

A Note on Ockham's Defender

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Robert Andrews, in the introduction to his edition of *Defensorium Ockham* in this issue of *CIMAGL* is unnecessarily modest about the importance of the text he has edited. I would like to point out that it is interesting both (1) for its philosophical content and (2) for its historical setting.

Re (1). Ockham's Defender has a keen eye for what conceptual tools are central to a theory. He makes a serious attempt to see Aristotle's *Categories* as a book that proceeds *more geometrico* and for his own part to follow in Aristotle's footsteps. Ockham had hinted at the possibility of such a reading of the *Categories*,¹ but his Defender develops the idea and suggests that the lore of categories is governed by three definitions, three postulates and two axioms. The definitions are those of univocals, equivocals and denominatives in *Cat. 1-2*. The postulates (c. 5) are [1] *Dicibilium, sive sint voces sive conceptus, quaedam sunt complexa, quaedam incomplexa*; [2] *Incomplexorum, sive conceptuum sive vocum, singulum aut significat substantiam <aut qualitatem> aut quantitatem aut respectus*; [3] *Incomplexorum praedictorum quaedam dicuntur de et sunt in, quaedam nec dicuntur de nec sunt in, quaedam dicuntur de et non sunt in, quaedam sunt in et non dicuntur de*. Postulates [1] and [3] are based on *Categories 2*, postulate [2] on *Categories 4*. Finally, the two axioms (c. 6) are [a] *Quando alterum de altero praedicatur ut de subiecto, quaecumque de eo quod praedicatur dicuntur, omnia de subiecto dicuntur* and [b] *Diversorum generum et non subalternatim positorum diversae sunt species et differentiae* – both of them from *Categories 3*.

Just as Ockham's author makes of point of identifying the logical tools central to Aristotle's doctrine of categories, so he has asked himself the question: Which are the tools that make Ockham's philosophy work? And he points to two in particular: denomination and connotation. This clearly comes out in ch. 16 when he says:

Viso modo salvandi distinctionem praedicamentorum sine multitudine rerum, qui est per denominationes, modo videndum est quomodo modus iste declinat

¹ Ockham, *Expositio in librum Praedicamentorum, Opera Philosophica* II: 138.

inconveniētia iuxta hunc modum apparentia. Et potissima quidem via ad hoc est per connotationem.

Ockham's Defender was good at singling out what is really important.

Re (2). The use of Denmark in some examples in ch. 15 is more interesting than one might think at first. What the examples require is two distant places, and the tradition prescribes that one of them be where the speaker and his audience (a teacher and his pupils) currently find themselves, whereas the other be a well-known place far away. The latter role is traditionally played by Rome. If you are in Paris, this city will play the former role, and since so many scholars could correctly use Paris for "here", we may expect to find it used sometimes even by people whose actual "here" was somewhere else. But this does not happen in the *Defensorium*, nor in Ockham's oeuvre, where the "here" opposed to Rome is called "England" and "London" in *Summa Logicae*², and simply "here" in a *quodlibet*³. There are few credible scenarios for a scholar using the most unusual example-place of Denmark in any example. A Dane abroad just might do it, alluding to his nationality, which of course would be known to his audience. But for the use of "Denmark" in a context where traditionally it equals "here" there is only one plausible explanation: the man actually was in Denmark.

If Ockham's Defender was in Denmark, where was he? The obvious place would be a Franciscan convent. As Robert Andrews points out (p. 190, above) his treatise belongs in a Franciscan milieu. To the arguments adduced by Andrews, I may add that it is less than obvious how the treatise could fit into the arts course of a university, and also there are too many references to theological matters for an arts faculty work. Whether the author was a theologian is unclear. His remark that he leaves aside some theological intricacies "quia in logica nolo esse theologus." (ch. 15) could mean "I am a theologian, but since this is a logic class, I will leave that aside" or "We are doing logic here, and I shall not try to act as if I were a theologian". But no matter whether he held a degree in theology, he was a well-educated man and giving instruction on a rather high level in Denmark.

² Ockham, *Summa Logicae* I.15 & III-3.45, *Opera Philosophica* I: 53 & 743.

³ Ockham, *Quodlibet* VI.2, *Opera Theologica* IX: 636-7.

The Franciscans had only one common province for the three Nordic kingdoms, and they called it Denmark (*Dacia*) after the then most important of the three kingdoms. So, it could be that when Ockham's Defender said "In Denmark" he meant "Here in our province of Denmark". If so, the convent could be in any of the kingdoms. Since the role of 'Denmark' in the examples is to be an ordinary toponymic, it probably stands there in its ordinary sense: the kingdom of Denmark.

So: a Franciscan convent in fourteenth-century Denmark or, less probably, in Sweden or Norway. Further precision can hardly be achieved, but this is enough to make *Defensorium Ockham* unique: no other known work may be claimed to have originated in the teaching of philosophy among Nordic Franciscans! On top of that, it is a much richer text than one might think at first. Though perhaps meant as a first introduction to the doctrine of categories, it is no mere repetition of standard lore.

