LA TRADITION MÉDIÉVALE DES CATÉGORIES (XIIe-XVe siècles)

Actes du XIIIe Symposium européen de logique et de sémantique médiévales (Avignon, 6-10 juin 2000)

réunis par

JOËL BIARD
et IRÈNE ROSIER-CATACH

LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE
ÉDITIONS DE L'INSTITUT SUPÉRIEUR DE PHILOSOPHIE
LOUVAIN - PARIS - DUDLEY, MA
ÉDITIONS PEETERS
2003
CONNOTATIVE CONCEPTS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS IN OCKHAM’S NOMINALISM

Claude Panaccio
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

William Ockham, as is well known, thinks of Aristotle’s theory of the ten categories as a classification not of things in themselves, but of signs of external things. Ontologically speaking, things, in his view, are either singular substances (horses, for example), singular qualities (whitenesses, for example), or essential parts of substances (namely: singular substantial forms and parcels of prime matter), and nothing else. No isomorphism is taken to hold between this rarefied ontological domain and the array of simple first-order general terms with which the Aristotelian classification is thought to be concerned. This discrepancy between signs and things gives rise, at the heart of Ockham’s thought, to a nominalist program with respect to the categories: that of showing how all these various kinds of terms which are distributed among the Aristotelian ten categories need be referentially connected with nothing but singular substances, qualities, and essential parts of substances.

What does this program amount to exactly? What, in the end, should ockhamism show in order to make its point about the categories? This question crucially lurks in the background of much recent discussion on Ockham’s semantics, on his theory of mental connotation in particular. What I would like to do here is to explain what I take Ockham’s nominalist program to be with respect to connotative terms, and to clarify in so doing the role he attributes to nominal definitions in this program, a point which has become crucial in the recent literature on Ockham.

1. Connotative terms and the reductionist interpretation of Ockham’s nominalism

This much is clear: connotation plays a decisive role in Ockham’s approach to the categories. A wide variety of cateorematic terms,

according to him, are connotative, including all those from the categories other than substance and quality, and even many of those that belong to quality. All these connotative terms are characterized by the fact that, although they are simple terms (no part of them has a signification of its own), they nevertheless display a complex semantical structure, each one having at least two distinct groups of significates: primary significates, on the one hand, which are the things the term can stand for within a sentence when it has personal supposition (e.g., white things in the case of “white”, and fathers in the case of “father”); and secondary significates (or connotata), on the other hand, which the term will not normally suppose for, but which it nevertheless indirectly brings to mind (such as whitenesses in the case of “white”, and children in the case of “father”). This complexification of the semantical connections, everybody agrees, is the key to Ockham’s approach to the categories. But in what way exactly? This is where a problem arises.

Paul Vincent Spade, Calvin Normore, Marilyn Adams and others have developed, from the nineteen seventies on, a very precise conception of Ockham’s attitude towards connotative terms (and hence towards the Aristotelian categories) as being reductionist in the sense of twentieth century analytical philosophy. Ockham’s program, according to this interpretation, would be to show that all the connotative terms in each of the ten categories can ultimately be reduced, through their nominal definitions, to combinations of non connotative (or, as Ockham calls them, absolute) terms, having only primary significates (all singular of course) and no connotata. We would thus have in the early fourteenth century an eliminative program by means of definitions, similar to what is sometimes found in Frege, Russell, Carnap or others with respect to whatever apparent entities they want to dispense with in their ontology; think of the Frege-Russell reduction of numbers to sets.

A minimal requirement for such a reductionist approach to be successfully applied to connotative terms generally is that all such terms be definable. And it so happens that Ockham thinks they are: he explicitly holds that all connotative terms have one – and only one – nominal definition, while properly speaking, no absolute term does. This in itself yields a powerful argument in favor of Spade’s interpretation. And Spade does conclude, actually, that nominal definitions play an eliminative role in Ockham’s theory. Since the definitional introduction of connotative terms, according to this reading, is supposed to be done on the basis of what Ockham takes to be the natural language of thought, composed with concepts, it follows – and this is indeed a major component of Spade’s reductionist account – that the only simple categorematic concepts in the human mind are absolute (i.e. non connotative) concepts.

The picture, then, is the following. Human beings naturally acquire, through a causal process usually triggered by perception, a basic stock of absolute concepts such as “goat”, “animal”, “stone”, “fire”, “water”, “whiteness”, “heat”, and so on. Using the device of nominal definitions, they then introduce on this basis a wide array of conventional connotative terms, and they end up, in this way, with conventional languages which are not structurally isomorphical with mental ese. Connotative terms, in this view, are seen as conventional abbreviations for complex mental expressions, and their nominal definitions are identified with what the Frege-Russell tradition calls “explicit definitions”. Granted that the correct nominal definition of “white” is “something having whiteness”, the reductionist account has it that what occurs in the natural language of thought in such a case is but a complex sequence of three concepts isomorphical with “something + having + whiteness”. Connotative terms should thus all be reduced to combinations of absolute terms from the categories of substance and quality (plus a number of basic syncategorematic connectors).

This is a very precise picture of Ockham’s program and it skillfully integrates many elements of his nominalism, notably the theory of nominal definition. My conviction, however, is that it is mistaken on some major points. I have tried to show elsewhere that Ockham quite explicitly thought that there are some simple connotative concepts in men-

---

3 Ibid., I, 10, pp. 35-38.

6 Those are among the examples of absolute terms given by Ockham in Summa logicae, I, 10, p. 36, I, 35-36.
7 This is one of the examples of nominal definitions of connotative terms in Summa logicae, I, 10, p. 36, I, 45-46.
tal language. A point which Spade has now elegantly granted. If this is true, however, it raises a major problem for his general picture, since, in this interpretation, the requirement that connotative terms all be reduced by way of nominal definitions stands out as the central strategical component of Ockham’s nominalist program with respect to the categories. If Ockham himself missed the point, then either he seriously lacked perspicacity in this instance, or his nominalist program is not, after all, the one Spade attributes him. Spade himself now favors the first branch of the alternative: Ockham, he thinks, did allow simple connotative concepts, but given the rest of his theory, he should not have. My own preference goes to the other branch: Ockham’s nominalist program with respect to the categories is not the one Spade thinks it is.

2. Are connotative terms synonymous with their definitions?

How is the above disagreement to be settled? Well, the discussion, as far as I can see, now concentrates on how exactly a simple connotative term and its nominal definition are related according to Ockham. In Ockham’s interpretation, this relation should be synonymy in the sense favored by Ockham himself: two names are synonymous in this sense if

and only if whatever is signified by one of them under a certain mode is also signified by the other one under the same mode (e.g. whatever is connoted by the one is also connoted in the same way by the other). Spade’s thesis is that whatever is signified under a certain mode by a simple connotative term is, in Ockham’s view, signified under the same mode by its nominal definition, and conversely, so that they should be intersubstitutable salva veritate in all contexts (even intensional contexts since the synonymy is supposed to be total). It follows that the reduplication of the connotative term and its definition is superfluous in mental language, despite what Ockham himself could say, since, according to his own conception, there should be no synonymy there. I, on the other hand, have tried to show that the semantical relation of a connotative term to its definition is not always, for Ockham himself, synonymy in the strong sense, and that they are not always taken by him to be intersubstitutable salva veritate.

The discussion, from there, has two aspects. First, did Ockham himself think of nominal definitions as being synonymous with the defined terms, or not? And second, if not, what are nominal definitions all about? I will take on the latter point in some details in section 3 below, but let me first briefly come back to the former one.

I proposed in a previous paper a number of textual passages tending to show that Ockham did not always considered the definition as synonymous with the defined term. These have since been discussed by Spade and others.

I would now like to say what I take the result of the debate to be at this point.

First, I must withdraw some of the texts I had used, since they have to do with real definitions (or definitions quid rei) rather than nominal definitions, as both Michon and Spade have remarked. Real definitions normally yield structural descriptions of the essences of certain things rather than give the meaning of certain words, and they are simply not relevant in the present discussion. This applies, in particular, to a passage I had

---

8 See C. Panaccio, “Connotative Terms in Ockham’s Mental Language”, Cahiers d’Épistémologie, n° 9016, Montreal, 1990 (http://www.philo.uqam.ca). This paper was originally written for a collection of essays on mental language in the Middle Ages, which, for some reason, has not yet appeared. A French – and slightly updated – version has recently been published: C. Panaccio, “Guillaume d’Ockham, les connotatifs et le langage mental”, Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale, 11 (2000), pp. 297-316.


10 See P. V. Spade, Thoughts, Words and Things, pp. 236-239. This also seems to be Cyrille Michon’s position; see his Nominalisme, pp. 374-377.

11 See Summa logicae, I, 6, p. 19, l. 8-11: “Large dicuntur illa synonyma quae simpliciter idem significant omnibus modis, ita quod nihil aliquo modo significat per unum quin eodem modo significetur per reliquum […]”.

12 See Summa logicae, I, 3, p. 11, l. 20-22: “[…] quidquid per omnia synonyma significatur posset per unum illorum exprimi sufficienter, et ideo multitudine conceptuum tali pluralitati synonymorum non correspondent […]”. See also Quodlibeta septem, V, 8, p. 512-513, l. 119-129.


quoted from *Summa logicae*, III-2, chapter 14, where Ockham says that a definition such as “thing composed of matter and form” “explicates more things” than the corresponding simple term, “body” in this case. Ockham, I must admit, is not speaking here of nominal definitions, as he makes it clear in the very next sentence.15

There still remains, however, enough relevant passages to support the point I wanted to make, and Spade’s other replies about them seem unconvincing to me. In one of these passages, Ockham says that “a definition signifies more explicitly what the defined term signifies implicitly”16. As Spade admits, the context makes it quite plausible that Ockham is speaking here of nominal definitions; and the text strongly suggests that there is a difference in mode of signification between the definition and the defined term, since the difference it wants to point to is expressed in it by adverbs (“explicitly” and “implicitly”) modifying the verb “to signify”. This is relevant to the on-going discussion because, remember, two expressions are considered to be synonymous in the strong sense by Ockham only if whatever is signified by one of them under a certain mode is signified under the same mode—or in the same way—by the other one. Spade wonders if the degree of explicitness which is mentioned here by Ockham could not be merely syntactical rather than semantical; but there is no indication to that effect in the text, which simply presents itself prima facie as having to do with how the definition and the defined term signify.

Another group of passages which I still maintain to be relevant are those where Ockham speaks about the nominal definitions of verbs, conjunctions, and adverbs17. Such a definition, he says, usually cannot be predicated of the corresponding defined term taken significatively (or in personal supposition), but only if it is taken in material supposition as in “where” is an interrogative adverb of place”. This is to say that such definitions are metalinguistically formulated and I took it to be obvious that a metalinguistic definition such as “an interrogative adverb of place” is not synonymous with the adverb “where” itself. Admittedly, these are quite special cases, but my point was merely to show that there are, in Ockham’s eyes, clear cases where the nominal definition can successfully do its job without being synonymous with the defined term. Now, Spade rejects this argument by remarking that if the definition is metalinguistic in such cases, so are the defined terms themselves since they are taken in material supposition, which, he contends, reestablishes semantical equivalence between the two. But this is off the mark. The question is whether the definition and the defined term are synonymous, and synonymy is a matter of signification, not of supposition. Surely the metalinguistic phrase “an interrogative adverb of place” signifies (in Ockham’s sense) certain things that the adverb “when” does not signify even when taken in material supposition (for taking a term in material supposition does not change its signification), namely adverbs. Hence they are not synonymous.

One might want to say, at this point, that however it may be with adverbs and conjunctions, the really interesting debate is about connotative names and that in this case at least the definition has to be synonymous with the defined name. This, however, is precisely what Ockham denies in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations* when he discusses the old problem of *nugatio*18. *Nugatio*, in the Aristotelian vocabulary, is the undesirable redundancy that occurs in certain contexts if a complete definition is substituted for the defined term. Take “white”, for example. Ockham defines it, we said, as “something having whiteness”. But now consider what happens if we substitute this definition to the term “white” in complex phrases such as “something white” or “white horse”. The result would be “something something having whiteness” or “something having whiteness horse”, which are unduly redundant and, moreover, ungrammatical. This problem, Ockham says, occurs only because we tend to assume that “a name and its definition signify exactly the same and that the one can always be substituted to the other”19; if we renounce this principle, which, Ockham insists, “is not true”20, then the difficulty simply vanishes.

Spade sees this passage as “the most troublesome evidence” against the synonymy thesis; Ockham, however, actually, plainly denies the thesis in question. Spade, however, thinks that this is not enough to settle the question. Even if simple connotative terms and their definitions are not

15 See *Summa logicae*, III-2, 14, p. 530, l. 26-33.
16 See *Summula philosophiae naturalis*, ed. S. Brown (Opera philosophica, VI), St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1984, I, 3, p. 162, l. 57-62: “[...] et communiter dicitur quod definitio significat illud idem explicite quod definitum significat implicite, in qua propositione ‘definendum’ non stat nisi pro nomine vel pro termino. Sic igitur dicendum est quod istorum terminorum ‘subiectum’ et ‘privatio’ sunt diversae definitiones experimentes quid nominis [...]”.
17 See *Summa logicae*, I, 26, p. 89, l. 137-145; and *Quodlibeta septem*, V, 19, p. 556, l. 67-73.
18 See *Expositio super libros Elenchorum*, ed. F. del Punta (Opera philosophica, III), St. Bonaventure, 1979, pp. 129-133.
always synonymous after all, he submits, the connotative terms will nevertheless be ultimately reducible, because they will still be synonymous if not with their whole definitions, at least with a part of it: "white", for example, might be synonymous not with "something having whiteness", but with "having whiteness" "tout court", and if so, it will still be eliminable. For my part, however, I cannot see any textual or theoretical support for this interpretation. Not only does Ockham never say anything of the sort, but if he thought that the defined term was synonymous with part of its nominal definition, one wonders what he took the rest of the definition to be about. Actually, "white", for him, is not synonymous with "having whiteness" any more than it is with "something having whiteness". We will see why in section 3 below.

Finally, I also wish to maintain the main theoretical argument I had used against the synonymy thesis, which is that in Ockham's paradigmatic cases of nominal definitions, certain things are signified under certain modes by some components of the definitions, which are not at all -- or not under the same mode -- signified by the defined term. Consider "father", for example. Its nominal definition, according to Ockham, is something like "male animal having a child". Now, the primary significates of "male animal", which occurs as a component of the definition, are not all among the primary significates of "father"; and the secondary signification of "child", which also occurs in the definition, cannot be equated with the secondary significates of the defined term "father". The only way to avoid the conclusion that the definition and the defined term cannot be synonymous in such paradigmatic cases would be to decide, as Richard Gaskin suggests, that the signification of a complex expression -- such as a definition -- is not the sum of the significations of its components (as required by the "Additive Principle" proposed by Spade), but that some sort of special semantical 'restriction' operates in such cases to exclude from the significates of the complex expression as a whole some of the significates of its components.

---

21 Let me recall that Ockham explicitly holds that such correlative connotative terms as "father" and "child", or "double" and "half", cannot be completely defined without resorting to each other (see, for example, Summa logicae, III-3, 26, p. 690, l. 18-28; Exp. Sup. lib. Elenchorum, II, 16, p. 296-297, l. 27-38; and my discussion of the point in "Guillaume d'Ockham, les connotatifs et le langage mental", p. 306-308).

22 R. Gaskin, op. cit.

23 What Spade calls the "Additive Principle" is the principle that the significates of a complex expression simply correspond to the sum total of the significates of each of its components. Spade finds this principle in Buridan, but he also wants to inject it into Ockham's semantics (see P.V. Spade, "Ockham's Distinctions...", pp. 58-58; and Thoughts, Words and Things, pp. 163-165).

---

I can see, however, no textual support in Ockham for such a strategy. Since it is incompatible with some of the things he explicitly holds (as in the passage I just referred to in the previous paragraph), it should not, as a matter of principle, be attributed to him. Moreover, it is difficult to see, in the case of mental expressions, how the natural signification of their constituent simple concepts could simply be cancelled by the surrounding terms. If, for example, the concept 'animal' naturally calls to mind every animal there is, why should it cease to do so when it is followed by the concept of 'having a child'?

3. What are nominal definitions made for?

So the indications still are, as far as I can see, that nominal definitions do not have to be synonymous with the defined terms in Ockham's view. Just what, then, are these definitions supposed to be doing? This is the second aspect of the on-going discussion. If connotative names are not synonymous with their nominal definitions, Spade asks, what would the criterion be of a "correct" nominal definition for a given name? "If it's not synonymy, then what is it?" In a 1998 paper in Franciscan Studies, Spade made the point even clearer, insisting that his main reason for attributing to Ockham a reductionist program with respect to connotative terms generally, is that it fits so well with Ockham's theory of nominal definition: "if he did not accept the moderate reductionist program I have described, Spade asks again, what is the point of the theory of nominal definition?"

This, no doubt, is a reasonable request and I would like to address it now. I will first spell out what I take the role of nominal definitions to be within Ockham's thought, and then I will provide a short survey of arguments in support of this interpretation.

The nominal definition of a connotative name, in Ockham's system, is expected to unfold the meaning of the defined term. Now, the complete meaning of a connotative term lies in its signifying some things under a certain mode, and some under another mode. What the nominal defini-

24 This, actually, is the very reason why Spade -- contrary to Gaskin -- thinks that Ockham is committed to the Additive Principle. He does not acknowledge, however, that this principle is incompatible, in many cases, with the synonymy of the definition with the defined term.


tion should do, then, in order to unfold such a meaning, is to explicitly – and separately – identify the primary significates of the defined term and its secondary significates, while revealing in each case the mode under which they are signified by the defined term (in recto or in obliquo, affirmatively or negatively, and so on). The important point for Ockham is that in so doing, the nominal definition should make perspicuous the ontological import of the term.

How is that to be done exactly? We can, I believe, extract from Ockham’s own practice and explanations with respect to the nominal definitions of names, a relatively precise set of conditions he wanted such definitions standardly to satisfy. The following three can be proposed as a fair approximation:

(C1) For each group of connotata of the defined term, there should occur within the nominal definition one and only one grammatical complement – a term in obliquo, in Ockham’s vocabulary – having as its primary significates precisely these connotata of the defined term. Take “white”, for example. It has a single group of connotata, for Ockham, namely all the singular whitenesses there are out there in the world, and its nominal definition is said to be “something having a whiteness”. It can be seen that the term “whiteness”, which occurs as the only grammatical complement within this definition, has as its primary significates exactly those individuals which happen to be the connotata of the defined term, namely the whitenesses. Or take “father”. Its nominal definition is something like “male animal having a child”, where it is observed, again, that the term which occurs as grammatical complement within the definition – “child” – has as its own primary significates exactly those individuals which happen to be the secondary significates of the defined term, namely the children.

More complicated cases can be devised if we turn to terms with two – or more – series of connotata think of “grandfather”, for example. More complements would be needed in the definition. The principle, however, would be the same: each grammatical complement within a good nominal definition should primarily signify exactly those individuals which are secondarily signified under a determinate mode by the defined term.

(C2) The nominal definition should contain (usually as its first element) at least one term in recto having among its own primary significates all the primary significates of the defined term. A term taken in recto, in Ockham’s vocabulary, is a categorematic term which is not being used as a grammatical complement. Consider our familiar examples of nominal definitions again. In “male animal having a child”, the complex term “male animal” occurs in recto, and its primary significates – all the male animals there are – include all the primary significates of the defined term “father”. In “something having a whiteness”, it is the very general term “something” which occurs in recto, and its primary significates, in this case too, include all those of the defined term “white” since the general term “something”, taken as categorematic, primarily signifies all the individual things there are (including the white ones). The general idea is that the term in recto should delimit, at the outset of the nominal definition, a (usually wider) range among which the primary significates of the defined term are to be looked for: that of male animals in the case of “father”, and that of all things there are in the case of “white”.

(C3) The nominal definition should connect its categorematic term in recto with its categorematic term(s) in obliquo in such a way as to reveal the modes under which the secondary significates of the defined term are connoted and to make it perspicuous in this way how the primary significates of the term in recto have to be related in reality with the primary significates of the term(s) in obliquo, in order to be the primary significates of the defined term as well. Whether in mentalese or in external language, this is secured by grammatical structure and the use of appropriate syncategorematic phrases (including copulas such as “being” or “having”). Let us return to the definition of “white” once more: “something having a whiteness”. “Having”, here, is a syncategorematic copula connecting the term in recto with the term in obliquo; what is required from it in this circumstance is that its logic be adequate to express how singular things should stand with respect to whitenesses if they are to be among the primary significates of the defined term “white”. It is relevant to the correctness of this definition, for example, that “having” is asymmetrical in a way that “being” is not. Since syncategorematic terms, according to Ockham, do not signify special determinate things of the world, their contribution to the definition, I gather, rests solely upon such logical and grammatical properties.

In short, the correct nominal definition of a connotative name should precisely delineate (through the term(s) in obliquo) the set(s) of conno-
\textit{tata} of the defined term, while revealing for each such set the mode under which its members are connoted; and it should provide, moreover (through the term \textit{in recto}, the \textit{syncategorema}, and the grammatical structure), a sort of algorithm for picking out the primary significates of the defined name. Whatever does that job is a good nominal definition whether it is synonymous or not with the defined term. And in many cases, it will not be.

At least two reasons can be given why a nominal definition satisfying C1-C3 will not, in general, be synonymous with the defined name. They jointly correspond to what I called above my main theoretical argument against the synonymy thesis. First, the definition is supposed to contain, in virtue of C2, a general term \textit{in recto}, the primary significates of which will include \textit{and usually exceed} those of the defined term: "male animal", for example, has all the primary significates of "father", \textit{and more}; and so does "something" with respect to "white". This is the standard situation: the term \textit{in recto} within the definition normally delineates a wider range, of which the extension of the defined term is but a subset. Thus more individuals are normally signified by the definition than by the defined term, and hence the two of them cannot be synonymous in Ockham’s sense. Synonymy will not be reestablished (as Spade suggests)\textsuperscript{30} by simply leaving out the term \textit{in recto}, since whatever is left of the definition when this is done \textit{e.g.} "having a whiteness" in the case of "white", or "having a child" in the case of "father" – will entirely lack primary significates; remember that "having", here, is supposed to be a syncategorematic copula with no primary significates of its own\textsuperscript{31}.

A second reason why a definition satisfying C1-C3 might turn out not to be synonymous with the defined name is that the terms \textit{in obliquo} which are called for by condition C1 need not be absolute terms. What is required from them is that their primary significates precisely correspond to the secondary significates of the defined terms; whether or not, they themselves have secondary significates, and what these secondary significates are, seem irrelevant for the correctness of the definition. In “male animal having a child”, for example, the term \textit{in obliquo} "child" is itself a connotative term, secondarily signifying all the fathers and mothers, but surely those are not secondarily signified by the defined term "father"; "father" and its definition, consequently, are not synonymous. Many other such cases are bound to pop up if we accept Ockham’s general thesis that pairs of correlative terms are only definable through each other\textsuperscript{32}. There is no a priori reason, after all, why the connotata of a particular connotative name should always correspond to a natural kind. C1, in practice, forces the use of connotative names as grammatical complements within nominal definitions, and brings about in this way another excess in the meaning of the definition with respect to that of the defined term: it will often secondarily signify some things that are not signified under the same mode by the defined term.

The standard of correctness set up by C1-C3 for nominal definitions does not require, then, that the definition and the defined term be synonymous, and it does not require the complete resolution of connotative concepts into sequences of absolute ones and basic syncategoremata. The point of a nominal definition, in this view, is to be explicit about which individuals in the world are primarily signified by the defined name, and which are secondarily signified, and under what mode. From the point of view of nominalism, in particular, such a procedure of meaning explicitation presents the invaluable interest of making it clear \textit{what ontological commitments are brought about by the use of a given name}. The nominalist program called for by the ockhamistic rarefied ontology should be, in this context, to show, through nominal definitions, that connotative names never need to signify – primarily or secondarily – anything but individual substances, qualities, or parts of substances. And this is indeed Ockham’s program with respect to the categories as I understand it. It does not aim at the elimination of the connotative terms from the language of thought, but at showing, on the contrary, that some of them at least, whatever category they belong to in Aristotle’s list, can be admitted among the simple concepts naturally formed by human minds, without thereby complexifying the ontology.

So this is the answer I propose to Spade’s question about the role of nominal definitions in Ockham’s nominalism. It can be supported by three kinds of arguments.

\textsuperscript{30} See P.V. Spade, \textit{Thoughts, Words and Things}, p. 234.

\textsuperscript{31} Treating "having" as a categorematic term instead (signifying whatever \textit{has anything}) will not solve the difficulty, since it would \textit{ipso facto} reintroduce – and even aggravate in some cases – the excess of \textit{significata} that the leaving out of the term \textit{in recto} was devised to avoid. Of course, we could stipulate somehow that even if it is introduced by a syncategorematic term, a complex phrase such as "having a whiteness" has in the end the very same primary significates as the defined term, but the move seems arbitrary in the context, and devoid of both theoretical and textual support.

\textsuperscript{32} See above note 21.
First, it fits pretty well with Ockham’s actual examples of nominal definitions\textsuperscript{33}. Spade’s interpretation, by contrast, could not account for the fact that some paradigmatic examples of ockhamistic nominal definitions still included connotative terms without Ockham expressing uneasiness about it in any way.

Secondly, the proposed reconstruction fits well with several other particular tenets of Ockham’s doctrine. For one thing, it has no problem with simple connotative concepts sometimes coexisting with their nominal definitions in the language of thought. It smoothly accounts for absolute terms having no nominal definition of their own (they can hardly comply with C1, having no connotata to be referred to by the terms in obliquo), and for the connotative terms having but one (any two “correct” nominal definitions for a single connotative name are required by C1-C3 to be isomorphical and semantically equivalent to each other)\textsuperscript{34}. It also makes Ockham’s solution to the old nugatio riddle entirely intelligible (a solution based, remember, upon the explicit denial that synonymy has to hold between a nominal definition and the corresponding defined term)\textsuperscript{35}. And it even explicates why Ockham shows no great interest in elucidating the role of syncategorematic terms in nominal definitions, his nominalist program primarily having to do with the import of the categorematic terms.

This approach, of course, supposes that things are mind-independently ordered in certain ways out there in the world, but this is exactly what Ockham thinks: Bucephalus really has a whiteness, Abraham really generated Isaac, Socrates’ essence really resembles that of Plato, and so on. What his nominalism commits Ockham to reject is the reification of such orderings.

The third kind of arguments, finally, is that the proposed interpretation fits well with the passages where Ockham gets explicit about the role of nominal definitions. Thus he poses in so many words that the job of a nominal definition is to reveal (“declarat”, he says) the ontological import of the defined term\textsuperscript{36}. And he makes it quite clear too that this is

\textit{nominis est oratio explicite declarans quid per unam dictionem importatur . “Importare” is Ockham’s standard verb for introducing the ontological import of a term. It is normally used with a direct complement referring to whatever singular things in the world a given term signifies, whether directly or indirectly (see Summa logicae, I. 33, p. 69, l. 26-28: “Aliter accipitur ‘significare’ communissime quando aliquod signum [...] aliquid importat, sive principaliter sive secundario [...]” [italics are mine]; other good examples of this use are found in Summa logicae, I. 20, p. 48, l. 23-28; I. 17, p. 184, l. 26-29; I. 59, p. 188, l. 9-11; II. 11, p. 280, l. 36-37; and in many other places). On the other hand, “importare”, in connection with connotative terms, is also sometimes used by Ockham with a propositional clause introduced by “quod”, the function of which is to make it explicit how the various primary and secondary significates of the relevant connotative term are to be related with one another in reality (see, for example, Quodlibeta septem, VII, quest. 8, p. 729, l. 67-69: “approximatio causarum non tantum dicit res absolutas, sed importat quod nihil impediens sit medium inter illa”; several other instances of this use are found in Quodlibeta septem, VII, e.g.: qu. 2, p. 706, l. 72-76; qu. 5, p. 714, l. 17-21; qu. 7, p. 725, l. 50-52; qu. 8, p. 730, l. 103-104). In accordance with conditions C1-C3 proposed above, both uses of “importare” are relevant to characterize what a nominal definition is supposed to make explicit about a connotative term, the first use having to do with conditions C1 and C2, and the second one with condition C3.\textsuperscript{37}