



## From Dominican to Dominican: Osmund Lewry on Robert Kilwardby

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### Abstract

In this text, I explore the contribution of the Dominican, Osmund Lewry, to medieval scholarship by focusing on his work on the medieval Dominican, Robert Kilwardby (1215-1279). I examine in some detail one area of Kilwardby's thought that was first noted by Lewry: the question of how the principles of scientific knowledge are acquired. In order to do so, I will briefly connect Kilwardby's answer to this question with those of his two more famous Dominican contemporaries, Albert the Great (ca. 1200-1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). The aim of this paper is to give to provide a glimpse of the outstanding contribution of both Kilwardby and Lewry to the development of medieval philosophy and the scholarship on medieval philosophy.

### Keywords

Robert Kilwardby, Osmund Lewry, early Dominicans, Oxford, theory of science

### I. Auspicious Beginnings

The history of the scholarship of medieval philosophy is full of pioneering figures who recognize thinkers and aspects of their thought as being of historical significance. One needs just to remember the figures of Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), and Norman Kretzmann (1928-1998), to name just a few. Much of what we know of philosophical ideas in the medieval period and how we understand the main patterns of their development is due to their work – not limited to but inspired and made possible by their efforts in carving new inroads for others to pursue. The list is certainly longer, and one always runs the risk of being unfair when it comes to whom to include in such a selection, so that in the end, it becomes a personal affair,

revealing preferences for those who have made a bigger impact on one's own research careers and interests. Speaking for myself, the name of Patrick Osmund Lewry will always figure in such a list. I never met Lewry, but it was after reading his edition of Robert Kilwardby's *De spiritu fantastico*<sup>1</sup> that I understood where my research interests lay, and this has since then defined to a large extent my own scholarly pursuits.

Cardinal Robert of Kilwardby OP died on September 10, 1279. Father Patrick Osmund Lewry OP died on April 23, 1987. Despite their many centuries apart, much connects the two men, from their studies and teaching at Blackfriars, Oxford, to their interest in (medieval) logic: Kilwardby producing a variety of treatises on logical theory of enduring impact among his contemporaries and others in the centuries to come; Lewry devoting his scholarly life to the study of medieval logic, in particular in the Oxford academic milieu, and above all to the study of Kilwardby's thought.<sup>2</sup> To him, we have a systematic analysis of these works, well-reasoned justifications behind attributions of authorship to Kilwardby, and a better understanding of the early reception of Aristotelian works in England in the thirteenth century.

Robert Kilwardby was Master of Arts at the University of Paris from the mid-30's to the mid-40's of the thirteenth century, during which he wrote on a variety of topics, including logic, theory of language,

<sup>1</sup> *De spiritu fantastico*, ed. P.O. Lewry, *On Time and Imagination: De tempore, De spiritu fantastico*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1987. I would like to thank Brian Davies for his invitation to contribute to this issue of *New Blackfriars* and pay homage to these two Dominicans. In conducting the research for this article, I discovered the interesting fact that the first editor of this journal (*Blackfriars*), Father Bernard Delany O.P., also wrote a dissertation on Robert Kilwardby, which I was not able to procure a copy of. On this, see J.B. Reeves, 'The First Editor of 'Blackfriars'', *Blackfriars* 40:469 (1959), [147-53] 150.

<sup>2</sup> P.O. Lewry, *Robert Kilwardby's Writings on the Logica Vetust Studied with Regard to Their Teaching and Method*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1978; 'The Oxford Condemnations of 1277 in grammar and logic', in *English Logic and Semantics from the end of the Twelfth Century to the Time of Ockam and Burleigh*. H.A.G. Braakhuis, C.H. Kneepkens, L.M. de Rijk (eds.). Nijmegen: Ingenium, 1981, 235-78; idem, 'Robert Kilwardby on Meaning: A Parisian Course on the "Logica Vetust"', in *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, J.P. Beckmann et al. (eds.). Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981, 376-84; idem, 'Robertus Anglicus and the Italian Kilwardby', in *English Logic in Italy in the 14th and 15th Centuries*, A. Maierù (ed.). Naples: Bibliopolis, 1982, 33-51; idem, 'Robert Kilwardby on Imagination: The Reconciliation of Aristotle and Augustine', *Medioevo* 9 (1983), 1-42; idem, 'Robert Kilwardby's Commentary on the Ethica nova and vetust', in *L'Homme et son Univers au Moyen Age*, C. Wenin (ed.). Louvain-La-Neuve-Leuven: Peeters, 1986, 799-807; idem, 'Thirteenth-Century Teaching on Speech and Accentuation: Robert Kilwardby's Commentary on *De Accentibus* of Pseudo-Priscian', *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1988), 96-185. (This list is not intended to be comprehensive.) It is also worth mentioning the last article completed by Lewry only ten days before his death, as an initial note in the article reports, to this very same journal and which focuses on his (Lewry's) own spiritual development in his Order: Osmund Lewry, 'Surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses', *New Blackfriars* 68:806 (1987), 297-308.

grammar theory, theology, philosophical psychology, natural philosophy, rhetoric, and epistemology. Like Lewry, I take it that what makes Kilwardby so important as an object of study for those who want to understand the evolution of medieval thought is that he wrote at a time when newly translated works of Aristotle on natural philosophy, ethics, logic, and epistemology were slowly settling in the cultural and academic institutional settings of the Latin West. The efforts to receive and interpret these works would change the nature of science in all domains until the dawn of modern thought, and in Kilwardby's work we can read how this intellectual framework was being understood and diversely interpreted in this period of transition, before it was completely transformed by outstanding interpreters such as Albert the Great (ca. 1200–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), from the Dominicans, and John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, from the Franciscans. Kilwardby is the last of the least major figures before the advent of Scholasticism as we know it, and his contribution to this system of thought defines his place in history as one of the great medieval thinkers.

After his Parisian period, Kilwardby entered the Dominican Order just before or upon his arrival in England, around 1245, some twenty-five years after the establishment of the first house of the Order in England at Oxford (in 1221).<sup>3</sup> After studying Theology, probably with Richard Fishacre, he continued as a regent master of Theology at the University of Oxford and went on to take increasingly more important places within the hierarchy of the Order and the Church, first as Provincial of the Dominican Order in England (1261), then as Archbishop of Canterbury (1272), and finally as Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in Porto and Santa Rufina (1278).<sup>4</sup> His influence and impact upon other major figures of the period has been extensively noted, for instance, on his brothers Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, but this impact was not only positive. In fact, much of the reason why Kilwardby has been neglected for so long is the criticism he has been perceived as leveling against Aquinas – although the extent of this criticism has been repeatedly called into question.<sup>5</sup> To characterize their

<sup>3</sup> On the beginnings of the Order in England, see W.A. Hinnebusch, *The Early English Friars Preachers*. Rome: Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatorum Ad S. Sabinae, 1951.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief overview of Kilwardby's life and works, please see J.F. Silva, 'Robert Kilwardby', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/robert-kilwardby/>, which includes an extensive bibliography; for a more detailed presentation of the main topics of Kilwardby's thought, see J.F. Silva, *Robert Kilwardby (Great Medieval Thinkers)*. Oxford University Press, 2020. The primary source for the study of Kilwardby's life still is E.M.F. Sommer-Seckendorff, *Studies in the Life of Robert Kilwardby, O.P.* Rome: Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatorum Romae S. Sabinae, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> On this, see J.F. Silva, *Robert Kilwardby on The Human Soul. Plurality of Forms and Censorship in the Thirteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

intellectual disagreements as ‘hostile’, as has often been done in the past, is mostly unfair and overlooks the nature of medieval philosophical debates: medieval thinkers, like their modern counterparts, often disagreed on how best to interpret a certain theory and on how to read a difficult passage. This was particularly the case in the early reception of Aristotle and his theories about the nature of matter and the human soul, which caused problems in how to understand them in the context of Christian ideas of creation, immortality, and resurrection. Kilwardby and Aquinas found themselves, somewhat willingly, at opposite ends of the debate and, just as it is true that Aquinas ended up being on the winning side, it is equally true that he was most likely representing a minority view at the time Kilwardby wrote the majority of his works.

The impact of his modern Dominican brother, Osmund Lewry, on medieval scholarship cannot be overestimated and mimics the influence Kilwardby himself had on the development of medieval thought. From around 1978, when he published his magistral PhD dissertation at Oxford, to around 1988, when the last of his posthumous publications came out, Lewry published on Kilwardby’s psychology, theory of knowledge, philosophy of time, grammar, logic, rhetoric, theology, ethics, and cosmology. Lewry also produced many other scholarly contributions on other authors and topics.<sup>6</sup> Lewry’s doctoral dissertation, *Robert Kilwardby’s Writings on the Logica Vetus Studied with regard to their teaching and method* (Oxford, Long Vacation, 1978), focused on Kilwardby’s lecture course on the *Old Logic*<sup>7</sup>, which included commentaries on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, Aristotle’s *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, the anonymous *Book of the Six Principles*, and Boethius’ *Book of Divisions*. This set of treatises, which is a record of Kilwardby’s teaching at the Faculty of Arts in Paris (from roughly 1237 to 1245), constituted the backbone of university logical education until the works of the New Logic of Aristotle (the *Prior* and the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*)<sup>8</sup> made their way into the Latin West and the higher education system. (Kilwardby also

<sup>6</sup> P.O. Lewry, ‘Two Continuators of Aquinas: Robertus de Vulgarbia and Thomas Sutton on the Perihermeneias of Aristotle’, *Mediaeval Studies* 43 (1981), 58–130; idem, ‘Robert Grosseteste’s Question on Subsistence: An Echo of the Adamites’, *Mediaeval Studies* 45 (1983), 1–21; idem, ‘Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, 1220–1320’, in *The History of the University of Oxford, I: The Early Oxford Schools, 1220–1320*, J. Catto (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 401–33.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the Old Logic, please see M. Cameron, ‘Logica Vetus’, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic*, C. Dutilh Novaes and S. Read (eds.). Cambridge University Press, 2016, 195–219.

<sup>8</sup> The two first works have been edited in modern editions, whereas the two last ones remain unedited and may not be by Kilwardby. On the *Posterior Analytics*, see *Notule Libri Posteriorum*, ed. D. Cannone, *Le Notule Libri Posteriorum di Robert Kilwardby nella tradizione esegetica latina medievale del XIII secolo*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Rome, 2003–2004; on the *Prior Analytics*, see *Notule Libri Priorum*, ed. P. Thom and J. Scott. Oxford: Published for

produced commentaries on all these other works.) Lewry's research on Kilwardby's commentaries had two main benefits: first, it allowed for a better understanding of the system and method of commentary at the early stages of medieval Universities, thereby providing a grasp of their syllabi and teaching practices; and, second, it helped account for the reception of Aristotle and his commentators.

Kilwardby wrote on many topics and influenced his immediate contemporaries. But most of his writings remained in manuscript form until quite recently. Father Lewry was instrumental in making available modern and critical editions of some of those texts. He also investigated questions of authorship, identifying some texts as being by Kilwardby while bringing into question other works attributed to him in medieval catalogues of works (such as the first known catalogue of Dominican works, the so-called Stams Catalogue),<sup>9</sup> or by modern scholars.<sup>10</sup> For those unacquainted with medieval sources, it is worth mentioning that medieval manuscripts are often without ascription, which means that authorship must be inferred or concluded on the basis of clues in the text itself – ways of proceedings, certain theories or concepts, expressions, references to other works or events that can be precisely dated, etc. – or external to the work, such as references to that work found in other writings, later ascriptions, information from the codex or volume in which the work is found (namely, other works from what is thought to be the same author). One distinctive feature that Lewry identified in Kilwardby's works that allows for a safe attribution is the formal structure of the Introduction (*Proemium*), where Kilwardby usually proceeds by identifying the subject matter of the work, the way of proceeding, and the purpose and authorship in terms of Aristotle's four causes: material, formal, final, and efficient (respectively).<sup>11</sup>

An indication of Lewry's impactful research is reflected by the number of works by Kilwardby that were edited to a modern format prior to and after Lewry's pioneering work. Kilwardby's extremely popular

The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2015. On the *Topics*, see O. Weijers, 'Le commentaire sur les *Topiques* attribué à Robert Kilwardby', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 6 (1995), 107–143.

<sup>9</sup> 'Catalogus Stamensis' in *Laurentii Pignon Catalogi et Chronica*, ed. by G. Meersseman O.P. Rome: Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatorum, 1936, 56–61.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., the debate between F. McRae ('Geoffrey of Aspell's Commentaries on Aristotle', *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1968), 94–134) and G. Gàl ('Robert's Kilwardby Questions in the *Metaphysics* and *Physics* of Aristotle', *Franciscan Studies*, 13 (1953), 7–28) about the Commentaries on the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*; and between P.O. Lewry ('The Commentary on 'Priscianus Maior' ascribed to Robert Kilwardby: The Problem of the Authorship', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge grec et latin* 15 (1975), 12<sup>+</sup>–17<sup>+</sup>) and K.M. Fredborg, N.J. Green-Pedersen, L. Nielsen, and J. Pinborg ('Selected Texts', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge grec et latin* 15 (1975), 1–146) about the authorship of the *Commentary on the Priscianus Maior*.

<sup>11</sup> Lewry 1978, 213.

introduction to the sciences, the *De ortu scientiarum*,<sup>12</sup> was one of the few that already was available in a critical edition, but since then numerous scholars have worked tirelessly to make the most important works available in the form of modern editions, from his theological commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard to his commentaries on the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* and *Ethics*.<sup>13</sup> We are now in a better position to understand Kilwardby's thought, but much work remains to be done with respect to both making available critical editions of some remaining texts and with respect to the study of the relation between Kilwardby and his contemporaries. What is clear is that the journey ahead of us may be long, but it is certainly shorter than it would be without Father Lewry's scholarly contributions. His work was a great gift to the study of the early English Dominicans and their role in shaping the development of medieval philosophy and theology.

In what follows, I explore one area of Kilwardby's thought that was first noted by Lewry, chosen because it may be of interest even for non-specialists in medieval philosophy: the question of how the principles of scientific knowledge are acquired. In order to do so, I will briefly connect (rather than offering a full-blown comparison) Kilwardby's answer to this question with those of his two most famous Dominican contemporaries, Albert the Great (ca. 1200–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274).<sup>14</sup> My aim is to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, but to provide a brief introduction to the topic while showing the dynamism and systematicity of medieval thinkers in approaching a theoretical problem<sup>15</sup> in a way that Father Lewry would approve: by showing what they have in common, rather than what takes them apart.

<sup>12</sup> *De ortu scientiarum*, ed. A. Judy. Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1976.

<sup>13</sup> Full bibliographical references to these editions can be found in Silva 2020 and Silva 2016. An edition of Kilwardby's *Super libros Ethicorum* by Anthony Celano is soon forthcoming.

<sup>14</sup> There would be a more straightforward way to compare the three authors, namely by focusing on their responses to a request by the Master General of the Dominican Order, John of Vercelli, in 1271. All three sets of responses survive and have been edited and studied. For a presentation of the material and bibliographic references, see J.F. Silva, 'Robert Kilwardby on Celestial Motion', *Medievalia Philosophica Polonorum*, 36:2 (2007), 90–119. It would be impossible to do justice to the extensive secondary literature on both Albert and Aquinas. Good introductions for Aquinas are B. Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, and E. Stump, *Aquinas*. Routledge, 2005; a good introduction to Albert is *A Companion to Albert the Great*, I.M. Resnick (ed.). Brill, 2013. For the topic under examination here, the most useful is J.L. Longeway, *Demonstration and Scientific Knowledge in William of Ockham: A Translation of Summa Logicae III-II: De Syllogismo Demonstrativo, and Selections from the Prologue to the Ordinatio*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> '... the multitude of voices that form the polyphony of mediaeval thought', as Lewry himself put it (Lewry, 'Surrounded...', 306)

## II. Knowledge First

The arrival in the Latin West from the mid-twelfth century of a set of new texts of Aristotle on logic, natural philosophy, and ethics had an immense impact in medieval thought. Not only did this contribute to the exponential development of new centers of knowledge, in particular the Universities of Paris and Oxford, but it also contributed to the development of a novel conception of knowledge and science. In the Aristotelian framework, as defined in the *Analytics*, knowledge is primarily of what cannot be otherwise, meaning that it is about what is necessary rather than what is contingent, of what is universal rather than what is particular. But in order to reach the knowledge of what is universal, one needs to start by knowing the particular things around us. We come into contact with individual things, ‘substances’ in medieval parlance, by means of their accidents, that is to say their properties that we perceive by means of our senses.<sup>16</sup> Our perceptual powers collect information about these particular things until the intellect is able to abstract universal concepts from those instantiations. In possession of those universal concepts, we are then able to build demonstrations, that is, deduce conclusions that necessarily follow from those principles and the syllogistic premises.<sup>17</sup> A theory of knowledge must therefore explain first, how one comes to knowledge of universals, and second, how universal attributes can be predicated of subjects in a necessary way. In this highly formal and deductive system, the starting points of scientific endeavor are immediately known axioms common to all sciences and a set of high order principles about the specific subject matter of a given science, be that geometry or physics.<sup>18</sup> In order to acquire knowledge of the highest sort, one needs to know the basics of demonstration, as Kilwardby clearly points out in the following passage:

As all human beings naturally desire to know, note that this desire is not frustrated when they become knowers, but only by means of demonstration. It is therefore necessary to have knowledge of demonstration because it is by means of it that any science proceeds. Moreover, in the same way as the practical intellect is perfectible by virtue and the unqualified good also the speculative intellect is perfectible by truth and science

<sup>16</sup> ‘Accidentia, ut dicit Aristotiles in libro De anima, conferunt maximam partem cognitionis eius quod quid est: set id quod quid est est subiectum: conferunt ergo maximam partem cognitionis subiecti’, Robert Kilwardby, ‘Notule Libri Prisciani *De accentibus*’, ed. Lewry in ‘Robertus Kilwardby *Notulae libri Prisciani De accentibus*’, *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1988), [96–185] 119.

<sup>17</sup> This paints a greatly simplified view of the problems involved in either process, which I cannot here discuss in any detail for reasons of space; but the reader can find a more fine-grained account in Silva 2020.

<sup>18</sup> To be precise, demonstrations of natural, contingent things are qualified as being about what is frequently the case rather than what necessarily is the case, but this difference is not essential for what follows. On this, see Silva 2020, 126–28.

[or knowledge]: but this one cannot be realized except by demonstration; therefore, it is necessary to know [the science of] demonstration.<sup>19</sup>

But, according to Aquinas and Albert, ‘in order to know the science of demonstration, it is useful to know in what way the first principles are known’<sup>20</sup>: all necessary knowledge is the result of demonstrations, and everything that is demonstrated is dependent upon and certified by those principles.<sup>21</sup> One needs to know first the universals that are the principles of a given science but also the universals that are the middle term of a demonstration, so that in the highest kind of demonstrations, the predicate of the conclusion can be shown to belong to the subject of the conclusion in a necessary and universal way: always and in all cases, and such that it cannot be otherwise.<sup>22</sup> The first principles at stake here are the definitions that express the natures of things that enter in demonstrations, as subject or attribute. This is the case, even if these thinkers disagree on what the middle term is in the highest sort of demonstration: whereas Aquinas takes the middle term to be the definition of the subject term of the conclusion, both Kilwardby and Albert (the latter probably adopting the former’s view) claim that the middle term is the definition of the predicate).<sup>23</sup> Be that as it may, an essential part of the scientific enterprise is to identify the nature of the middle term and explain the method by means of which it can be acquired, which in practice is to show how to acquire the knowledge of the universal principles of demonstration. We arrive thus to the central passage of *Posterior Analytics*, book two, chapter nineteen.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Cum omnes homines naturaliter scire desiderant, constat hoc desiderium frustratum non est, quare possunt fieri scientes, set non nisi mediante demonstracione. Necesse est ergo habere cognicionem de demonstracione, quia per ipsam fit omnis scientia. Item, sicut intellectus practicus perfectibilis est uirtute et simpliciter bon, sic intellectus speculatiuus perfectibilis est ueritate et scientia: set iste non perfectitur nisi per demonstracionem; oportet ergo demonstracionem cognoscere.’, *Notule Libri Posteriorum*, quoted by Lewry 1978, 39.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Et ideo ad scientiam quae est de demonstracione, utile est ut sciatur qualiter prima principia cognoscantur’, Thomas Aquinas, *Post. Analyt.* II, lect. 20, n.2, 398; Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 228: ‘...oportet ergo immediatorum principiorum cognitionem esse ante demonstracionem, ex quo est cognitio talis in omni demonstracione supposita’.

<sup>21</sup> ‘omne enim quod demonstratur refertur ad cognitionem principiorum, et certificatur ex illa et ad illam’, Albert the Great, *Posteriorum Analyticorum*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, ed. Borgnet. Paris: Vivès, 1890, (hereafter, *Post. Analyt.*) II, tract. 5, cap.1, 228.

<sup>22</sup> As Aquinas points out, ‘ille qui habet scientiam, scit quod impossibile est aliter se habere’, Thomas Aquinas, *Posteriorum Analyticorum*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1. Rome, Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1882, (hereafter, *Post. Analyt.*) II, lect. 20, n.4, 398. (There is a more recent edition that I was unable to consult for this article: *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. I, ed. R.-A. Gauthier. Rome-Paris, Commissio Leonina-Vrin, 1989.)

<sup>23</sup> On this, see Silva 2020, chapter 4. Kilwardby’s Commentary is dated from ca. 1240; Albert’s Commentary is thought to have been written ca. 1261-1262, whereas Aquinas’ is from 1269-72. On these dates, see D. Cannone, ‘Le *Notule Libri Posteriorum* di Robert Kilwardby: il commento ad *Analitici Posteriori*, I, 4, 73a34-b24’, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 13 (2002), 71-135.



At the beginning of this chapter, Kilwardby reflects of the structure of the whole book of the *Posterior Analytics* up to this stage and remarks that it offers an overarching argument, which runs from the knowledge of the principles to the knowledge of the conclusion, meaning that only by knowing how to acquire the principles do we come into possession of knowledge that allows us to achieve a necessary and universal conclusion every time.<sup>24</sup> In a sense, however, the conceptual framework it offers for a theory of human science is the culmination of the whole of logic because both the *Categories* and the *On interpretation* are about the meaningful terms, simple and complex (propositions), that enter in the making of demonstrations as determined in the *Posterior Analytics* and formalized in the *Prior Analytics*.

With respect to the specific question of how we come to know the first principles, the first option considered in *Posterior Analytics* II.19 is to take this knowledge to exist in us prior to its being explicitly spelled out, suggesting that we already possess it without being aware that we do, suggesting that it exists in us in a dispositional or habitual way. Doing so is part of Aristotle's (and following him, our medieval interpreters) strategy to deny the implicit Platonism of innate contents. Albert is particularly explicit in identifying the reference to Plato and more precisely to the *Meno*, observing that this knowledge is not found in us from the outset (*insit per naturam*) in an inchoate state (*latet*), which we would come to know explicitly as the result of being exposed to and engaged by things in the world.<sup>25</sup> Instead, he argues, this knowledge of the first principles is achieved in us by our own cognitive capacities. Kilwardby agrees that this knowledge must come from the exercise of our cognitive capacities, which are prior to their interaction with things in the world, and which are mostly devoid of any cognitive content.<sup>26</sup> But he clearly identifies a difficulty in the Aristotelian text, which requires *both* that all knowledge must come from a pre-existing

<sup>24</sup> 'non peruenitur in scientiam conclusionis nisi per scientiam principiorum, et ideo oportet prescire principia, et hac necessitates agit de cognitione principiorum. Iam patet ordo. Quia etiam cognitio demonstratiua principaliter intenditur, ideo de ea determinat.', Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 500.

<sup>25</sup> '...cum autem non fuerint in nobis, aut non generentur in nobis, sed insint per naturam, et nos lateant donec excitati studio percipiamus eos in nobis esse?', Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 228.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Kilwardby, *Notule Libri Posteriorum*, ed. D. Cannone in *Le Notule Libri Posteriorum di Robert Kilwardby nella tradizione esegetica latina medievale del XIII secolo*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Rome, 2003–2004 (hereafter, *NLPost.*) II.33, 501: 'non sunt innati, sed in nobis facti per acquisitionem'. All three authors were dependent on the commentary of Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253): *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, ed. Pietro Rossi. Florence, 1982, made on the basis of James of Venice's translation of the work (ca. 1125–1150). See *Aristoteles Latinus* IV, 1–4: *Analytica Posteriora*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello and B. Dod. Bruges-Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1968.

principle *and* that no knowledge is innate.<sup>27</sup> He solves this, like Albert and Aquinas will do after him, by taking that pre-existing principle to refer not to content, but to a power or capacity that is capable of coming to know the principles out of which demonstrations can be made. The knowledge itself does not pre-exist, but the power doing the knowing does – pre-existing here meaning being prior to the contact with the things to be known, just like the power of sight is prior in being to actual seeing this or that object.

If this knowledge does not pre-exist in the soul, then it must come from a different source. Kilwardby argues that it cannot originate from intellectual knowledge because the first mode of intellectual knowledge is precisely the knowledge of principles (as showed before, one needs to know the principle prior to knowing the conclusion that follows necessarily).<sup>28</sup> For us to come to know something, we must be in contact with it, and the capacity to ‘encounter’ things in the world is the perceptual capacity.<sup>29</sup> To be in contact, however, is not enough, and we must be able to retain something significant from that encounter; the capacity to retain something from that encounter is memory. Now, whereas all animals have a perceptual capacity, some animals have in addition the power of memory, but some lack it. In the case of these imperfect animals, their knowledge is limited to perception of things while present. Kilwardby is keen on stressing the principle that although all animals have sense powers, not all are capable of retaining ‘the sensible species in the absence of the external sensible [thing]’.<sup>30</sup> Characteristically, Albert elaborates more extensively than the other two on the differences between animals and the powers that they are naturally endowed with. He is also more emphatic than them about the interdependence of these powers, like imagination and the estimative sense, and about the ability of the perceptual capacity of animals to judge incoming sensory information.

<sup>27</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPPost*. II.33, 502. He makes a similar point in *Notule Libri Priorum*, ed. P. Thom and J. Scott. Oxford: Published for The British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2015, book I, lectio 33, 742.

<sup>28</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPPost*. II.33, 503: ‘Hec etiam cognitio intellectiva esse non potest, quia inter omnes cognitions intellectivas cognitio principiorum est prima. Oportet igitur quod sit sensitiva, et hoc universaliter omnibus inest animalibus ad iudicandum de sensibili (...) Item, patet ex prima cognitione cuius potentie completive cognoscimus principia, quia ex precognitione sensitiva’.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Post. Analyt.* II, lect. 20, n.8, 400: ‘omnia [animals] habent quamdam connaturalem potentiam ad iudicandum de sensibilibus, quae vocatur sensus’; Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 229: ‘habent enim omnia animalia potentiam quamdam primo cognoscibilium iudicativam praesente materia, quam nos vocamus sensum communiter loquentes’;

<sup>30</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPPost*. II.33, 503: ‘cum omnibus animalibus insit sensus, in quibusdam manet species sensibilis post absentiam sensibilis extra, in quibus autem non manet, quasi dicens: in quibusdam est memoria conservans speciem, in quibusdam non.’ On this, see Silva 2020, 133-35.

There is a general agreement among these commentators that those animals endowed with memory, and thus capable of retaining the information about particular things presented to the senses, are further able to compare and/or collate the information of those particulars. The result of such comparison, collation and even judgment, is the grasping of what is common to them without being particular to any. At a basic level, that comparison is called ‘experience’ (*experimentum*), and at a more advanced level, when reason or intellect intervenes directly, it results in the discovery of the universal ‘at rest in the soul’ (*quiescente in anima*).<sup>31</sup> Kilwardby explains that

In those animals that retain sensible species, it happens [that they also] possess an inductive capacity like reason, which collates what is presented and retained from the senses, or [even] a certain universal acquired from the many [species] presented and previously retained. It is hence clear that the first multiplicity in the senses makes a certain difference in the soul, i.e., a certain universal account [ratio] acquired from the many [species] presented.<sup>32</sup>

Even more explicitly than the two others (Albert and Aquinas), Kilwardby makes clear, in the continuation of the text, the different types of general and abstract content different animals are capable of: those endowed with memory but not with reason are capable of a certain content collated from a few instances but that is generalizable to a limited scope of individual things. In contrast, those animals endowed with the powers of memory *and* reason (*memoratiua simul cum ratione*) are capable of acquiring a true universal.<sup>33</sup> Whereas experience is the kind of knowledge that is true of a certain number of particulars, the universal is one step higher in the abstraction from what is particular and is what can be said or predicated of all the individuals of a certain type: in the example given, that this species of herb (scammony in the original Aristotelian case) cures a fever. The epistemic order is then of a

<sup>31</sup> Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 230: ‘Experimentum enim est universalis cognitio ex similitudine sensibili accepta per potentiam iudicativam’. Kilwardby justifies the use of *experimentum* with the meaning of the term: ‘Hoc autem significat nomen, quia experimentum est ad extra perfecte intentum’, i.e., is about the individual things in the world, what they have in common.

<sup>32</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 503: ‘In illis autem animalibus in quibus manet species sensibilis contigit haberi inductive potentiam sicut rationem collatiuam presentatorum et retentorum in sensu, uel quidam universale multis presentatis et prius retentis acceptum ex illis. Quare manifestum est quod prima multiplicitate sensum in talibus fit quedam differentia in anima, id est: quedam ratio uniuersalis ex omnibus presentatis accepta.’

<sup>33</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 503-4: ‘in talibus animalibus, scilicet in quibus manet species sensibilis et est memoratiua simul cum ratione, contingit fieri unum uniuersale mediante memoria presentatorum; in aliis autem, ubi non est memoria presentatorum cum ratione, non contingit’. See also Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 230: ‘In his autem animalibus in quibus sensibilia talibus potentiis [memoria et ratione] objecta non manent, non fit taliter uniuersalis differentia’.

memory being made of sense perceptions, the multiplication of memories resulting in experience (*experimentum*), and the multiplication of experiences leading to the universal.<sup>34</sup>

The universal is abstracted in the sense that it is separated from the particulars in which it was found instantiated, as their metaphysical formal constituent, but in a strict sense it only exists in the soul. As such, that is as a form of content in the soul, the universal has none of the accidental properties that qualify the particulars in which it was instantiated. Much can be said of the ontological status of that universal as (one) existing in the mind (*unum praeter multa*) and as existing, particularized (and thus numerically distinct), in the individual things which are said to instantiate it (*in multis ut similitudo essentialis in eis*):<sup>35</sup> the whiteness that exists in both this and that shirt. Kilwardby distinguishes between the consideration of the universal according to its essence, as it exists in the mind as one beyond the many; and the universal considered according to its being or existence, as it is in the many (individual things).<sup>36</sup>

The question of the status of universals is a complex one. For my purposes here, it suffices to emphasize that the cause of that universal is not the individual thing in which it exists instantiated and that we perceive; rather, the cause is the mind or reason that takes the sensible species the senses receive and considers it in isolation from the individuating conditions of that particular thing. The key element is the cognitive capacity of reason or intellect that grasps what is essential from what the senses perceive. All three – Kilwardby, Albert, and Aquinas – agree that sensation is of particulars but that it also is of universals, not insofar as the senses apprehend the universal as such, but insofar the senses apprehend that which, upon rational consideration, is grasped as universal: we sense the shirt as white, whereas we grasp that whiteness exists or is instantiated in the shirt (and all shirts of the same type). And even if it is the case that we do perceive individual things as belonging to a certain kind (for example, that we can perceive Callias as a human being), we do so accidentally, and only because reason interacts with our sensory capacities.<sup>37</sup> Kilwardby elaborates on this idea in an interesting way, which was not taken by either Albert or Aquinas,

<sup>34</sup> Kilwardby, *NLP* II.33, 504: ‘ex sensu fit memoria, sicut nunc dictum est, et ex memoria multiplicat experimentum, quia unum experimentum numero est ex multis memoriis, experimento autem aut simpliciter aut ex omni, id est: experimento multiplicato, fit uniuersale’.

<sup>35</sup> Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* II, tract. 5, cap.1, 230.

<sup>36</sup> Kilwardby, *NLP* II.33, 504-5: ‘Et nota quod quamvis dixit Aristoteles quod uniuersale sit unum preter multa et tamen quod sit in omnibus, non tamen dixit impossibilia, quia considerando uniuersale secundum suam essentiam, est unum preter multa; considerando autem ipsum secundum esse, in multis est’

<sup>37</sup> Albert the Great, *Post. Analyt.* 231: ‘Talis autem est sensus per accidens qui ex reflexa ratione ad sensum mixtum in sensibili accipit uniuersale adiutorio superiores potentiae.’

namely, that the senses are also about what is universal (for example, that we perceive Callias as a human being) because the senses ‘contract’ what the intellect ‘abstracts’. I take this to mean that the senses are about what is universal simply because they perceive the universal form together with – and thus contracted to – the individuating features of that particular thing.<sup>38</sup>

Hopefully it is clear from this brief presentation that for all three thinkers under consideration, it is by means of reason/intellect and by induction from sensation that we apprehend the universals as principles of science,<sup>39</sup> with which the scientific demonstrations in any given field can be made, and from which the resulting conclusions can be universally and of necessity accepted.<sup>40</sup> That is why Kilwardby remarks that ‘sensation is the door for human cognition and is therefore necessary: if nothing were to remain of the sensible [thing] after sensation, there would be no cognition beyond sensation’.<sup>41</sup> Were that the case, all human knowledge would be restricted to what is present and particular, and we would have no ability to know what always is the case (and, thus, no ability to make predictions). Therefore, three of the most important Dominican thinkers of the thirteenth century – Robert Kilwardby, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas – all agree that perception is the necessary starting point for scientific knowledge, even if scientific knowledge properly is the result of a demonstrative process.

<sup>38</sup> Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 506: ‘Et intellige istud sciendo hominem in se, et illo percipit sensus aliquod commune illis, non tamen abstrahendo, sed contraendo cum intendit. Unde sensus est universalis, non tamen per medium uniuersalis et abstractione, cum eius quod est uniuersalis, ut hominis, quod est commune. Percipit enim hominem in utroque, scilicet contrahendo et non abstrahendo, et sic exponit Themistius.’

<sup>39</sup> ‘Quia igitur universalium cognitionem accipimus ex singularibus, concludit manifestum esse quod necesse est prima universalia principia cognoscere per inductionem. Sic enim, scilicet per viam inductionis, sensus facit universale intus in anima, in quantum considerantur omnia singularia.’, Thomas Aquinas, *Post. Analyt.* II.20, 402; see also Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 506: ‘necessarium est nobis cognoscere prima principia immediata per inductionem: nam sensus sit procedit, scilicet per singularia inducendo ad cognoscendum aliquod uniuersale’.

<sup>40</sup> This is of course a general statement that needs to be specified with respect to any particular science because sciences ‘demonstrate according to the possibilities of their matters’ (‘omnes scientie (...) demonstrant secundum possibilitatem sue materie’, Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 512.); matter here refers to the subject matter or what the science is about. The science of mathematics is more general and thus able to reach more universal conclusions than the science of optics, say.

<sup>41</sup> ‘sensus est porta cognitionis humanae et ideo necessarius est: nisi enim maneret sensibile post sensum, non esset cognitio ultra sensum, et ideo necesse est sensibile manere, et ita necessaria est memoria’, Kilwardby, *NLPost.* II.33, 509.

### III. Conclusion

In this brief study, I aimed at presenting two basic ideas about two of the most important Dominicans the reader *may never have heard about*: the thirteenth century philosopher and theologian, Robert Kilwardby, and the twentieth century medieval scholar, Patrick Osmund Lewry. I have tried to show, first of all, how much of our knowledge of Kilwardby is due to the efforts of Father Lewry, who not only studied Kilwardby's thought in great detail but also edited some of Kilwardby's key texts and provided us with the tools necessary for identifying which of his works are rightly attributed to him; second, I tried to justify with one (brief) case-study, why Kilwardby is justly counted as one of the great medieval thinkers, by focusing on the similarities between his theory of science and those of his more famous contemporaries and confreres, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. My aim was to show how much these thinkers, traditionally thought to be in disagreement, shared a certain conception of knowledge and science that has proved to be very influential. A more detailed study would certainly show the disagreements in addition to the commonalities presented here, but at the same time, by being the first of the three to comment on the original Aristotelian texts, how much Kilwardby may have influenced Albert and Thomas. The most important point, however, is that none of this would have been possible without the outstanding research done by Patrick Osmund Lewry on another Dominican, Robert Kilwardby, who lived and wrote some 800 years ago, soon after the first friars arrived in England to establish a house in Oxford – which we celebrate in this Jubilee issue of *New Blackfriars*.

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