

Chapter 7

Javelli and the Reception of the Scotist System of Distinctions in Renaissance Thomism



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Abstract This chapter uncovers a less investigated aspect of the relationship between the two most important scholastic schools of the Renaissance, Thomism and Scotism: the influence of Scotist literature on distinctions as seen in some sixteenth-century Thomists. The chapter has a primary focus on Chrysostomus Javelli's engagement in his discussion of divine attributes with the Scotist doctrine of distinctions, but also considers other Thomist sources. First, the beginnings of the highly specialised Scotist literature on distinctions are traced back to the start of the fourteenth century; I show how some early followers of Duns Scotus, in particular Francis of Meyronnes and Petrus Thomae, systematised Scotus' ontology of the various grades of being by compiling lists of subtle distinctions to be applied to various levels of reality. I give some indications as to the later reception of these models of distinctions in the Scotist school. Special attention is paid to Étienne Brulefer, since his summary of Petrus Thomae's model of seven distinctions was Javelli's source for the Scotist doctrine. I then investigate how Javelli worked with Brulefer's summary, and how he sought to integrate the Scotist doctrine into his own discussion of divine attributes. Thomists traditionally allowed only a rational or mental kind of distinction among divine attributes, and between them and the divine essence. Javelli, however, endeavours to show how the Thomist position may be reconciled with the Scotist doctrine of a formal or *ex natura rei* distinction. He did

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not always endorse this conciliatory approach; I hypothesise that he changed his mind on the subject over time. Finally, I show how other Renaissance Thomists reacted to the Scotist system of distinctions; in particular, I draw attention to the Thomists Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, Bartolomeo Manzoli, and Mattia Gibboni da Aquario, who all wrote treatises on Thomist distinction theory modelled on the Scotist system of distinctions. In some of this literature, lists of distinctions based on Thomist metaphysics were compiled in order to replace the Scotist system. I argue that Javelli's approach is more conciliatory and, in fact, has some overlap with the concordist thought of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who himself considered Scotus and Aquinas to be in fundamental agreement as regards the distinction between divine attributes.

7.1 Introduction

Let me begin from a somewhat unusual angle: Karl Werner's (1821–1888) highly informative section on Chrysostomus Javelli in his *Der Endausgang der mittelalterlichen Scholastik* from 1887 seems to have gone unnoticed in recent literature on the Italian Thomist. This Austrian historian of scholastic philosophy and theology not only discusses Javelli's role in the Pomponazzi affair and his project of harmonising Plato and Aristotle with each other and with 'Christian truth'; he also spends several pages on Javelli's Thomist disagreement with the Scotist tradition in his *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, called his 'Aristotelian masterpiece' by Werner (Werner 1887, 150–196 at 164).¹ Werner indeed identifies the engagement with the Scotists as the single most important task of this work, the metaphysical debate with other Thomists holding only second place. Javelli thus engages in debate with Duns Scotus and some of his followers, in particular with Antonius Andreae (a contemporary of the Subtle Doctor) and Antonio Trombetta (a contemporary of Javelli himself) (Werner 1887, 153 and 167). Werner's observations, backed by his commanding overview of the late and post-medieval scholastic traditions, are important as a reminder of the centrality of the critical exchange between the two schools – Thomism supported by Javelli's Dominican order and Scotism supported by the Franciscans – throughout the Renaissance. That Javelli's encounter with Scotism was not motivated by enmity, but rather by curiosity and interest, may be gathered from his view, noted both by Werner and in more recent times Michael Tavuzzi, that the central claims of Scotism and Thomism regarding the

¹I use the edition of Javelli's *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* found in the 1568 Lyon edition of his *Totius rationalis, naturalis, divinae ac moralis philosophiae compendium*, vol. I; the work is there called *Super duodecim Metaphysices Aristotelis libros ad mentem Aristotelis et S. Thomae ut plurimum decisae*. The work was first published, along with other of Javelli's Aristotelian works, at Venice in 1534, after it had been revised and completed by Javelli in January of 1532, during which time he was in Cremona; see Tavuzzi 1990, 478, and 1991, 115; Cordonier and De Robertis 2021, 41.

concept of being's univocity or analogicity respectively are not at all incompatible with each other; they are rather complementary, or they differ only in terminology (Werner 1887, 174; Tavuzzi 1993, 116; Javelli 1568, 733a).

In this contribution, I shall investigate a previously unexamined aspect of Javelli's argument with the Scotists, i.e., his markedly syncretistic reception of the Scotist system of distinctions.² Since knowledge of Scotist distinction theory, beyond Scotus' own 'formal distinction', can hardly be taken for granted, I shall begin with some general observations thereon (Sect. 7.2) before turning to Javelli's knowledge of and engagement with the Scotist system of distinctions, as seen in his discussion of divine attributes (Sects. 7.3 and 7.4); from there, I shall expand on some other Renaissance voices, Thomist and otherwise (in particular Giovanni Pico della Mirandola), on the relationship between the Scotist and Thomist approaches to distinctions (Sect. 7.5). Javelli gives his fullest account of the Scotist doctrine of distinctions in the context of his discussion of divine attributes; my main focus in this chapter is Javelli's (and, partially, other Thomists') reception of and engagement with the Scotist doctrine, rather than on the discussion of divine attributes itself. In this way, I seek to uncover an undeservedly underexamined aspect of the debate between the two most important scholastic schools of the Renaissance, Thomism and Scotism.

7.2 The Scotist System of Distinctions from Duns Scotus to Étienne Brulefer

In this section, I shall elucidate the distant background of Javelli's discussion of the Scotist system of distinctions, in particular the origins and development of the Scoto-formalist tradition. John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308), of course, is well known for introducing what he calls a 'formal distinction' into metaphysics, psychology, and theology. According to Scotus, a special kind of distinction, one which is neither mind-dependent nor a full-blown real distinction, holds among, e.g., genus and species, the powers of the soul, and the divine perfections (Noone 2009, 129–134). Less well known is the fact that some of Scotus' early followers, in particular Petrus Thomae († 1340) and Francis of Meyronnes (1285–1328), developed whole systems of kinds of distinctions applicable to various levels of reality. In order to understand this development from Scotus to the early Scotists, it is important to appreciate properly one fundamental feature of Scotus' ontology: its tendency to stratify reality. One modern Scotus scholar, Peter King, aptly describes the situation in the following words:

²Javelli's acquaintance with Scotist distinction theory was observed, but not further investigated, in Andersen 2011, 237–239. For another interesting aspect of Javelli's (in that case, more critical) encounter with Scotism, see → Burzelli, Chap. 4, in this volume.

Now the very terminology of ‘diminished being’ suggests that Scotus is talking about a kind of *being*, albeit one that picks out a lesser ontological status: frogs and bats have one status, pictures of frogs and thoughts of bats another; God presumably has the greatest ontological status of all. On this score, mental contents are entities, if second-rate entities. They have less being than other things. Nevertheless, they are not nothing, for if they were nothing they could hardly determine the character of mental acts. Hence diminished being applies to any ontological status that is somehow ‘less’ than the status enjoyed by the ordinary things of this world. Scotus’s notion of diminished being is a way of distinguishing ontological levels (King 2004, 82).

The general idea is that reality encompasses various distinct levels or kinds of being that enjoy correspondingly distinct ontological statuses. This ontological scale reaches all the way from God, the highest being, through ordinary things of this world, down to things that do not exist in the same way as these ordinary things but rather only in a diminished way – and due to this, they barely escape falling into pure nothingness. Among items of this last kind are mental contents. As King points out, Scotus, in his later writings, carefully avoided leaving the impression that items with diminished being possess any kind of real being or ‘ontological standing’ of their own. They rather exist ‘in and through’ the real items upon which they supervene (King 2004, 84–85). Nevertheless, a comprehensive theory of the structure of reality must take into account the weak ontological status of such items as well as the stronger one of more robust real items.

The idea of such an ontological scale, more than any single argument for the formal distinction, forms the background of the systems of distinction developed by the aforementioned early Scotists. Notably, Scotus seemingly only once – in his *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* VII, q. 19 – briefly suggests a scheme of various real distinctions that apply on different levels of reality (Duns Scotus 1997, 370; Noone 2009, 131–132; Andersen 2011, 85–87). Some of his early followers, such as William of Alnwick and James of Ascoli, or writers working in Scotus’ sphere of influence, such as Thomas of Wylton, were content with discussing how the formal distinction relates to the real distinction and the distinction of reason: does it occupy a place between the real distinction and the distinction of reason, or is it rather subsumed under one of them? (Noone 2009, 134–148).

Francis of Meyronnes, who appears to have studied under Scotus in Paris, instead lists four different kinds of distinctions that all operate on various levels of reality. In his *Conflatus* (the mature version of his commentary on the first book of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*), Francis thus differentiates between an essential distinction, a real distinction, a formal distinction, and a modal distinction; he explains that there is a hierarchical order among these distinctions, the first covering a wider scope than the others, the second covering the second widest scope, etc. The varying scopes of the distinctions are due to the items distinguished. The essential distinction thus holds between items that possess their own essence and existence, such as God and all of creation (or created substances); the real distinction holds between items that have one single essence in common but are otherwise distinct, such as the

Father and the Son in the Trinity; the formal distinction, in Meyronnes' understanding, holds between quiddities of things that have one genus in common, such as man and donkey; the modal distinction holds between some quiddity and its intrinsic mode, such as man and finitude or whiteness and the intensity of whiteness (Meyronnes 1520/1966, 43^b; Andersen 2011, 89–93).

Meyronnes' examples would require considerable clarification in order to avoid the impression of obscurity; however, the guiding principle of his scheme of distinctions is clear enough: the distinction with the widest possible scope, that between God and creatures, takes first place, whereas the distinction with the narrowest possible scope, that between a quiddity and a modality that cannot exist independently of the quiddity, takes the last place. The ontological scale is clearly reflected in the differentiation among the kinds of distinctions that apply at various levels of reality.

Petrus Thomae has the merit of having transformed this hierarchical approach into an elaborate system that was then handed down through subsequent generations of Scotists, even after Peter's own name was forgotten – and, on its way, caught Javelli's attention. We have no evidence that Peter was among Scotus' direct students, though he at one point claims to have access to writings by Scotus 'in his own hand' (*de manu sua*) (Thomae 1957, 52–53). He is among the first to refer to a group of authors as Scotists (*schola Scotica*), a group with which he explicitly declines to identify (Thomae 2018, 13). From his point of view, a 'Scotist' is someone who adheres closely to Scotus' doctrines; only in a broader perspective, the perspective of the later tradition, does he himself belong to this group.

Peter deals with the division of the kinds of distinctions in two different texts, firstly in *quaestio* 7 of his *Quodlibet*, which also figures as *quaestio* 10 of his *De modis distinctionis*, and secondly in a short treatise exclusively devoted to a discussion of the various kinds of distinctions and their application to the ten Aristotelian categories. This latter treatise has come down to us in two different versions both available in modern editions, though only one of them was printed during the Renaissance, in Venice in 1517 (Andersen 2011, 25–81, with references to further literature).³ In *Quodl.* 7, Peter presents an array of distinctions embracing distinction of reason (*distinctio rationis*) and seven kinds of mind-independent distinctions, all named after the items distinguished (*distinctio modi intrinseci et eius cuius est, distinctio formalitatis et rei, distinctio formalitatis et formalitatis, distinctio realitatis et rei, distinctio realitatis et realitatis, distinctio rei et rei, distinctio essentiae et essentiae*) (Thomae 1957, 120; Andersen 2011, 95–99). In his short treatise, he presents in total seven kinds of distinctions. This latter presentation, which became influential in the Scotist tradition, is not only

³One version of the treatise, edited by Egbert P. Bos under the title *De distinctione predicamentorum*, appeared as an appendix to Bos 2000. The other version was edited by Celia López Alcalde under the title *Tractatus brevis de modis distinctionum* in Thomae 2011, with a Catalan translation by Josep Batalla and an English one by Robert D. Hughes. I shall refer to both versions and, whenever relevant, point out the differences between them.

much more sophisticated than the *Quodlibet* version, but also includes a number of features that qualify it as, indeed, a *system* of distinctions. In the first of two corollaries to the presentation of the seven distinctions, Peter explains that each of them correlates with a kind of identity – something that seems obvious enough, when we recall Aristotle’s *dictum* in the *Topics* (I, 15, 106b 14–15) that there are as many kinds of identity as there are kinds of distinction. Petrus Thomae’s final list of distinctions with their corresponding kinds of identity then includes the following (Thomae 2011, 286 and 310; Bos 2000, 296 and 302; both with reference to the *Topics*):

1. *Distinctio/identitas rationis* (‘distinction / identity of reason’)
2. *Distinctio/identitas ex natura rei* (‘distinction / identity from the nature of the thing’)
3. *Distinctio/identitas formalis* (‘formal distinction / identity’)
4. *Distinctio/identitas realis* (‘real distinction / identity’)
5. *Distinctio/identitas essentialis* (‘essential distinction / identity’)
6. *Distinctio/identitas se totis subiective* (‘totally subjective identity / distinction’)
7. *Distinctio/identitas se totis obiective* (‘totally objective identity / distinction’)

In his second corollary, Peter explains the hierarchical order among the distinctions and identities. As mentioned above, Meyronnes had already explained how the distinctions may be ordered according to the breadth of their scope. Peter proceeded in much the same way in his *Quodl.* 7. Now, in his short treatise on distinctions, we learn that whatever is distinguished by means of the most robust distinction, which he calls ‘*distinctio se totis obiective*’, is also distinguished in all other ways; whatever is distinguished in the second-most robust fashion, i.e., according to the ‘*distinctio se totis subiective*’, is also distinguished by means of all the lesser distinctions; one may proceed in this way until one reaches the weakest possible kind of distinction, the distinction of reason. As for the relationship among the kinds of identity, the same principle applies, but in reverse order: thus, whatever may be identified by means of rational identity will also be identical in all other respects. Even though Peter does not explicitly say so, it is clear that he thinks one may proceed in the same way down through the list of identities (Thomae 2011, 312–314; Bos 2000, 302–303; Andersen 2011, 105–107).

The systematicity of this doctrine is quite remarkable. Whether it is of any value in the analysis of reality, of course, depends on how the individual kinds of distinction and identity are described. I shall return to this matter shortly, when studying Javelli’s reception of the seven distinctions. Let me conclude this section with a word on Javelli’s professed source, who is not Petrus Thomae himself, but rather the Breton Scotist Étienne Brulefer (1450/55–1496/99). Having received his doctorate, and taught logic, in Paris, Brulefer is known to have lectured on scholastic theology in Mainz and Metz (Zahnd 2015, 300). Brulefer had a keen interest in Scotist distinction theory. He composed two treatises on this topic, the

first of which was initially printed in 1480, whereas the second, longer one, appeared in print only posthumously in 1501 (Zahnd 2015, 301; Bolliger 2003, 321–358).⁴ Now, this Scotist's approach to Scotist distinction theory contains a direct criticism of Petrus Thomae's system, which Brulefer does not take to be in accordance with Scotus' own thought. For the sake of criticism, however, Brulefer starts his earliest treatise with a succinct overview of the seven distinctions put forward by, as he says, 'some formalists who claim to be followers of the Subtle Doctor' (*advertendum quod ab aliquibus formalisantibus doctorem subtilem, ut asserunt, sequentibus ponuntur septem modi distinctionum*) (Brulefer 1485–90, 1').

The term 'formalists' has a long history that goes back to the early fourteenth century, when the phrase 'those who assume formalities' (*ponentes formalitates*) was used to designate Scotus' followers (Courtenay 2011, 183). This terminology bears witness to the centrality of the doctrines of the formal distinction and intrinsic modes in Scotist thought. In the subsequent tradition, however, '*formalisantes*' (or '*formalizantes*') came to more specifically target authors of short treatises especially devoted to Scotist distinction theory. In this literature, Meyronnes' and Petrus Thomae's doctrines of distinctions competed for acceptance. The elaborate model of Petrus Thomae clearly won the day, even though Meyronnes' modal distinction was often added to his list of distinctions (Andersen 2011, 177–267; Andersen 2016, 659–668). Such is the background of Brulefer's depiction of Petrus Thomae's doctrine as representing the standard 'formalist' view.

7.3 Javelli's Report of the Seven Scotist Distinctions

In this section, I shall examine how Javelli renders the Scotist system of distinctions; I shall let him speak for himself and then comment on his report. Javelli discusses distinctions, including Scotist views of them, at various places in his *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and elsewhere. By far the most extensive discussion is found in book XII, q. 19. There, amidst Aristotle's theology of the first unmoved mover, Javelli discusses whether the divine perfections, also called 'dispositions', are really or instead merely rationally distinct from one another (*Si dispositiones Dei, quas dicimus perfectiones divinas, distinguuntur realiter, vel solum ratione*). More precisely, the problem Javelli deals with here is how it is that one can form true propositions about God, such as 'God is living', 'God is knowing', or 'God is the first principle', when God is altogether simple and the purest act. Are the predicates in such propositions, then, altogether identical in God, or are they rather

⁴In the following, I refer to a later printed edition of the first treatise.

distinct from one another and, if so, in what way are they distinct? (Javelli 1568, 892a). As we have seen, Scotist formalism operates with a plurality of distinctions, each with its own scope of application. In a digression on the *via Scoti* (Javelli 1568, 892a–b), Javelli recaps the Scotist doctrine, leaning heavily – and explicitly – on Brulefer’s summary:

Concerning the kind of distinctions put forward by the Scotists, note that – as I have extracted from Étienne Brulefer’s *Treatise on the Formalities* – there are seven.

The first one is of reason, and this is the one that comes about through a collating intellect, to be exact, as in ‘Socrates is Socrates’. For Socrates in the predicate differs by reason from himself as posed in the subject. I say ‘to be exact’, because here we are not dealing with the distinction of reason that arises from an intelligible thing (*ex parte rei ratiocinabilis*), but rather with the one that arises only from the reasoning intellect (*ex parte intellectus ratiocinantis*). For the distinction of reason from the thing is identical with the distinction that is due to the nature of the thing. That is what Étienne says.

The second one is called ‘distinction due to the nature of the thing’, and it obtains between two extremes about which contradictory predicates may be verified without any work of the intellect. In this way, the whole and its parts are distinguished, for the whole is constituted, whereas the parts are not constituted; the parts are constituting, and the whole is not constituting. In this way, genus and difference are distinguished, because the genus is divided by differences, whereas the differences are not divided by differences; thus, contradictory predicates are verified about them, and by consequence they are distinguished due to the nature of the thing.

The third one is called ‘formal distinction’, and it obtains when two items do not mutually include one another in the first mode of per se [predication], as is the case with property and subject, action and passion, genus and difference.

The fourth one is called ‘real distinction’, which is that between whichever items where one of them may be separated from the other, as is the case with matter and form, according to Scotus, and subject and accident, according to common opinion.

The fifth one is called ‘essential distinction’, which is that between two essences, which by some power may be separated from one another, as is the case with Socrates and white; and note that although whatever is really distinguished in creatures is [also] essentially distinguished, this is not so in God, according to the theologians, since this is true: the Father and the Son are really distinguished, but not essentially, for the essential distinction is absolute, which is something that does not occur in God, since he is altogether simple.

The sixth one is called ‘totally subjective distinction’, and it obtains when two extremes really and actually exist, and yet they cannot convene in any one subject, as is the case with two individuals of the same species, and whatever opposition there is between them, it is such that they cannot exist in it at the same time. However, this distinction is different from the real one, because in that case no actual separation is required, since a potential one suffices; but in this case an actual separation is required. Therefore, soul and body are not distinguished by this distinction, for they convene in one composite, but they are really distinguished, because they are [potentially] separable from another.

The seventh one is called 'totally objective', and it obtains when the extremes do not convene in any one real and quidditative concept, as is the case with the ultimate differences, which are primarily diverse, being and non-being, and – according to the Thomist way – God and creature, substance and accident, which do not convene in any real and univocal concept. This is the highest of the distinctions according to Scotus.⁵

Surprisingly, Javelli, despite being familiar with Brulefer's treatise, nowhere acknowledges that he only summarised the formalist doctrine of distinctions in order to criticise it. Brulefer carefully distinguished between the formalist view of distinctions and a more genuinely Scotist approach to the topic. Javelli, however, takes Brulefer's summary to be representative of the *via Scoti*. There is a shift of perspective here: whereas Brulefer views Scotism from within, Javelli's view is that of an outsider, even though he draws on Brulefer.

There are other significant discrepancies between Brulefer's and Javelli's presentations of the distinctions as well. The first concerns the rational distinction that, according to Javelli, comes in two versions. There is a distinction '*ex parte rei*

⁵Javelli 1568, 892b–893a: 'Circa genere distinctionum Scotistarum adverte quod ut extraxi ex tracta. formalitatum Stephani Burlifer, sunt septem. Prima dicitur distinctio rationis, et est illa, quae fit per intellectum collativum praecise, ut Sortes est Sortes. Nam Sortes in praedicato differt ratione a seipso posito in subiecto. Dico autem praecise, quoniam ibi non accipitur distinctio rationis, quae proveniat ex parte rei ratiocinabilis, sed quae est solum ex parte intellectus ratiocinantis. Nam distinctio rationis ex parte rei idem est, quod distinctio ex natura rei. Haec Stephan. Secunda dicitur distinctio ex natura rei, et est inter duo extrema, de quibus praedicata contradictoria possunt verificari praeter omne opus intellectus, sic distinguuntur totum et partes. Nam totum est constitutum, partes non sunt constitutae. Partes sunt constituentes, et totum non est constituens. Sic distinguuntur genus et differentia, quoniam genus dividitur differentiis, differentiae autem non dividuntur differentiis, ergo de eis verificantur praedicata contradictoria, ex consequenti distinguuntur ex natura rei. Tertia dicitur distinctio formalis, et est quando aliqua duo non se mutuo includunt in primo modo per se, ut passio et subiectum, actio et passio, genus et differentia. Quarta dicitur distinctio realis, quae est inter quaecunque, quorum unum potest ab altero separari, ut materia et forma, ad mentem Scoti, subiectum et accidens commune. Quinta dicitur distinctio essentialis, quae est inter duas essentias, quae per aliquam potentiam possunt abinvicem separari, ut Sortes et albedo, et nota quod licet in creatis quaecunque distinguuntur realiter, distinguantur essentialiter, non tamen in Deo secundum Theologos, nam haec est vera, pater et filius distinguuntur realiter, non tamen essentialiter, quoniam distinctio essentialis est absoluta, quae non cadit in Deo, cum sit omnino simplex. Sexta dicitur distinctio se totis subiectivae, et est quando duo extrema sunt distincta realiter et actu existunt, et tamen non possunt convenire in uno aliquo subiecto, ut duo individua eiusdem speciei, et quaecunque oppositionem habent adinvicem, ita quod non possunt eidem simul inesse. Haec tamen distinctio est alia a distinctione reali, quia in illa non requiritur separatio actualis, sed sufficit potentialis, in hac vero requiritur separatio actualis, unde anima et corpus non distinguuntur hac distinctione, quia conveniunt in uno composito distinguuntur tamen realiter, quia sunt abinvicem separabilia. Septima dicitur se totis obiectivae, et est quando extrema non conveniunt in aliquo uno conceptu reali quidditative, ut duae ultimae differentiae, quae sunt primo diversa, ens et non ens, et secundum viam Thomist. Deus et creatura, substantia et accidens, quae in nullo conceptu reali univoco conveniunt. Haec est summa distinctionum secundum mentem Scoti'.

rationabilis', which is a distinction of reason with a foundation in intelligible reality, and then there is a distinction '*ex parte intellectus ratiocinantis*', which does not have such a foundation, but rather is a pure product of a reasoning intellect. The differentiation between these two kinds of rational distinction, later often called '*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*' and '*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*', is a well-known motif from the Thomist tradition (Andersen 2016, 796–797). Javelli expressly refers to Brulefer, but only to make the point that he exclusively spoke of the first kind of rational distinction which, in the Scotist terminology employed by Brulefer, following Petrus Thomae, is said to come about 'through an act of a comparing or collating intellect' (*per actum intellectus comparativum seu collativum*) (Brulefer 1485–90, 1^v).⁶ An example of such an act of comparison is when an intellect distinguishes between subject and predicate in a proposition of identity ($A = A$); here, no distinction is found in the actual thing. The other kind of rational distinction is different. The Scotists do not operate with a separate rational distinction of this kind, but rather only, as Javelli correctly observes, with a '*distinctio ex natura rei*'. Javelli's description of this 'distinction due to the nature of the thing' (as holding between 'contradictory predicates') is faithful to Brulefer's; the interesting move in Javelli's text here is his explicit identification of this kind of distinction with the Thomist rational distinction with a foundation in reality.

Javelli's description of the formal distinction reproduces almost verbatim Brulefer's, which also refers the reader to Aristotle's doctrine of the various forms of *per se* predication in the *Posterior Analytics* (I, 4, 73a 34–73b 24), the first mode of which concerns predicates that belong to an item's essence. The formal distinction, then, on this view, holds between any items that do not pertain to each other's essence. Given the importance of the formal distinction, the most striking feature of both Brulefer's and Javelli's description is its brevity. Since the formalist understanding of the formal distinction plays a certain role in Javelli's further discussion, let me note in passing that Scotus himself, taking Aristotle's essence as a formal *ratio*, did indeed explicitly define formal identity as *per se primo modo* inclusion, and formal non-identity (or distinction) as the corresponding sort of exclusion.⁷

Javelli's description of the real distinction deviates from Brulefer's in several respects. Brulefer's explanation that this is a distinction that holds between '*res et res*' is missing (Brulefer 1485–90, 1^v). Javelli's example of form and matter, which he takes to be *realiter* distinct according to Scotus, is not in Brulefer's summary, though at a later point in his treatise Brulefer does say that matter and form are *realiter* distinct from the composite to which they belong (Brulefer 1485–90, 6^v).

⁶Note that Thomae 2011, 286–288, in contrast to Brulefer, does differentiate between a rational distinction founded in the *ratio* of a thing and one that is fabricated by a *ratio*, i.e., an intellect; however, only the latter is of relevance in his system of distinctions (this differentiation is not found in the version edited by Bos; see Bos 2000, 296). For Petrus Thomae on rational distinction, see Bridges 1959, 57–68; Andersen 2011, 111–119.

⁷Duns Scotus 1950, 356–357 (*Ordinatio* I, d. 2, pars 2, qq. 1–4, n. 403), defines formal identity as *per se primo modo* inclusion; Duns Scotus 2008, 548 (*Reportatio* I-A, d. 45, qq. 1–2, n. 32), defines formal non-identity as *per se primo modo* exclusion.

The example of subject and accidents is in both authors, but Brulefer adds some further examples that Javelli leaves unmentioned: cause and effect, as well as *generans* and *genitum*. The latter example is especially important, since it reveals the applicability of the real distinction to Trinitarian speculation: thus, there is, according to Brulefer's summary, a real distinction between the Father (who is *generans*) and the Son (who is *genitus*).⁸ Javelli does acknowledge that this is an instance of a real distinction, when he subsequently, following Brulefer, explains that the only difference between a real and an essential distinction is that the latter does not occur in God due to his utmost (essential) simplicity. Whereas an essential distinction would violate this simplicity, a real one does not.

As regards the totally subjective distinction, Javelli is faithful to Brulefer, who in his turn only departs from Petrus Thomae by adding an explanation, also reported by Javelli, of why body and soul are really, but not totally subjectively distinct: when body and soul are separated, one of them remains, while the other does not – clearly a case of real distinction. Body and soul, however, are found together in one composite that has actual existence and thus they 'convene in a subjective reality' (*conveniunt [...] in realitate subiectiva*) (Brulefer 1485–90, 1^v–2^r).⁹ A distinction of this kind thus holds between items that do share in one such subjective reality, as is the case with individuals belonging to one and the same species, for species is an example of something that does not actually exist on its own and hence does not represent any subjective reality.

Correspondingly, the totally objective distinction holds between items that do not share in any objective reality. Brulefer gives the example of ultimate differences (Brulefer 1485–90, 2^r); by these, he undoubtedly means such individualising features (also called *haecceitates*) that according to Scotus radically abstract from any form of commonness and thus only pertain to individuals. Petrus Thomae explained that this kind of distinction holds among items 'from which no real univocal concept may be abstracted' ('a quibus non potest abstrahi aliquis conceptus univocus realis') (Thomae 2011, 310; similarly *ibid.*, 346).¹⁰ Brulefer omits any talk of univocity in this context; instead, he speaks of a 'real common concept', which here seems to amount to the same thing. In either case, the upshot is that only items that do not have any genuine conceptual being in common are totally objectively distinct from one another. Javelli, at any rate, understands perfectly well that contrasting core assumptions of Thomist and Scotist metaphysics are involved. Beyond adding 'being and non-being' as an example of items that have no real concept in common, he thus also mentions 'God and creature' and 'substance and accident', which in Thomist metaphysics have no univocal concept in common, but rather only an

⁸ Brulefer 1485–90, 1^v: 'Illa etiam sunt res et res [...] quorum unum est generans et aliud genitum, quia nulla res seipsum gignit, secundum Augustinum libro primo *De trinitate*, ut in divinis pater et filius'.

⁹ For the distinction between subjective (actual and mind-independent) and objective (intelligible) being, see Thomae 2015, 144–145; Andersen 2011, 159–161.

¹⁰ The version edited by Bos, which in this respect is closer to Brulefer, has 'conceptus unicus' or 'conceptus unus' instead of 'conceptus univocus'; Bos 2000, 302 and 312.

analogical one (by contrast, on Scotist premises, God and creature are not totally objectively distinct, but rather identical; the same goes for the ten Aristotelian categories, which do have the univocal concept of being in common). This final remark of Javelli's is interesting because it shows he gave thought to how the Scotist system of distinctions might be applicable in a Thomist context; it adds an interesting aspect to his well-known view of univocity and analogy, although he does not here explicitly defend their compatibility (see above in the introductory section).

In his account of the seven 'Scotist' distinctions, Javelli does not mention that Brulefer, having described each of the seven distinctions, moves on to summarise Petrus Thomae's explanation, discussed above, of the relationship among them and among their corresponding kinds of identity (Brulefer 1485–90, 2^r). Javelli also does not mention that Brulefer subsequently offers a thorough revision of the whole formalist doctrine, at the end of which only three distinctions survive. Brulefer employs the maxim, a version of Ockham's razor, that 'one should not assume any plurality without necessity' (*pluralitas non sit ponenda sine necessitate*) and points out that most of the distinctions in the formalist system may be reduced to others; beyond the rational distinction, only two kinds of mind-independent distinctions are necessary: the real and the formal (Brulefer 1485–90, 10^v).¹¹ In effect, he thus returns to the starting point in the immediate wake of Scotus, before Meyronnes and Petrus Thomae with their innovations kicked off what would become the formalist tradition. Javelli is clearly not aware of this history. His own discussion of distinctions, beyond his account of the 'Scotist' system, revolves around the relationship between the rational, the real, and the formal distinctions, but also – for the sake of comparison – presupposes the assumption of a separate and genuinely 'Scotist' *distinctio ex natura rei*. Brulefer points instead to the fact that Scotus never operated with any such distinction as separate from the formal distinction; the Scotists who do so are therefore not really in conformity with Scotus (*isti Scotisantes non dicunt ad doctrinam Scoti conformiter*), he observes (Brulefer 1485–90, 4^v). The implications of Javelli's shift of perspective on the formalist tradition may thus be detected even beyond his account of the seven 'Scotist' distinctions.

7.4 Javelli's Own Conciliatory Approach to Distinctions

Let us now have a look at how Javelli integrates the Scotist system of distinctions into his own discussion of divine attributes; in this section, I shall also draw on texts by Javelli that in part do not support his otherwise conciliatory approach. Having presented the seven Scotist distinctions, Javelli moves on to a comparison between the Thomist and the Scotist ways of approaching the topic of his *quaestio*, i.e., the distinction among the divine perfections. He states that the issue over the difference

¹¹The details of Brulefer's criticism of the formalist system need not detain us here; see Bolliger 2003, 323–330; Andersen 2011, 229–235.

of opinion between Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas on this subject is one of words, rather than of meaning (*potius stat in terminis quam in sensu*); Scotus thinks there cannot be a real distinction here or, for that matter, any other distinction that comes after the real distinction in the Scotist system of distinctions, since these presuppose a real distinction – and this is not contrary to the Thomist stance (Javelli 1568, 893a). Although Aquinas' own position is not under investigation in this chapter, we should note that Aquinas is indeed clear that any distinction between God and his attributes, and among these attributes themselves, is due solely to the human intellect.¹² Before setting out the Scotist system, Javelli had already outlined what the Thomists, in accordance with Aquinas, as well as the Commentator, i.e., Averroes, think about this issue. Javelli's statement on the compatibility of the Scotist and the Thomist approaches is important, because it appears to be his own original contribution to the debate. Javelli is clearly not satisfied with stating the Thomist position, but rather quite specifically wants to demonstrate its compatibility with the Scotist position (we may note that Averroes, as a side issue, is drawn into the arena, too).

Javelli's comparison has been prepared, not just by his account of the Scotist distinctions, but also by the way he states the Thomist position in two *conclusiones* at the beginning of his *quaestio*. Whereas the first *conclusio* excludes the possibility of any real distinction among God's perfections, and between God's essence and perfections, the second *conclusio* provides a solution as to what kinds of distinctions may apply here:

The first conclusion: these dispositions [i.e., perfections] are not really distinct from the essence of the first principle, nor from each other; indeed, they are rather identical with one another. This is proved: where there are many absolute real beings that are really distinct, there is a real composition, since it is not intelligible that many share in one when they are absolute and really distinct from that in which they are and from one another, if there is not a composition, either of them or with them.¹³

The second conclusion: although they are really identical with the substance of the first principle and with each other, they are still formally distinct and by reason.¹⁴

The point that there is not any real composition in the 'essence of the first principle' is clear enough; such a composition, of course, is precluded by divine simplicity. Javelli refers to both Averroes and Avicenna for the view that there cannot be any

¹² See, e.g., Aquinas 1961, 47a (*Summa contra gentiles* I, cap. 36); Aquinas 1888, 114b (*STh* I, q. 13, a. 4).

¹³ Javelli 1568, 892a: 'Prima conclusio, istae dispositiones non distinguuntur realiter ab essentia primi principii, nec inter se, imo identice una est altera; probatur, ubi sunt plura entia realia absoluta distincta realiter, ibi est compositio realis, quia non est intelligibile quod plura conveniant in uno absoluta et distincta realiter ab eo in quo sunt, et inter se, quin sit ibi compositio, aut ex eis, aut cum his'.

¹⁴ Javelli 1568, 892a: 'Secunda conclusio, licet sint idem realiter cum substantia primi principii et inter se, tamen distinguuntur formaliter et ratione'.

real multiplicity of perfections in God.¹⁵ He adds that ‘everyone thinking correctly about God’ (*omnes recte sentientes de Deo*) agrees with the view expressed in the first conclusion (Javelli 1568, 892a). We find a similar appeal to a broad consensus when Javelli, arguing for the second conclusion, says that ‘no one thinking correctly’ (*nullus recte [...] sentiens*) would admit it is a mere tautology (*nugatio*) to call God just, wise, or powerful; hence, these perfections are ‘formally and rationally distinct from one another’ (*ergo distinguuntur formaliter et ratione*) (Javelli 1568, 892b). The most surprising thing about this statement as well as the second conclusion itself, of course, is that Javelli claims they express a *Thomist* position, when any talk of a *formal* distinction clearly is a nod to Scotus and the Scotist tradition. Javelli even foreshadows the formalist understanding of the formal distinction, such as he reported it via Brulefer, when he says that the various notions (*rationes*) formed by the (human) intellect about God ‘do not include one another in [the manner of] the first mode of *per se* predication’ (*non se invicem includunt in primo modo per se*) (Javelli 1568, 892a; see the description of the formal distinction in Javelli’s account of the Scotist distinctions).

We may thus observe that Javelli, at this stage of his argument, talks of the rational and the formal distinctions as if they were one and the same thing. He does, though, add that the distinct notions that we humans form about God in a sense result from his very essence that, as supremely perfect, provides a foundation for a diversity of notions, while in another sense they result from the ‘limitedness and debility’ (*ex limitatione et debilitate*) of our human intellect, incapable of expressing the divine perfection with just one word. The distinctions among God’s perfections have a double origin; they arise both ‘*ex parte nostri intellectus*’ and ‘*ex parte rei*’. The latter does not imply, we learn, that any ‘actual distinction’ (*distinctio actualis*) may be found in the divine essence, which is simple to the utmost degree, but rather only that one may speak of a foundational distinction among its aspects insofar as it gives rise and corresponds to the man-made notions of God’s perfections (*potest [...] dici, distingui a seipsa fundamentaliter et correspondenter*) (Javelli 1568, 892b). More precisely, then, Javelli’s talk of a ‘formal and rational distinction’ seems to express the two sides of this foundational distinction, i.e., the latent distinction in the foundation and the manifest distinction between its corresponding notions.

The very talk of a ‘formal and rational distinction’ may come across as somewhat confused. In his *quaestio* on divine perfections, Javelli adds that the Scotists, in fact, prefer to speak of a ‘*distinctio ex natura rei*’ instead of a foundational distinction (Javelli 1568, 892b). At this point, his readers might have preferred some more clarity: which distinction is it, really? However, Javelli’s point is that various distinctions do indeed apply here. Later, when presenting his explicit comparison of the positions involved, he summarises the Scotist approach as follows:

¹⁵Ibid., references Averroes 1562/1962, 323aC (*In Met.* XII, comm. 39): ‘Multiplicitas igitur in Deo non est nisi in intellectu differentia, non in esse’; and Avicenna 1980, 430 (*Liber de philosophia prima* VIII, cap. 7): ‘[...] nulla autem harum duarum facit in sua essentia debere esse multitudinem ullo modo nec variationem’.

[The divine perfections] are rationally distinct on the part of the intellect, which is the first kind of distinction; for the intellect may form a proper concept of each of them. But it is not only rational (*ratione*) on the part of the intellect, but rather also *ex natura rei*, which is the second kind of distinction; for given two divine perfections, e.g., intellect and will, one may verify contradictory predicates about them, since it is true to say of the intellect that it understands and of the will that it does not understand; therefore, they are distinguished *ex natura rei*. And they are also distinguished by the formal distinction, which is the third kind of distinction, since one perfection is not formally, but only identically [i.e., really], predicated of another in [the manner of] the first mode of per se [predication].¹⁶

The upshot of this passage is that all three kinds of distinctions that precede the real distinction in the formalist system, i.e., the *distinctio rationis*, the *distinctio ex natura rei*, and the *distinctio formalis*, are applicable to divine perfections. The real distinction is not, because there is a real identity both among the divine perfections and between them and the divine essence. This characterisation of the Scotist position, of course, is absolutely in accordance with Javelli's statement of the Thomist position in his two conclusions, especially the second one, the explanation of which already had a strong Scotist fragrance. On these premises, then, Javelli's contention that the positions under debate 'do not differ in meaning' (*non differunt in sensu*) is not in any way controversial (Javelli 1568, 893a).

What still is debatable is exactly how the Thomist division of the rational distinction into two different kinds relates to the three Scotist sub-real distinctions. In the remainder of his *quaestio*, Javelli accordingly adds a long digression on the two kinds of rational distinctions. The digression almost constitutes a separate *quaestio* within q. 19, with its own sub-disposition and *conclusiones*. The digression revolves around the problem of 'how a rational distinction alone may be sufficient for obviating a contradiction' (*quomodo sit possibile, quod sola distinctio rationis sufficit ad tollendam contradictionem*) (Javelli 1568, 893b). Recall that, on the formalist account, a *distinctio ex natura rei* is one that obtains between items with contradictory predicates, such as 'understanding' and 'not-understanding' (in the passage just quoted); the contradiction between these two predicates may be said to be suspended when their subjects turn out to be distinct from one another and to do so independently of any work of an intellect. In other words, what Javelli examines in his digression is if and how a Thomist rational distinction might do the job of a Scotist *distinctio ex natura rei*.

At the beginning of Javelli's account of the formalist system, we already learned that one rational distinction is founded in intelligible reality, whereas another one is due only to a reasoning intellect. In his digression, Javelli elaborates on the

¹⁶Javelli 1568, 893a: 'Sed distinguuntur ratione ex parte intellectus, quae est prima species distinctionis. Quia intellectus de unaquaque potest formare proprium conceptum, sed non tantum ratione ex parte intellectus, imo et ex natura rei, quae est species secunda distinctionis, nam sumptis duabus perfectionibus divinis puta intellectu et voluntate, de eis verificantur praedicata contradictoria, nam de intellectu verum est dicere, quod intelligit, et de voluntate verum est dicere, quod non intelligit, ergo distinguuntur ex natura rei, et distinguuntur distinctione formali, quae est tertia species distinctionis, quoniam una perfectio non praedicatur de alia in primo modo per se formaliter, sed identice, unde nec intellectus est voluntas formaliter e converso'.

discrepancy between these two kinds of rational distinction. The distinction due to intellectual activity alone is sufficient for distinguishing between *intentional* predicates only. When an intellect distinguishes between ‘Socrates’ as the subject and ‘Socrates’ as the predicate in the proposition ‘Socrates is Socrates’, then a contradiction between predicates (that is, the contradictory predicates of being-a-subject and not-being-a-subject) is suspended on a purely intentional level. This distinction corresponds to nothing in Socrates, the real man. Another example is the distinction between synonymous words (Javelli 1568, 893b).

The second kind of rational distinction, like the first, is itself a ‘being of reason’ (*ens rationis*); it negates a contradiction – a contradiction is a being of reason, and so is a negation – hence, as a negation of a contradiction, a distinction is a ‘most weak being of reason’ (*debilius ens rationis*). However, in the special case of the second kind of rational distinction, as applied to divine perfections, this being of reason is founded on the ‘most perfect real being’ (*ens reale perfectissimum*): the ‘fullness of the infinite perfection of the divine substance’ (*in plenitudine infinitae perfectionis divinae substantiae*). The crucial question, now, is whether this most real foundation suffices for a suspension of predicates on an extra-mental level. Javelli refers to the famous Thomist John Capreolus († 1444) for the opinion that it certainly does; Javelli, in fact, has borrowed from him the explanation of distinctions as being *entia rationis*, and the explanation of the most real foundation of the second kind of rational distinction (Javelli 1568, 893b; Capreolus 1589, 99b).

Some (unnamed) authors (*aliqui*) object, however, that the second kind of distinction of reason, in spite of its foundation in the fullness of divine perfection, is not *actually* in the thing, but only ‘virtually’ (*virtualiter*); any actual effect requires an actual cause, not a merely virtual one. This would seem to be an argument for the necessity of a Scotist formal distinction or a *distinctio ex natura rei* in addition to the rational distinction (of any kind). Javelli disagrees, even though the goal of his digression is to establish some degree of compatibility with the Scotist distinctions. He retorts that the argument that actual effects need actual causes is only valid in regard to real positive effects (*quando effectus est realis positivus*); when the effect is a negation (in the present case, a negation of a contradiction), then a virtual distinction suffices. As Javelli puts it, ‘this virtual distinction is sufficiently in act for an effect of this kind, which is a negation’ (*illa distinctio virtualis [...] sufficienter est in actu pro tali effectu, qui est negatio*) (Javelli 1568, 894a). This claim is puzzling, for an obvious objection immediately comes to mind: that something *virtual* by definition hardly can be *actual*; so, how can a virtual distinction be ‘sufficiently actual (or, in act)’? Javelli does not have an answer to this objection. In a further argument, he instead corrects himself and no longer speaks of the virtual distinction as being in any way actual, but rather as being *equivalent* to an actual distinction in the created realm:

And first of all, because it is equivalent to an actual distinction found in created perfections; therefore, just as these two do not contradict one another in us: ‘the intellect understands’ and ‘the will does not understand’, because there is an actual distinction, and not identity, between created intellect and will, thus also in God these two do not contradict one another:

‘the intellect understands’ and ‘the will does not understand’, because between them there is a virtual distinction that is equivalent to the actual one.¹⁷

These are Javelli’s final words in his *quaestio* on divine perfections. This last argument may be seen as indirectly supporting the compatibility of the Thomist and Scotist doctrines of distinctions; Javelli’s contention is that the virtual or rational distinction in God is just as powerful as an actual distinction in creatures, the implication being that the only difference between the positions involved is solely in regard to terminology. Javelli’s readers may not be entirely convinced that his postulation of equivalence between virtual and actual distinctions solves the matter; this very postulate might be seen instead as rendering the terminology of virtuality meaningless. What is absolutely clear, however, is Javelli’s opinion on the matter, and also how far he is willing to go for the sake of scholastic conciliation between the Thomist and the Scotist traditions – at least in regard to the issue under debate in book XII, q. 19, of his *Quaestiones* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

Let me note at this point that Javelli’s stance on Scotist distinction theory appears less conciliatory if one takes into account his view of the distinction between being and its transcendental properties. Regarding this issue, however, his statements are not altogether consistent. In the first chapter of his *Tractatus de transcendentibus*, we learn that the transcendentals – *unum*, *verum*, *bonum* – are neither *realiter* nor *ex natura rei* distinct from being, but rather only due to a rational distinction; they designate one and the same nature, i.e., being, and yet it is not a mere tautology (*nugatio*) to say that being is one, true, or good. When discussing divine perfections, Javelli took the lack of tautology as a sign of a formal-rational distinction, but now he thinks a rational distinction suffices. In our context, Javelli’s explicit rejection of Scotus’ *distinctio ex natura rei* is of special interest, since it is based on a rather undifferentiated equivalence to the real distinction: since the *distinctio ex natura rei* obtains ‘before any work of an intellect’ (*ante opus intellectus*) it must be a real distinction, and since the transcendentals do not add ‘anything real’ (*aliquid reale*) to being, a distinction of this kind is out of the question (Javelli 1568, 462b–463a). Somewhat surprisingly, the *Tractatus de transcendentibus* reveals no interest in the formalist system of distinctions or even in the Thomist division of the rational distinction into two different kinds. A comparison of Javelli’s teaching on the transcendentals in the *Tractatus* with that of the Jesuit Francisco Suárez indeed shows Suárez to be more influenced by Scotus than Javelli (Heider 2012, 859). Now, if we turn to Javelli’s discussion of the transcendentals in book IV, q. 3, of his *Quaestiones* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, the situation is a bit more complicated. There, Javelli teaches that the three transcendentals – *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum* – are ‘really identical’ (*realiter idem*) with being (Javelli 1568, 735a). However, regarding their distinction from being, there is room for some differentiation: whereas *unum* is

¹⁷Javelli 1568, 894a: ‘Et maxime quia aequipollet distinctioni actuali repertae in perfectionibus creatis, unde sicut in nobis ista duo non contradicunt: intellectus intelligit, voluntas non intelligit, quia est distinctio actualis, et non identitas, inter intellectum creatum et voluntatem, sic in Deo ista duo non contradicunt, intellectus intelligit, voluntas non intelligit, quia inter ea. stat distinctio virtualis aequipollens illi actuali’.

formally distinct from being, *verum* and *bonum* are only rationally so. The rule, included in Javelli's account of the formalist system (as quoted above), that there is formal distinction between 'property and subject', is cited as one argument for the formal distinction between *ens* and *unum*, but no reason is provided why this same rule should not apply in the cases of *verum* and *bonum* (Javelli 1568, 735a–736a).

Regarding Javelli's teaching on the distinction between being and the transcendentals, the reader is thus left with an impression of inconclusiveness. His thought on the subject and on distinctions in general seems to have evolved. Between his view of the Scotist *distinctio ex natura rei* in the *Tractatus de transcendentibus* and his view of the same distinction in his *quaestio* on divine perfections clearly lies his preoccupation with Brulefer's summary of the formalist system of distinctions. Javelli may already have had a look at Brulefer's short *Treatise on the formalities* when writing the *quaestio* on the transcendentals in book IV of his metaphysical *Quaestiones*, but then postponed a deeper investigation of the formalist views until his discussion of theological matters in book XII. This hypothesis of an evolution in Javelli's thought, and indeed knowledge of the Scotist tradition, provides us with the most likely explanation for the discrepancy between his expressed views on distinctions.¹⁸

7.5 Scotism and Thomism: Conflict or Conciliation?

In this final section, I shall provide some historical background that may help us assess Javelli's originality in his engagement with the Scotist doctrine of distinctions. The only Thomist author to whom Javelli refers in his *quaestio* on divine perfections is John Capreolus. As we have seen, important elements of Javelli's discussion are borrowed from this French Thomist. Not only that, the references to Averroes and Avicenna reported above are found already in Capreolus, as well; and when Capreolus states that the divine attributes are called '*designationes*' by al-Ghazali, '*dispositiones*' by Averroes, and '*proprietates*' by Avicenna (or rather, by their Latin translators), Javelli follows him closely (Capreolus 1589, 227b; Javelli 1568, 892a). Interestingly, the later Jesuit theologian Théophile Raynaud (1583–1663) noted Javelli's dependence on Capreolus in this regard.¹⁹ More

¹⁸Notably, this hypothesis has implications for the dating of the *Tractatus de transcendentibus*. The date of composition of this opusculum remains unknown. No separate edition is listed in Tavuzzi 1991, 114; it was only printed in posthumously published collections of works by Javelli. It seems unlikely that Javelli would first develop his differentiated conciliatory stance on the Thomist and Scotist theories of distinctions and then later go back to the idea of a simple opposition between the two; hence, the *Tractatus* clearly predates the *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (revised and completed in January of 1532; see the references in the introductory section). The fact that the *Tractatus* is referenced in the latter work seems to confirm this hypothesis of relative chronology; see Javelli 1568, 735b.

¹⁹Raynaud 1622, 601b (speaking of the divine attributes): '[A]pud Commentatorem vocantur *dispositiones*, apud Avicennam *proprietates*, apud Algazelem *designationes*, ut advertit Iavellus 12. Met. q. 19. post Capreol. in 1. d. 8. q. 4. concl. 1. *in fine*.' Italics as in the original.

importantly, though, Javelli's *quaestio* on divine perfections is partially modelled on Capreolus' *quaestio* on the same topic in his *Commentary on the Sentences* I, d. 8, q. 4, which opens with two *conclusiones* that (1) all the divine attributes are really one in God (*omnia [...] attributa sunt omnino unum re in Deo*), yet (2) distinct in the mind (*divina attributa distinguuntur ratione*) (Capreolus 1589, 227a–b). Javelli deviates from Capreolus, not only by speaking of a 'formal and rational distinction', but also by engaging with the formalist system of distinctions; it is fair to say that his *quaestio* is constructed using elements from Brulefer and Capreolus. Javelli, however, due to his preoccupation with the formalist distinctions, arrives at a rather different view from that of Capreolus about the compatibility of Scotus' and Aquinas' approaches to distinctions in things divine. Capreolus reports, and thoroughly refutes, no less than 16 arguments by 'Scotus and his followers' (*Scotus et sequaces*) against his first conclusion; generally, the Scotist idea of a *distinctio ex natura rei* is here considered as a negation of the real unity of the divine essence and its attributes (Capreolus 1589, 229b–230b and 237a–241b). Set up in this way, the discussion hardly leaves room for any conciliation between the Thomist and Scotist approaches to the subject under debate.

Among Renaissance Thomists, Javelli was not alone in his interest in the formalist system of distinctions. Some Thomists even went much further in their engagement with the formalist literature and indeed contributed to this literature themselves. The German Dominican, later turned Reformer, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541) and the two Italian Dominicans, Bartolomeo Manzoli († c. 1525) and Mattia Gibboni da Aquario († 1591), each composed a Thomist 'treatise on the formalities' (Karlstadt 1508; Manzoli 1518; Aquario 1605). We should note that it was not unusual at all for members of other schools than the Scotist to engage with the formalist tradition; we find the same phenomenon, e.g., in Renaissance Lullism (Andersen and Barceló 2022). The engagement of the Thomists just mentioned, as well as Javelli, with Scotist formalism thus attests to the latter's presence in the mainstream scholastic philosophy of the period. Among the Thomists, there does not seem to have been any concerted effort to confront the formalist doctrines. In the material under investigation here, Javelli does not show any awareness of the works on distinctions by Karlstadt or Manzoli nor does he seem to have had any particular influence on Aquario.²⁰

In the case of Manzoli's *Formalitates secundum viam Sancti Thome*, Javelli's lack of interest is somewhat puzzling. After all, Manzoli – like Javelli – was a former student in the Dominican *Studium generale* at Bologna and had his *Formalitates* printed in that city in 1518 (Tavuzzi 1993, 111), the year Javelli himself began as *magister regens* in the Bolognese *Studium generale* (Tavuzzi 1990, 471). In the preface to this work, Manzoli bluntly states that someone ignorant of 'formalities' (*formalitates*), understood as synonymous with formalist literature and its preoccupation with distinctions, is not truly educated and in fact resembles unformed

²⁰Instead, an example of Javelli's influence is found in the Calvinist tradition: Alsted 1613, 239–240, quotes all of Javelli's account of the totally subjective and the totally objective distinctions, including Javelli's assessment of the Thomist view of the totally objective distinction; Alsted explicitly refers to Javelli.

matter; moreover, knowledge of ‘formalities’ perfects and decorates the human soul.²¹ Thus, even though Javelli ignores this treatise, if Manzoli’s view of the importance of formalist distinction theory may be seen as an indication of the centrality of this topic among Bolognese Thomists around 1518, then it is not so surprising that Javelli, too, became interested and included a discussion of the topic in his metaphysical *Quaestiones*.

In comparison with Javelli, Manzoli displays a much less conciliatory approach to the formalist doctrine of distinctions. He polemically calls the separation of *res* and *realitas* (equivalent to *formalitas*) chimerical and arbitrary as well as a Scotist invention and fabrication (*distinctio inter rem et realitatem chymerica est ac voluntaria et a solis Scotistis inventa et fabricata*); it allows for a multitude of real items in God, something that is wholly alien to ‘the common way of all theologians and philosophers’ (*divertit a communi via omnium aliorum theologorum ac philosophorum*) and that in itself is wrong (*in se falsa est*) (Manzoli 1518, 57^b; similarly *ibid.*, 28^b). Manzoli has a correspondingly negative view of the formal distinction. It may be divided into a ‘real formal distinction’ (*distinctio formalis realis*) and a distinction that is due to an intellectual operation and hence is ‘only rational’ (*distinctio [...] formalis que est rationis tantum*) (Manzoli 1518, 40^a). The Thomists accept the latter, but certainly not the former (Manzoli 1518, 41^{b–v}a). However, if there is only a rational distinction among God’s attributes, it may be difficult to explain how it is that God’s will, after all, is not God’s intellect. Recall that Javelli’s reply to this challenge was that the virtual distinction is either ‘sufficiently actual’ or else is ‘equivalent’ to an actual distinction and thus may cause the actual effect of a distinction among the divine attributes. Manzoli, by contrast, refers to Cajetan’s explanation: this distinction does indeed have an actual cause, but the actual cause in question is not itself a distinction but rather ‘something that virtually contains a distinction’ (*continens virtualiter distinctionem*) (Manzoli 1518, 41^a; Cajetan 1888, 398a; *STh* I, q. 39, a. 1, comm.). The difference in approach between Javelli and Manzoli becomes manifest in their respective replies to the challenge of explaining the actual cause of the distinction among the divine attributes.

The Dominican Karlstadt is known to have developed a keen interest in Scotism during his professorship in theology at Wittenberg, and prior to joining the Protestant reform movement (Bubenheimer 1977, 16–19). When he wrote his *Distinctiones Thomistarum*, he was still a *baccalaureus*, and a Thomist. Yet, the tone in this work is already quite conciliatory. The young Karlstadt thus finds both that the difference between Scotus and Aquinas is not as great as many believe (Karlstadt 1508, 4^v; Bolliger 2003, 361), and that the formal distinction should not necessarily be rejected *in via Thomae* (Karlstadt 1508, 10^r). His most original contribution lies in his extensive discussions of various kinds of real and rational distinctions; his discussions are clearly inspired by the formalist idea of a multitude of distinctions, but

²¹ Manzoli 1518, unpaginated *3^v: ‘Nam qui formalitates ignorat quamvis animi viribus excellat, is mihi tantum a docto viro distare videtur, quantum rudis et informis materia ab ea quae arte elaborata praestantissimam formam accepit, perficiunt siquidem formalitates animum nostrum atque condecorant non secus ac forma materiam’.

Karlstadt develops his distinctions in exchange with a wide range of Thomist authors from Hervaeus Natalis to Capreolus and Cajetan, and also his own Thomist teachers in the *Bursa Montis* at Cologne (Karlstadt 1508, 8^r). Bartolomeo Manzoli, too, makes significant adjustments in the formalist system, e.g., calling the ‘totally objective distinction’ a ‘totally univocal distinction’ (*distinctio totaliter univoce*) and placing it before the ‘totally subjective distinction’; he cites the doctrine of the univocity of the concept of being and its non-quidditative predication of its properties and ultimate differences as one source of disagreement between Scotism and Thomism (Manzoli 1518, 47^ra). Manzoli clearly understood that when this doctrine is abandoned, there is indeed no reason to regard this kind of distinction as the one with the broadest scope in the list of distinctions. The doctrine of univocation is dismissed in the same way as the Scotist teaching on ‘formalities’: it is against common philosophical doctrine (Manzoli 1518, 46^vb).

Of the authors considered, it is Mattia Aquario who most thoroughly reworks the formalist system in order to make it comply with Thomist metaphysics. In his posthumously published *Formalitates iuxta doctrinam Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae Aquinatis*, he first presents different views on the number of distinctions: Scotists assume eight distinctions (the seven formalist distinctions and a modal distinction); Nominalists assume three kinds of distinctions (a formal and a real distinction as well as the *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*); Aquinas acknowledges only two kinds of distinctions, one real and one rational, but employs them in a variety of ways painstakingly enumerated by Aquario, resulting in a list of no less than nine kinds of distinctions in total: two rational distinctions, seven real distinctions – plus one Thomist modal distinction whose status – real or rational? – is left undetermined (Aquario 1605, 2–4). Aquario devotes one chapter to each of his distinctions (Aquario 1605, 4–22), and then, in a separate chapter, explains how his Thomist distinctions relate to the formalist ones; generally speaking, the distinctions proposed by the formalists ‘either may be reduced’ to those in Aquario’s own list, ‘or else are equivalent to nothing’.²² Unlike Javelli, Aquario thus does not compare the Scotist and the Thomist views of distinctions in order to detect their overlap, but rather – quite originally – attempts to replace the formalist system of distinctions with one based on Thomist metaphysics. It is worth mentioning here that Aquario, in another of his works, strongly opposes the view – advocated by Javelli – that Scotus and Aquinas with regard to univocity and analogy differ only in terminology (Aquario 1584, 185); on this matter, Aquario sides with the Thomist Dominic of Flanders (Tavuzzi 1993, 119; D’Ettore 2018).

In comparison with the other Thomists considered here, with the exception of Karlstadt, Javelli stands out as much more focused on conciliation and fruitful exchange with the Scotist tradition. Often enough, though, he distances himself from Scotist teachings. Just to mention one example of direct relevance for distinction theory, Javelli – like Manzoli, as seen above – rebuts the Scotist core

²²Aquario 1605, 24: ‘Patet ergo ex dictis, quot sunt species distinctionum apud S. Thomam; caeterae vero quas aliqui formalizantes introducunt, vel reducuntur ad supradictas, vel aequivalent nihilo’.

metaphysical assumption that being is not predicated quidditatively of its properties and ultimate differences (Javelli 1568, 737b–738b; similarly *ibid.*, 735b; further examples may be found in Karl Werner’s survey study mentioned in the introduction). Regarding his conciliatory approach to distinctions, one striking resemblance to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s view on the matter, as expressed in his famous *900 Theses* of 1486, still needs to be addressed. Among the theses that Pico gathered and wished to debate at his planned but, due to papal intervention, cancelled philosophical disputation at Rome, we find the following two:

Regarding the distinction *ex natura rei* the Thomists and Scotists need not disagree, if they understand their doctors on a fundamental level.

Regarding the distinction among [divine] attributes Thomas and Scotus do not disagree.²³

Pico’s view of the fundamental agreement between the Angelic Doctor and the Subtle Doctor regarding divine attributes is not that uncommon among Renaissance and early modern authors (Sarnano 1590/1911, 15–16, and the list of authors in favour of this view in Raynaud 1622, 606a). We should therefore hesitate to assume any direct influence of Pico upon Javelli. As Amos Edelheit has shown, however, navigating between Thomism and Scotism, the two most important scholastic schools of the period, was, in fact, a central issue for Pico (Edelheit 2007, 531–532; also Edelheit 2022). Recently, Brian P. Copenhaver has likewise emphasised both the scholastic nature of Pico’s own thought and his special interest in Aquinas and Scotus (Copenhaver 2022, 242). In his *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, Pico, drawing on his *Theses*, states – in terms which may seem overly general to modern critical readers – that there is overall agreement between Scotus and Aquinas (Pico della Mirandola 1942, 146). It is not impossible that Javelli was aware of Pico’s opinion, especially given his broad interest in contemporaneous thought, as seen in other contexts (see Cordonier and De Robertis 2021, 68–70; De Robertis 2022), as well as his, in Tavuzzi’s words, ‘unusually intense interest in Plato’s ethics’ (Tavuzzi 1990, 470–471). Javelli’s interest in Plato, of course, is not at all unusual for the period, but it is for a Thomist – and it is an interest that he has in common with Pico. Werner already, in his book from 1887, identified Javelli’s reverence for Plato as a crucial factor that sets his thought apart from Cajetan’s vision of Thomism as a Christian kind of Aristotelianism (Werner 1887, 158–164). At any rate, Javelli’s conciliatory approach in his discussion of the distinction between the divine perfections does seem to be closer at least in spirit to Pico’s concordist project than to any conservative Thomism.

²³ Pico della Mirandola 1998, 366: ‘De distinctione ex natura rei non debent discordare Thomistae et Scotistae, si suos doctores fundamentaliter intelligant’; ‘De attributorum distinctione non discordant Thomas et Scotus’.

7.6 Conclusion

Let me now return to Karl Werner's observation, mentioned in the introduction, that the chief purpose of Javelli's *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is to argue with the Scotists, rather than with other Thomists. Javelli's discussion of the distinction among divine attributes confirms this observation; yet, it also shows that the matter is slightly more complicated in that the argument Javelli does have with other Thomists, in this specific context, exactly concerns the compatibility of core doctrines of Thomism and Scotism. We may thus notice that Javelli uses his insights from his engagement with the formalist distinctions to relativise Capreolus' negative view of Duns Scotus' *distinctio ex natura rei*. Javelli's syncretistic approach to distinction theory further confirms the impression conveyed by his remark on the compatibility of the Scotist and Thomist views of the univocity vs. analogy of the concept of being. We have seen that other Renaissance Thomists were interested in formalist literature as well. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, Bartolomeo Manzoli, and Mattia Gibboni da Aquario all contributed to this literature by writing Thomist treatises on the 'formalities'. In comparison with these authors, especially with Manzoli and Aquario, Javelli in his approach stands out as more conciliatory; indeed, his view of the compatibility of Scotus and Aquinas has a parallel in Pico della Mirandola's concordist approach to scholastic philosophy.

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