

Richard of Conington was an Oxford Master about 1305–06, a lecturer at Cambridge, and Minister Provincial in the Franciscan Order in 1310. He is cited by William Ockham in the Prologue to his *Ordinatio*, Question 5. The following is translated from the edition of Stephen Brown, “Sources for Ockham’s Prologue to the Sentences,” in *Franciscan Studies* 26 (1966) 53–65.

Quodlibet I, Question 1

By Richard of Conington

Translated by John Longeway

In our first quodlibetal disputation twenty two questions were asked, of which some were in logic, some in philosophy, some in metaphysics, one in canon law, and some in theology.

The first logical question is whether the middle term demonstrating in the highest way is the definition of the attribute or of the subject.

And it is argued first that it is of the attribute, and not of the subject, since Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* II [2, 90a7], says that the middle term is the cause. And he asks, the cause of what? And he says that it is not of the subject, whether without qualification or not, but of those which are in it per se. But according to him this cause which is the middle term is a definition. Therefore it is the definition of what is in the subject per se, that is, of attributes, is the middle term for demonstrating them to be in it.

On the other hand, the definition of the passion is not the cause of its inherence, because this inherence is in its definition, and nothing is the cause of itself. Therefore, etc.

Here there are two things to be explained: First, what sort of demonstration is of the highest sort, and then, what the middle term is in it.

As for the first point, it must be known that Aristotle, in *Posterior Analytics* I [13–14, 78a22–79a32, and 24–26, 85a13–87a30), assigns five conditions to demonstration of the highest sort, namely, that it is why it is so, in the first figure, universal, affirmative, and direct. But in the second book [*Posterior Analytics* II 8, 93a1–13], he adds the sixth condition [namely that the middle term is a definition]. Now since the middle term of such a demonstration is a definition, and there are three sorts of definition, namely material, formal and composite—and the composite is not the middle term of a demonstration, but the whole demonstration rearranged, but the material as well as the formal definition can be a middle term in demonstration. But only the formal definition can be the middle term in the highest sort of demonstration.

And it should be known that, according to Grosseteste [*Commentary on Posterior Analytics* II 2], the definition of a reality can be taken from any of its causes, since the reality is there beforehand through each of its causes, name from its end finally, from its efficient cause virtually, through its material cause potentially, and from its form formally. Since the definition indicates only what the reality is, it is clear that its definition can be taken from each of its causes. Still, Aristotle calls the definition taken from the efficient cause and from its matter a material definition, and the definition taken from its end and from its form a formal definition, because just as the form informs the reality in being so the end which is the operation of the form informs the reality in its well being. Now matter and the efficient cause do not inform, for

the efficient cause is extrinsic and matter is not form. Aristotle, then, shows that the formal definition demonstrates rather than the material cause above, where he says that “because demonstration which demonstrates alone is higher than that demonstrated by demonstration, for demonstration is a syllogism by which we know when we have it, and this without needing anything else.” [*Posterior Analytics* II 8, 93a1–14] But only demonstration through the formal cause is like this, therefore etc. Aristotle shows the minor premise through many examples, which all take their strength from this, Grosseteste says, that the end causes the efficient cause and the form the material.

But some will say, “the causes are causes of each other.” Hence, although the end moves the efficient cause, nonetheless the efficient brings about the form and the end, and thus form establishes matter, just as matter supports form, as the Commentator says, on *Physics* I [Averroës, *On the Physics* I 3, ed. Iuntina, vol. IV fol. 20r.] Therefore by whatever reason demonstrations are demonstrated to be given through the efficient and material cause, by the same reason, demonstrations are also given through the form and the end.

And it must be replied that even though causes a causes of one another, still this is in a less noble way. For example, the end in the intention causes the efficient cause, and then the efficient cause brings about the end. Hence it is clear that the efficient cause causes only insofar as it is caused by the end, but the end causes not as it is caused by the efficient cause. Also, the efficient cause cannot cause the form insofar as it causes formally, for it causes formally when the efficient cause ceases, and hence the efficient cause is only the cause of its becoming. The efficient cause also does not give being to matter, but becoming only. But matter does not cause the composite unless it is first caused and constituted according to nature through the form, nor does it then cause except when the occasion is right. But the cause thus causes the reality formally, that it is essentially whatever the reality is strictly and per se, inasmuch as it is assumed, and all else is set aside, *per impossibile*, the reality would be in its species and genus, and *in effectu*. Hence it is the highest cause of the reality, and therefore the definition taken from it is the highest middle term for demonstration.

From these it is clear in what genus of cause the middle for demonstrating in the highest way is, for it is in the genus of formal cause, not that it is the cause in the reality itself, but it is rather the exemplar and paradigm of it, namely the definition explicitly indicating what the reality is.

But since there are two terms in a demonstration other than the middle term, it must be inquired— of what reality is that form, of which the definition, exemplar or paradigm is the middle of the highest sort of demonstration? And this is the second article of the principal question.

Now it seems to some that it is the form of the subject, since the conclusion of a demonstration of the highest sort is per se in the second way; but in that way the whole cause of the inherence of the predicate is in the subject, as is clear in *Posterior Analytics* I [2, 72a27–30]. But the highest sort of demonstration is given through the whole and most perfect cause, therefore etc.

But this does not seem true to me, because I see that when demonstrations are given through some genera of causes, they are always given through causes of inherence, namely through the efficient cause of inherence, the material cause of inherence, or the final cause of inherence. Therefore, similarly when it is given through a formal cause, this ought to be the

formal cause of inherence. But the formal definition of the subject is not the formal cause of the inherence of the passion, but rather the efficient or material cause. Therefore etc.

Again, the middle for demonstration of the highest sort ought to be the proper and proximate cause of the inherence of the passion. But the formal definition of the subject is not of this sort, therefore etc. The minor is clear, since if it were proper, it would not be a cause of anything except this. But the formal definition of the subject is the exemplary proper and proximate cause of the subject. Therefore etc.

Again, the middle of the highest sort of demonstration is not the middle in position alone, as in any other syllogism, but it is necessary that it be the middle according to nature, for if it were equally primary as the attribute according to nature, or posterior to it, it would not be the cause, and if it were prior to the subject it would not be the proximate cause. But the formal definition of the subject is prior to the subject, for it is given through what is prior according to nature, and consequently it is not in the middle according to nature between the subject and the predicate. Therefore etc.

From this it is clear how to respond to the argument, for even though in the conclusion of the demonstration the form of the subject is the whole cause of the inherence of the passion in some genus of cause, still it is not in the genus of the formal cause which is the middle of the highest sort of demonstration. Neither it nor the definition taken from it is the exemplary formal cause of the attribute, and the middle of demonstration of the highest sort is in that genus of cause, as we have said.

Others hold that neither the formal definition of the subject nor that of the attribute to be demonstrated is the middle term of the highest sort, but the formal definition of a prior attribute between it and the subject is. This is because the formal definition differs from the defined only verbally. Therefore, if either the formal definition of the subject or that of the attribute to be demonstrated is placed as the middle term in a demonstration, there will be three terms in the demonstration only verbally, and the question will be begged in the argument. Therefore it is necessary, it seems, to say that the middle term is the definition of neither of these formally, but it is the definition of a prior attribute.

Again, the examples of Aristotle are in agreement with this opinion. For in *Posterior Analytics* I he takes the incremental arc of the moon as the middle term for sphericity in the moon, and being near to demonstrate that the planets do not twinkle, and having lungs to demonstrate respiration in animals, and the ascension of blood around the heart to demonstrate anger, and in Book II, he takes the interposition to demonstration the eclipse, and numerical proportion to demonstration consonance or harmony between high and low sounds—and indeed, he says that this proportion is the definition of harmony, but not of high and low—and his being unaffected by good and bad fortune to demonstrate fortitude of Lysander and Socrates, and not taking insult to demonstrate magnanimity of Cleanthe and Hercules, and the extinction of fire in the cloud to demonstrate thunder. And it is clear that all these are attributes between the subject and the attribute to be demonstrated.

But this cannot stand, for the formal definition of the prior attribute is not the formal exemplary cause of the attribute following, nor its proximate cause, but it is the definition of the attribute, as it was argued above concerning demonstration of the subject.