dicunt de pluralitate individuorum in eadem specie angelica. Et ut videatur de diversis opinionibus distincte, quae quaeruntur de distinctione vel indistinctione substantiae materialis, quaero singulatim de diversis modis ponendi, – et primo, utrum substantia materialis ex se sive ex natura sua sit individua vel singularis" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 391-392, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 1).

not inherent to the essence of things as existent but rather contingent upon the act of cognition.[24] However, Scotus (1973) interjects with a series of trenchant objections to this conjecture. Firstly, he queries how one could reconcile the notion of knowing things when our knowledge is mediated through universal concepts if the objects themselves are singular entities. Such a proposition, he contends, leads to a paradox wherein our comprehension of things diverges diametrically from their intrinsic nature or constitution.[25] Secondly, Scotus ventures to dismantle the notion by asserting that anything possessing a real, proper, and sufficient unity, albeit less than numerical unity, cannot inherently be numerically singular. Nature, he elucidates, embodies such unity, thereby precluding its innate numerical singularity.[26] This unity, intrinsic to nature, stands as a self-contained entity, requiring no supplementary unity beyond its inherent completeness. In contrast, numerical unity, being inherently exclusive, cannot coexist with multiplicity without engendering contradiction.[27] Thus, Scotus concludes that nature, in its essence, defies numerical singularity.

Having firmly established the extrinsic nature of numerical unity *vis-à-vis* nature, Scotus (1973) expounds upon the necessity of acknowledging a form of unity that transcends the confines of numericality. Central to his argument is

[24] "Hic dicitur quod sicut natura ex se formaliter est natura, ita est ex se singularis, ita quod non oportet quaerere aliam causam singularitatis a causa naturae […]. Quod probatur per simile: quia sicut natura ex se habet verum esse extra animam, non autem habet esse in anima nisi ab alio, id est ab ipsamet anima (et ratio est, quia esse verum convenit ei simpliciter, – esse autem in anima, est esse eius secundum quid), ita universalitas non convenit rei nisi secundum esse secundum quid, scilicet in anima; singularitas autem convenit rei secundum verum esse, et ita ex se et simpliciter. Et igitur quaerenda causa quare natura est universalis (et dandus est 'intellectus' pro causa), – non autem est quaerenda aliqua causa quare natura est singularis, alia a natura rei, medians inter ipsam et eius singularitatem, sed eadem causae quae sunt causae unitatis rei, sunt et singularitatis eius; ergo etc." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 393-394, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 5-6).

[25] "Contra istud arguitur sic: Obiectum in quantum est obiectum, est prius naturaliter ipso actu, et in illo priore – per te – obiectum est ex se singulare, quia hoc semper convenit naturae non acceptae secundum quid sive secundum esse quod habet in anima; igitur intellectus intelligens illud obiectum sub ratione universalis, intelligit ipsum sub ratione opposita suae rationi, quia ut praecedit actum determinatur ex se ad oppositum illius rationis, scilicet universalis." (Scotus, 1973, p. 394, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 7). (Cf.) González-Ayesta & González-Ginocchio (2015, pp. 101-131, pp. 127-128).

[26] "Praeteream cuiuscumque unitas realis, propria et sufficiens, est minor unitate numerali, illud non est de se unum unitate numerali (sive non est de se hoc); sed naturae exsistentis in isto lapide, est unitas propria, realis sive sufficiens, minor unitate numerali; igitur etc." (Scotus, 1973, p. 395, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 8).

[27] "Maior de se patet, quia nihil est de se 'unum' unitate maiore unitate sibi sufficiente: nam si propria unitas – quae debetur alicui de se – sit minor unitate numerali, numeralis unitas non convenit sibi ex natura sua et secundum se (aliter praecise ex natura sua haberet maiorem et minorem unitatem, quae circa idem et secundum idem sunt opposita, – quia cum unitate minore sine contradictione potest stare multitudo opposita maiori unitati, quae multitudo non potest stare cum unitate maiore, quia sibi repugnat; igitur et.)" (Scotus, 1973, p. 395, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 9).

the imperative to illustrate that unity, while often associated with numerical singularity, can manifest in forms that are less restrictive yet equally valid. Scotus marshals a battery of arguments to buttress this thesis:[28]

1) Objects can be classified into a genus based on real features that all individuals of the genus possess. In addition, this classification is made by taking a model case of the corresponding genus. Scotus denotes this action of classifying as a measurement, and the measurement can only be real if the device for the measurement is a real entity. Hence, there must be some kind of unity between the individuals of a genus, which is real, but this unity cannot be the numerical one. The numerical unity does not allow any comparison between individuals or the identification of similarities between them. There cannot be an individual that is the measure of the rest of the members of the genus, if there were just the numerical unity, because individuals are all equally different and consequently equally important.[29]

2) Scotus argues, following Aristotle, that not every real difference must be numerical. The difference between the unity of genus and the unity of species is a real difference because both concepts have mentally the same unity, they are, namely, numerically one. If the unity of species and genus were not real, the concepts corresponding to the species and genus could not be predicated essentially of the members of a genus or a species. Nature is one with the unity of species, which differs from the unity of genus, but it is not one with numerical unity.[30]

[28] Scotus speaks of six arguments, still after the sixth argument he adds a seventh one.

[29] "'in omni genere est unum primum, quod est metrum et mensura omnium quae sunt illius generis'. Ista unitas primi mensuratis est realis … Ista autem unitas est alicuius in quantum est 'primum' in genere: est ergo realis, quia mensurata sunt realia et realiter mensurata; ens autem reale non potest realiter mensurari ab ente rationis … Ista autem unitas non est numeralis, quia nullum 'singulare' est in genere, quod sit mensura omnium illorum quae sunt in illo genere, – nam secundum Philosophum III *Metaphysicae* «in individuis eiusdem speciei non est hoc prius et illud posterius»." (Scotus, 1973, p. 396, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n.11-13).

[30] "Quia secundum Philosophum VII *Physicorum,* in specie atoma fit comparatio, quia est una natura, – non autem in genere, quia genus non habet talem unitatem. Ista differentia non est unitas secundum rationem, quia conceptus generis est ita unus numero aput intellectum, sicut conceptus speciei; alioquin nullus conceptus diceretur in 'quid' de multis speciebus … Igitur Philosophus intendit ibi naturam specificam esse unam unitate naturae specificae; non autem intendit ipsam esse sic unam unitate numerali, quia in unitate numerali non fit comparatio. Igitur etc." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 397-398, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 16-17).

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3) According to Aristotle, each similarity, sameness, or identity is based on some form of unity. Similarity is a relation that has as its foundation some real unity in things, which is less than numerical unity because nothing is similar to itself.[31]

4) The opposition of two things presupposes the unity of each side of the opposition and presupposes a unity, which is less than the numerical unity because there is no opposition between pure individuals.[32]

5) One action of one faculty has one object, and the unity of the object is real, not numerical. This unity of the object exists before any activity of the intellect. This is also explained by our inability to know individuals as such through the senses and differentiate individuals of the same species in themselves.[33]

6) If every real unity is numerical, then every real diversity must also be numerical. This cannot be, because even the numerical diversity includes some unity that is not numerical, for as numerical it is the same. If there were no unity less than the numerical one, the intellect could not abstract something common to two individuals of the same kind, more than to two individuals which have no relation at all. The universal would be pure fiction if it were so.[34]

[31] "Praeterea, tertio: Secundum Philosophum V *Metaphysicae* cap. de 'Ad aliquid', idem, simile et aequale fundantur super 'unum', ita quod licet similitudo habeat pro fundamento rem de genere qualitatis talis, tamen relatio non est realis nisi habeat fundamentum reale et rationem proximam fundandi realem; igitur unitas quae requiritur in fundamento relationis similitudinis, est realis: non est autem unitas numeralis, quia nihil unum et idem est simile vel aequale sibi ipsi" (Scotus, 1973, p. 398, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 18).

[32] "Praeterea, quarto: Unius oppositionis realis sunt duo prima extrema realia; sed contrarietas est oppositio realis […] igitur utrumque primum extremum huius oppositionis est reale et 'unum' aliqua unitate reali: non autem unitate numerali, quia tunc praecise hoc album esset 'primum contrarium' huic nigro (vel praecise illud album), quod est inconveniens, quia tunc tot essent contrarietates primae quot individua contraria; igitur etc." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 398-399, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 19).

[33] "Praeterea, quinto: Unius actionis sensus est obiectum unum secundum aliquam unitatem realem; sed non numeralem; igitur est aliqua alia unitas realis quam unitas numeralis.

Probatio minoris, quia potentia cognoscens obiectum sic (in quantum videlicet 'hac unitate' unum), cognoscit ipsum in quantum est distinctum a quolibet quod non est unum hac unitate, – sed sensus non cognoscit obiectum in quantum est distinctum a quolibet quod non est unum ill […] Posset etiam iuxta hoc argui de primo obiecto sensus, quod est unum in se aliqua unitate reali, quia sicut obiectum 'huius potentiae' – in quantum obiectum – praecedit intellectum, ita etiam secundum unitatem suam realem praecedit omnem actionem intellectus […] sed de uno obiecto unius actus sentiendi non videtur negare quin necessario habeat unitatem realem et minorem unitate numerali" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 399-400, Ord. II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 20-22).

[34] "Praeterea, sexto: Quia omnis unitas realis est numeralis, ergo omnis diversitas realis est numeralis. Sed consequens est falsum, quia omnis diversitas numeralis in quantum numeralis, est aequalis, – et ita omnia essent aeque distincta: et tunc sequitur quod non plus posset intellectus a Socrate et Platone abstrahere aliquid commune, quam Socrate et linea, et esset quodlibet universale purum figmentum intellectus." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 400-401, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 23).

7) Thought objects cannot generate anything in reality, but there is some sort of unity between the generated and the thing that generates. This unity is a real but not a numerical one and is not produced by the intellect, but recognized in real things by it.[35]

For these compelling reasons, Scotus (1973) unequivocally asserts that nature possesses a unity less restrictive than numerical unity, rendering it indifferent to singular unity.[36] In this regard, commonness, according to Scotus, signifies a real unity that transcends numerical constraints entirely. Drawing from Avicenna's theoretical underpinnings, Scotus posits that the essence of a thing encapsulates its nature alone; individuality and universality emerge as subsequent determinations, not inherent to its fundamental nature. Consequently, the unity inherent in common nature, being less than numerical, can accommodate numerical unity as a further determination. Common nature, in its intrinsic state, remains indeterminate in a specific sense, leaving room for variability, particularly concerning numerical unity. This inherent indeterminacy opens avenues for intelligible existence as a universal. The intellect, capturing the essence of things, discerns a formal content that is undeniably real yet transcends numerical quantification. Thus, the universal finds its grounding in the real existence of individual entities within a species, debunking any notion of pure fiction. In this intricate interplay between unity and determination, Scotus unveils a framework wherein common nature emerges as a nexus of ontological richness, transcending numerical constraints to underpin the very fabric of universal existence.

Although Scotus (1973) diverges from Avicenna's conception of common nature by asserting that nature, in itself, lacks independent existence, this departure does not signify a dismissal of its reality. Scotus elucidates that while nature does not exist autonomously, it manifests alongside one of two modes, neither of which it inherently favors. Despite this dependence on modes

[35] "Praeterea: Nullo exsistente intellectu ignis generaret ignem et corrumperet aquam, et aliqua unitas realis esset 'generantis ad genitum' secundum formam, propter quam esset generatio univoca. Intellectus enim considerans non facit generationem esse univocam, sed cognoscit eam esse univocam." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 401-402, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 28).

[36] "Sicut etiam deducit secunda ratio (cum suis probationibus omnibus), aliqua est unitas in re realis absque omni operatione intellectus, minor unitate numerali sive unitate propria singularis quae 'unitas' est naturae secundum se, – et secundum istam 'unitatem propriam' naturae ut natura est, natura est indifferens ad unitatem singularitatis; non igitur est de se sic illa una, scilicet unitate singularitatis." (Scotus, 1973, p. 402, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 30).

of existence, Scotus underscores that nature maintains a primacy, naturally preceding these modes.[37] This primacy, however, does not connote temporal precedence or endow common nature with an independent ontological status. Rather, this natural priority implies an ontological primacy—a foundational status that does not hinge on temporal or independent existence. The absence of independent existence for common nature does not render it nonexistent or devoid of reality; rather, it signifies a reality that is formal in nature, contingent upon intentional or real being (González-Ayesta & González-Ginocchio, 2015, pp. 118-119; Owens, 1957, p. 13). What, then, does this natural priority entail, considering common nature's nonexistence in isolation? According to Scotus, this priority underscores the fundamental ontological significance of common nature. While it lacks independent existence, common nature possesses two essential attributes: a formal content (such as "horseness" or "humanity") and a unity fitting to this formal content, which falls short of numerical unity.

Scotus employs the concept of natural priority across various contexts, always referring to entities considered in their intrinsic essence: he discusses being qua being, the definition of a thing, and propositions true in the primary sense. Nature, taken in itself, assumes a natural priority precisely because it delineates what is essential to it, excluding anything extraneous to its intrinsic constitution. Only elements encapsulated within the definition of a thing are deemed essential, thus rendering their existence, whether real or intentional, a non-essential attribute. This metaphysical priority of nature over its individual real existence or its intentional universal existence stems from the fact that these distinct forms of existence metaphysically hinge on nature, much like further determinations depend on what they determine. Consequently, nature in itself appears as a pure abstraction, devoid of tangible reality in any sense. The sequence of determinations does not unfold chronologically, and nature, in its essence, does not exist independently of either form of existence. Therefore, when Scotus refers to common nature and its natural priority, he elucidates the inherent indeterminacy and independence of common nature in its formal

[37] "Licet enim numquam sit realiter sine aliquo istorum, de se tamen non est aliquod istorum, sed est prius naturaliter omnibus istis, – et secundum prioritatem naturalem est 'quod quid est' per se obiectum intellectus, et per se, ut sic, consideratur a metaphysico et exprimitur per definitionem; et propositiones 'verae primo modo' sunt verae ratione quiditatis sic acceptae, quia nihil dicitur 'per se primo modo' de quiditate nisi quod includitur in ea essentialiter, in quantum ipsa abstrahitur ab omnibus istis, quae sunt posteriora naturaliter ipsa." (Scotus, 1973, p. 403, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 32).

content. This indeterminacy enables it to be further specified by various causes, underscoring the dynamic interplay between essence and determination within Scotus' philosophical framework.

The logical consequence of this perspective dictates that there must exist a cause not only for the individuality but also for the universality of things. This is because things, in their essence, are neither inherently individual nor universal. Universality, rather than being a metaphysical category, remains a logical one: it denotes how things are conceived or apprehended as universals. This mode of universality, inherent to nature, manifests primarily within the intellect, where things are known. However, when we initially consider nature, we do so in its pristine state, devoid of any mode or further determination. In this initial moment of contemplation, nature is contemplated in its pure form, neither as a tangible existent nor as it exists within the intellect as an intelligible being. Universality, therefore, emerges as a mode of thinking about the thing, rather than a mode intrinsic to the thing itself, as Scotus (1973) affirms.[38] Thus, individuality and universality are regarded as modal determinations according to Scotus' philosophical framework (González-Ayesta & González-Ginocchio, 2015, p. 16; Kobusch, 1987, p. 113; King, 1992, p. 61).

Scotus (1973) employs the expression *non repugnare* to denote the indifference inherent to nature in itself.[39] It is characteristic of nature to exhibit a lack of resistance towards assuming either real or intentional existence, whether individual or universal. This lack of resistance stems from the fact that nature, in its essence, is none of these modes, and none of these modes contradicts its intrinsic constitution.[40] This indifference, or lack of resistance,

[38] "Non solum autem ipsa natura de se est indifferens ad esse in intellectu et in particulari, ac per hoc et ad esse universale et particulare (sive singulare), – sed etiam ipsa, habens esse in intellectu, non habet primo ex se universalitatem. Licet enim ipsa intelligatur sub universalitate ut sub modo intelligendi ipsam, tamen universalitas non est pars eius conceptus primi, quia non conceptus metaphysici, sed logici (logicus enim considerat secundas intentiones, applicatas primis secundum ipsum). Prima ergo intellectio est 'naturae' ut non cointelligitur aliquis modus, neque qui est eius in intellectu, neque qui est eius extra intellectum; licet illius intellecti modus intelligendi sit universalitas, sed non modus intellectus!" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 403-404, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 33).

[39] "Est ergo in re 'commune', quod non est de se hoc, et per consequens ei de se non repugnat non-hoc. Sed tale commune non est universale in actu, quia deficit illa indifferentia secundum quam completive universale est universale" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 407-408, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 38).

[40] "Et sicut secundum illud esse non est natura de se universalis, sed universalitas accidit illi naturae secundum primam rationem eius, secundum quam est obiectum, – ita etiam in re extra, ubi natura est cum singularitate, non est illa natura de se determinata ad singularitatem, … et secundum illam entitatem habet unitatem sibi proportionalem, quae indifferens est ad singularitatem, ita quod non repugnat illi unitati de se quod cum quacumque unitate singularitatis ponatur (hoc igitur modo intelligendo 'naturam habere unitatem realem, minorem unitate numerali')" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 404-405, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 34).

towards both modes or forms of existence constitutes what Scotus defines as the commonness of nature. The commonness of nature represents a unity inherent to nature itself, yet it is of a magnitude less than numerical unity. This unity is a defining property of nature, integral to its definition and essential to its primary essence. The indifference, then, emerges as a clear consequence of this unity, which falls short of numerical unity. Individuality and universality, on the other hand, are regarded as external determinations of common nature. Scotus further characterizes this indifference as something privative in his *Metaphysic Commentary*.[41] Consequently, this indifference is not inherent in nature itself; rather, the common nature remains undetermined so that it may be capable of further determination, namely, the determination of individuality and numerical unity.

Scotus (1973) explicitly rejects the thesis that the universal is real, using a principle of Averroes: "It seems that the universal is something real in the thing, what is against the Commentator, who says that the intellect makes the universal in the things, thus that it does not exist except through the intellect" (p. 405).[42] Thus, the distinction between common and universal is made. The universal is the actual universal only if it exists in the soul with an objective being or with intentional existence. The common is potentially universal, which exists individuated in the real thing. Scotus defines the actually universal as something that has some indifferent unity, through which it is in proximate potency of being predicated of something else. The universal can be immediately predicated of an individual. Real existent things cannot be predicated of other things; nature as such cannot be predicated of other things. Nature as thought is therefore universal and can be predicated of other things. On the other hand, nature as such is common, not universal, because it cannot be predicated of other

[41] "Et isto modo bene intelligitur illud dictum Avicennae quod natura de se non est universalis nec particularis, sed tantum natura … Et isto modo dicatur 'quid', et ista indeterminatio eius est privativa, alia maior quae est universalitatis contraria." (Scotus, 1997, *In Met.* VII q. 18 n. 49). (Cf.) Pérez-Estévez (2006).

[42] "videtur ponere universale esse aliquid reale in re (quod est contra Commentatorem I De anima commento 8, qui dicit quod 'intellectus facit universalitatem in rebus, ita quod non exsistit nisi per intellectum'" (Scotus, 1973, p. 405, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 35).

things as such. Nature as common is not actually universal, but just potentially universal.[43] It is, namely, capable of also existing really and being individualized in real things.[44]

Scotus (1973) concludes this inquiry by asserting that there exists no inherent opposition between singularity and commonness; rather, the true dichotomy lies between singularity and universality. He posits that commonness permeates both singular real existent entities and universal intentionally existent entities. This commonness is intrinsic to nature itself, whereas universality and individuality are imposed upon things by external principles: individuation contracts nature within individual entities, while universalization occurs as nature is conceived and exists within the intellect in an intentional manner. Crucially, Scotus contends that while there is no cause for the commonness of nature, there must be a cause for its universality and individuality.[45]

Scotus' metaphysical explanations carry deep epistemological implications, revealing a strong undercurrent of the latter in his arguments and concepts. The concept of common nature, central to Duns Scotus' philosophy, acts as a crucial bridge between reality and knowledge, specifically connecting the universal and the individual. In Scotus' framework, common nature becomes instrumental in shaping his epistemological stance. It lays the groundwork for a pragmatic understanding of knowledge by clarifying how we comprehend individuals through universal concepts. This theory finds its roots in Avicenna's influence, particularly his differentiation between the common and the universal.

[43] "Est ergo in re 'commune', quod non est de se hoc, et per consequens ei de se non repugnat non-hoc. Sed tale commune non est universale in actu, quia deficit illa indifferentia secundum quam completive universale est universale, secundum quam scilicet ipsum idem aliqua identitate est praedicabile de quolibet individuo, ita quod quodlibet sit ipsum." (Scotus, 1973, pp. 407-408, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 38).

[44] "Ad primum dico quod universale in actu est illud quod habet aliquam unitatem indifferentem, secundum quam ipsum idem est in potentia proxima ut dicatur de quolibet supposito […]. Nihil enim – secundum quamcumque unitatem – in re est tale quod secundum illam unitatem praecisam sit in potentia proxima ad quodlibet suppositum praedicatione dicente 'hoc est hoc', […] hoc enim solum est possibile de obiecto eodem numero, actu considerato ab intellectu, – quod quidem 'ut intellectum' habet unitatem etiam numeralem obiecti, secundum quam ipsum idem est praedicabile de omni singulari, dicendo quod 'hoc est hoc'" (Scotus, 1973, pp. 406-407, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 37).

[45] "Ad confirmationem opinionis patet quod non ita se habet communitas et singularitas ad naturam, sicut esse in intellectu et esse verum extra animam, quia communitas convenit naturae extra intellectum et similiter singularitas, – et communitas convenit ex se naturae, singularitas autem convenit naturae per aliquid in re contrahens ipsam; sed universalitas non convenit rei ex se. Et ideo concedo quod quaerenda est causa universalitatis, non tamen quaerenda est causa communitatis alia ab ipsa natura; et posita communitate in ipsa natura secundum propriam entitatem et unitatem, necessario oportet quaerere causam singularitatis, quae superaddit aliquid illi naturae cuius est." (Scotus, 1973, p. 410, *Ord.* II d. 3 p. 1 q. 1 n. 42).

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, John Duns Scotus' conception of commonness undeniably draws upon the groundwork laid by Avicenna's theory. While the parallels between the two are strikingly evident, it would be erroneous to view Scotus' theory as a mere reproduction of Avicenna's proposal. Indeed, Scotus' contribution to the understanding of common nature stands as an original and distinctive addition to philosophical discourse.

The theories of Avicenna and Scotus converge on numerous fundamental points: both assert that commonness is an attribute exclusive to nature when considered in itself. It represents the essence of a thing, existing identically in both real entities and universal concepts. Moreover, common nature encapsulates everything essential to the identity of a thing, abstracting from extraneous characteristics that lie beyond its definition, such as its numerical quantity or its mode of existence. Additionally, both philosophers adopt a modal understanding of these further determinations, recognizing them as contingent attributes that modify the essence of common nature. Furthermore, Avicenna and Scotus agree on the pivotal role of common nature as a bridge between reality and knowledge, albeit approaching the issue from distinct contexts and with varying objectives.

Despite the numerous points of convergence between the theories of Avicenna and Scotus, Scotus introduces crucial contributions to the theory of common nature, particularly in two key aspects.

Firstly, Scotus advances a decisive refinement in the distinction between the universal and the common, which is more sharply delineated in his theory compared to Avicenna's. While Avicenna introduces this distinction, Scotus offers a clearer and more consistent usage of both concepts. He argues that the common is an attribute of a metaphysical principle—nature—that inheres in things, and is not itself universal. In contrast, the universal is a logical property of our concepts, enabling their predication across multiple instances. Although related, commonness and universality are not identical. Scotus' contribution

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lies in providing a more precise formulation of this distinction, thereby averting potential misunderstandings. He achieves this by characterizing commonness as a state of indifference to diverse determinations or modalities of formal content.

Secondly, Scotus presents a novel conception of unity, characterizing commonness as a form of real unity that transcends numerical quantification. This departure from Avicenna's proposal is groundbreaking. Scotus rejects the notion that unity must necessarily be numerical and asserts the existence of a real unity that is distinct from numerical unity. This fundamental aspect of Scotus's understanding of common nature allows him to offer differing interpretations from Avicenna on various points.

The thesis of a unity less than numerical unity, attributed to common nature by Scotus, serves as a pivotal point in resolving longstanding debates within Avicenna's theory. Specifically, it addresses questions concerning the ontological status of nature when considered in itself, as well as related inquiries regarding any special ontological status it might possess. Scotus contends that nature in itself does not possess a distinct ontological status; rather, it is a real principle endowed with a degree of reality due to its inherent unity. This unity, being less than numerical, precludes nature from existing as a fully independent entity. Instead, it is conjoined with individuality or universality as further determining modalities.

Another significant point of departure between Scotus and Avicenna lies in their understanding of the individuating principle. While Avicenna suggests that individuation is caused by accidental factors, Scotus explicitly rejects this notion and proposes an essential principle of individuation, known as haecceitas.

This case highlights the substantial influence of Avicenna on Western philosophy and underscores his pivotal role as one of the primary sources for Latin Medieval thinkers. However, it also demonstrates that European philosophers did not passively accept Avicenna's theory without reflection

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or modification. Rather, they adapted and refined it to address their own philosophical concerns and provide solutions to perceived shortcomings within Avicenna's proposals.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest with an institution or association of any kind. Likewise, the Luis Amigó Catholic University is not responsible for the handling of the copyright that the authors make in their articles. Therefore, the veracity and completeness of the citations and references are the responsibility of the authors.

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