
Miscellanea Philosophica, Volume 2 (Latin Edition)

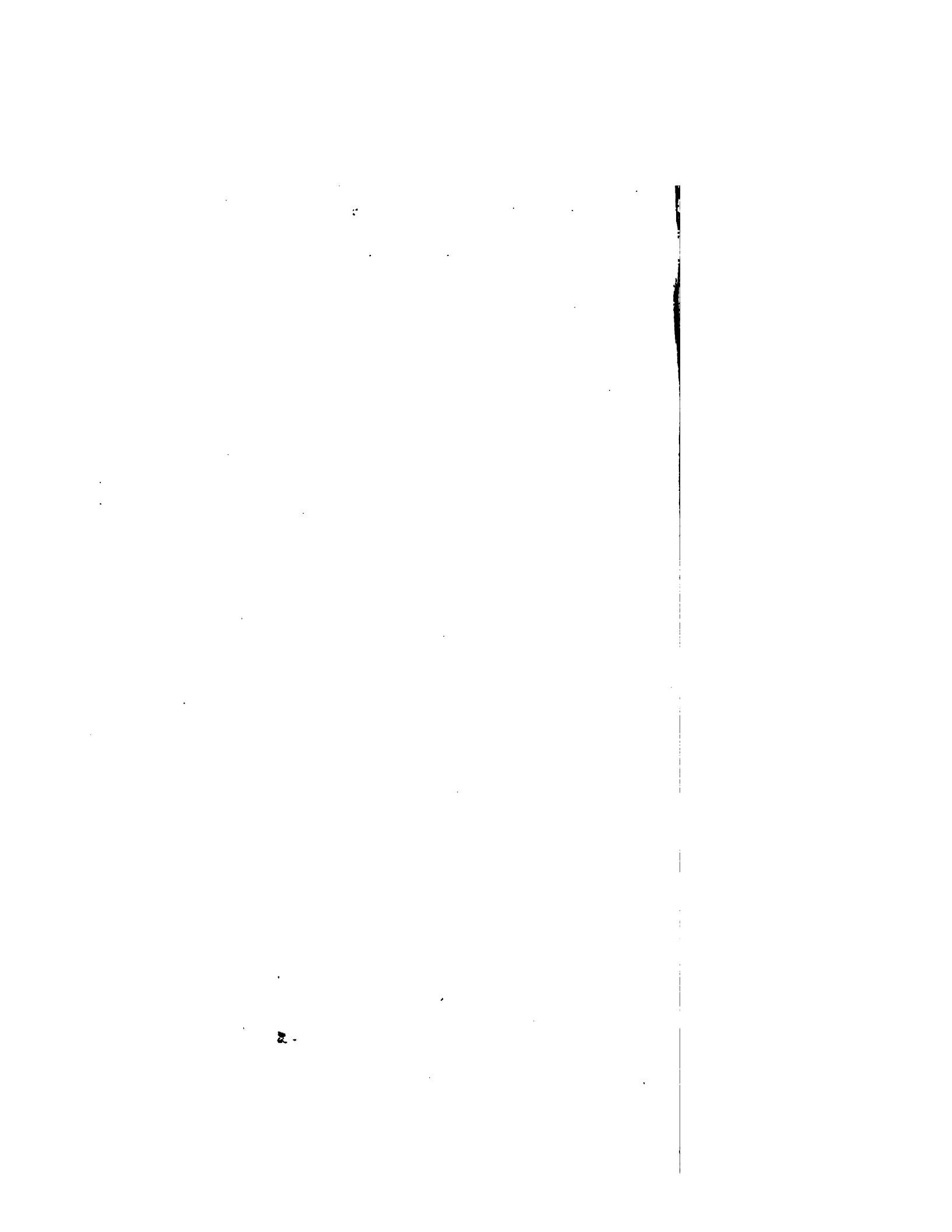
Wycliffe John

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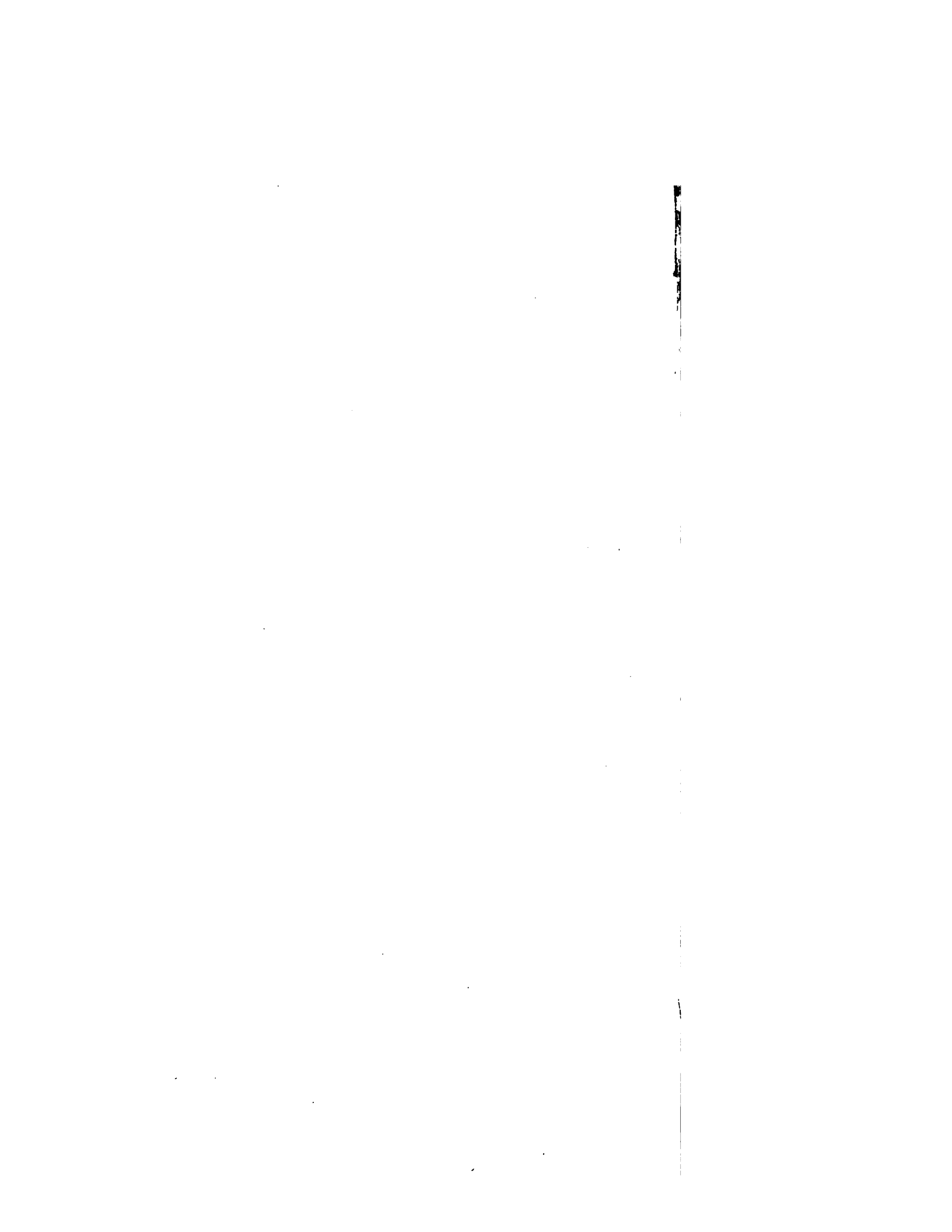
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JOHANNIS WYCLIF

MISCELLANEA PHILOSOPHICA.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING DE UNIVERSALIBUS
FRAGMENTA
NOTAE ET QUAESTIONES VARIAE
DE MATERIA.

NOW FIRST EDITED FROM THE MSS. UNIV. PRAG. IV. H. 9.,
AND III. G. 10.

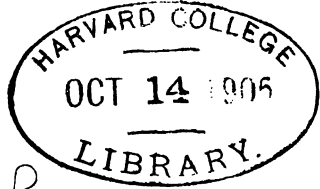
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Lowell J. Gould
(II)

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INTRODUCTION.

The present volume of Wyclif's *Miscellanea Philosophica*, which with the works already published contains all his philosophical writings, whether spurious, doubtful, or authentic, with the exception of his great work *De Ente*, is not less interesting than the first, but presents fewer new points of interest. All that I wrote concerning Wyclif's philosophy in my Introductory Essay to the first volume applies of course to the second, as it may also be truly said to apply to every one of his works. It will therefore be unnecessary to write a very elaborate Introduction; a few remarks concerning the manuscripts, their authenticity and date, and the analysis of the text of each work, seems to be sufficient.

I would however point out, in regard to possible shortcomings and mistakes, that I have been still worse off for the editing of this volume than for the former one. In the first, it is true, *De Actibus Animæ* was copied from the only manuscript extant; but for the *Replisatio de Universalibus* I had two, and for the *De Materia et Forma* as many as five manuscripts to consult. But in the editing of the present volume I have had in every case to do with unique manuscripts; which of course immensely increased my labours and difficulties. Add to this the fact that the writing is in both MSS. very careless and illegible, as much so as (I will not say, more than) the worst specimens I have met with in *Logica* or elsewhere; and occasional slips will, I hope, be readily accounted for and forgiven. Mr. Matthew has, as ever, been ready with his unfailing help and suggestions, some of much worth, of which I have been glad and thankful to avail myself. My hearty thanks are also due to Dr. Furnivall, who though anxious to see the volume terminated as soon as possible, and doing his best to hasten its slow progress through the press, has nevertheless understood my position, and the conflicting claims of speed and thoroughness, which I have indeed attempted to conciliate as well as I could.

I. The Manuscripts, authenticity and dates of the works.

De Universalibus and *Fragmenta* take up from f. 193^b to f. 259^b of MS. IV. H. G. of Prague University. *Notae* extends from f. 1^a to the end of f. 4^b (Univ. Prag. III. G. 10), with the exception of 1^b and the greater part of 2^a, which has already been published (see Note, p. 158). *De Materia* begins with f. 135^a of the same MS. and ends on f. 139^b. A full description of both the MSS. will be found in the *Miscellanea Philosophica*, Introduction, pp. LXIX, LXX.

As to their authenticity, we must first state that only *De Universalibus* and *De Materia* are noticed in Shirley's catalogue; I copied the others in Vienna, on the chance that they might be portions of the lost works of Wyclif, and acting under Dr. Furnivall's advice. There are a few peculiarities about *De Universalibus* which differentiate it from the other works of Wyclif. One is the great number of mistakes in grammar, some of which seem certainly ascribable to the writer and not to the copyist; another is the frequent recurrence of certain expressions (such, for instance, as *cum tunc*) which are rare in the other works. The writer's attitude towards the Roman Church (see p. 11, l. 30—35) and his assertion that God can, if He chooses, preserve accidents in being without their subjects (p. 78, l. 29—33) — an assertion which Wyclif, even in so early a treatise as *De Actibus Animae*, assailed with great vigour — may also incline us to doubt whether this tractate was really by him, although by far the greater part of his philosophical system is to be found therein. But we recognize here, not only the doctrine, but the power and subtlety of Wyclif; and the old argument: If not by Wyclif, then by whom? naturally presents itself since we know of no Realist contemporary worthy of mention by his side. As to the above stated points, they are easily answered if we note (p. 137) that the writer excuses himself for his inexperience which has made him diffuse, and write, he says, "satis pueriliter". And a few lines lower he again alludes, not without a touch of pride, to his "pueriles deductiones". If we assume that we have here Wyclif's very earliest work extant, mistakes of grammar, awkwardness of repeated expressions, orthodoxy as concerns Rome, and even his belief in "absolute accidents" are all explained. For my own part, I have no doubt that the work is authentic.

De Materia is so mutilated that it is difficult to form any judgment at all concerning it. Its authenticity, so far as I can see, amounts to this: We have no reason to believe that it is not by Wyclif, since it is his doctrine, and written in a style indistinguishable from his. It is true (see Note, p. 170) that a work ascribed to Johannes Huss de Hussynetz has the "incipit" and the first page, but the first page only, identical with this work. But Huss, as has been amply shown by Dr. Loserth more than once, was what we moderns would call a plagiarist of Wyclif; and the circumstance that only the first page is identical seems rather to show that Huss borrowed it from the present tractate, and that this tractate is by his master's hand.

Fragmenta, as I found when copying the last lines (p. 156, l. 16—17) are by another author. Nevertheless, these fragments are quite in their place here. They were evidently written by some disciple, who in all probability copied them with insignificant additions from some of the lost works of Wyclif.

Notae et Quaestiones Variæ have about as much authenticity as *De Materia*, save that *De Materia* alone is mentioned in Shirley's Catalogue. A point in their favour is also the fact that one of these "Notae" is identical with one of the *Quaestiones Tredecim*, already published with *De Compositione Hominis*.

We may set aside the question of the dates of these last short tractates as impossible to answer, but that of *De Universalibus* may be approximately fixed. Granting that it is by Wyclif, it is certainly earlier than *De Actibus Animæ*, itself earlier than *Logica*. The admission of "Absolute Accidents", already mentioned, which Wyclif combated during the whole of his subsequent career, seems to be a sufficient proof of this; besides, there are indications here and there in the work that the cosmological system of "punctal atoms", so carefully elaborated in *Logica*, which (as we have elsewhere shown) clashes with the idea of accidents separated from a substance and finally comes into collision with the doctrine of Transubstantiation itself, was not yet fully developed. As I showed in *Miscellanea*, vol. I, p. XXXIII, *De Actibus Animæ* was not much, if at all, anterior to Wyclif's Mastership at Balliol College. It is very probable that the present work was written by him when an undergraduate; though of course the precise date cannot be ascertained.

II. Analysis of the *De Universalibus*.

Chapter I. (pp. 1—6.) Wyclif begins by proving the existence of Real Universals from the doctrine of Divine Ideas, or ideal archetypes of all created things, eternally existent in God. It is probable that this proof, placed first here, was also first in order of time amongst the reasons which led to his conversion to Realism from the prevailing Nominalism of the Oxford Schools. The discrepancy, not to say the contradiction, between the doctrine of the World of Archetypes (so general amongst the early Fathers that it was almost a dogma of the Church, so universally admitted that St. Augustine did not hesitate to say: "He who denies them is an infidel") and the tenets of Nominalism, must have struck Wyclif from the first. For these patterns of things, or Archetypes, where and what are they? They are in God's mind, and therein endowed with eternal existence and reality; they correspond to the many individuals in the created world — the Ideal man to the multitude of created man, and so forth: therefore they are Universals. To deny them were to stand convicted of infidelity by the authority of Augustine; but as soon as Wyclif's youthful mind accepted them, he accepted them with all the consequences that he thought they contained. God certainly knows man not only as this or that particular man, but in his essence as a human being; and all other beings likewise (p. 2, l. 20 to p. 3, l. 25). This cannot be identical with the essence of any individual as known by God, since it applies equally to all individuals, and they therefore cannot be its proper and distinct object. What then is that distinct object? It can be nothing else but Created Humanity, eternally known by God as Creatable Humanity. And if the Idea is of something, surely it is of something real; and if the Idea of the Particular and of the Universal Man are distinct, no doubt the Particular and the Universal Man must be distinct also, unless we deny truth to these Divine Ideas (p. 3, l. 25 to p. 4, l. 5). These, having for objects things which are distinct, must be distinct one from another, though not from God (p. 4, l. 4—14); must be distinct from their objects, since the copy cannot be the same as the pattern (*ib.*, l. 14—22), and cannot be denied, if we admit that God knows all things from all eternity (*ib.*, l. 22—38).

Chapter II. The Divine Essence is as it were a mirror in which all possible created things are reflected, and this reflection is the Ideal

World. This must be admitted unless we refuse to believe in God's omniscience (p. 6, l. 1—28). God's knowledge must be of something necessarily existing, since His knowledge exists necessarily; if then this object be not the Ideal World, it must be the world as we know it, our world: but this does not exist necessarily. Each created being is distinct from others, and so has a distinct intelligibility; the Divine Essence cannot by itself be identical with all these different objects. As one seal stamps only one species of impression, so God must have other patterns besides His Essence to stamp the multitude of creatures with (ib., l. 28, 29; p. 7, l. 1—35). It is absurd to say that an Infinite Artist requires no model for His creations. On the contrary, the greater the artist, the more perfect his mental pattern is (p. 8, l. 7—15). Only in the case of a finite artist the mental pattern is not eternal; with the Infinite Artist, it is eternal or is not at all (ib., l. 15—38). The distinctness of God's knowledge of all things in Himself implies a multitude of ideas; if there were only a few, or one, the knowledge would be confused. And what of God's knowledge of things that never were, nor will be, but only might be? The object of that knowledge must be in Himself, or not exist at all. We must therefore admit an Ideal World, if we admit that anything can exist (p. 9, l. 1—60).

Note by the way that Wyclif here openly admits the possibility of things that never are nor will be. As we have shown elsewhere, this is in conflict with this more matured system. Even in the present work (Ch. XXI, p. 131) we find Wyclif asserting that every Universal must at some time or other *exist in its own proper form*; and yet more clearly (p. 137) that every species must at some time or other really exist. He had not yet extended his conclusion to every possible *particular* being; but the drift of his argument was already leading him that way.

Chapter III. Wyclif here adds several remarks, designed to forestall objections which might be made to his doctrine of an Ideal World. It contains in itself a vast multitude of forms that differ really amongst themselves, and may therefore be called different realities in God; although the Catholic faith allows us only to call the Three Divine Persons Things (*res*). Their difference is not, like that of the Three Persons, a numerical difference (so at least I understand the term *suppositaliter*, p. 10, l. 34, though it may be understood as a difference of subject, *supposition*), nor of essence, like that of God and His