



## **Core vocabulary and its variance in the early fourteenth-century Latin distinction collections**

**Sanna Supponen**

### Abstract:

The article aims to identify which kinds of words the early fourteenth-century distinction collections provided as material for sermon-making and whether those collections differ from similar earlier ones. The study focuses on three large-scale collections: Mathias of Linköping's *Alphabetum dictincionum*, Petrus Berchorius's *Repertorium morale*, and Arnaud Royard's *Distinctiones*. The article shows that the core of their vocabulary was common verbs and nouns of the Bible. Still, these compilers provided a greater variety of words than their colleagues in previous centuries. The article also demonstrates some variance between the three collections, which results from compilers' interests and their sources. In addition, the article points out a methodological challenge in comparing lemmatised headwords with computational methods. A relatively low correlation between the vocabularies may result because the compilers distinguished meanings of various lexemes from the same root under a single entry, but chose only some of them as headwords.

**Keywords:** Preaching; distinctiones; 14th century; lexicography; lemmatisation

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# Core vocabulary and its variance in the early fourteenth-century Latin distinction collections

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## Introduction

The article studies similarities and variances in the vocabularies of large-scale biblical distinction collections (*distinctiones*) in the early fourteenth century. Distinction collections were reference works that distinguished (*distinguere*) various meanings of a word or a theme.<sup>1</sup> The meanings were verified with authorial sources, typically biblical commentaries. Studying this kind of preaching aids helps us understand how sermons were put together and what material preachers had at hand.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of vocabulary may reveal similarities and differences in what was seen as suitable material for sermon-making. As the compilers of the distinction collections sought to discuss words they understood to be essential biblical vocabulary, their word choices tell us something about their values and attitudes towards specific themes.<sup>3</sup>

After the introduction of the first collections in the twelfth century, the difference between the collections' format and their content constantly changed.<sup>4</sup> We still lack a general survey of the whole genre and an agreement of its generic features that all collections share, if any, besides the fact that the collections consist of *distinctiones*. Our knowledge of later collections, in particular, is significantly lacking. Scholarship has focused on the genre's founding in the twelfth century as well as the widespread and popular collections of the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Those collections were more coherent in content and appearance than the later ones; later collections sometimes remind one of compendia of preaching materials. The number of entries also varied from a few hundred to several thousand. In this article, I focus on the large-scale collections with more than 900 headwords. I have chosen collections that were intended for use other than personal. Many later collections were private or otherwise circulated more locally than their earlier counterparts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the definition of the genre, see e.g. Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, 260–63; Ainonen, "Making New from Old: Distinction Collections and Textual Communities at the Turn of the Thirteenth Century," 49.

<sup>2</sup> Franco Giusberti argues that these collections could be used to study the development of ideas in general. Giusberti, *Materials for a Study on Twelfth Century Scholasticism*.

<sup>3</sup> On the word choices, see below.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Ainonen, "Manuscripts, Editions and Textual Interpretation: Alan of Lille's Distinction Collection Summa 'Quot Modis' and the Meaning of Words," 16–20; Wenzel, "Distinctiones and Sermons," 181–82; Delmas, "Les prologues de recueils de Distinctiones, le cas d'Arnaud Royard," 235–57.

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the earlier studies, see Barney, "Prefatio," in Petrus Cantor, *Distinctiones* Abel, ed. by Stephen A Barney, *Corpus Christianorum* (Turnhout: Brepols 2020), 23–24, note 22.

<sup>6</sup> This difference is evident in the number of surviving manuscripts. Petrus's *Repertorium* is only one of the fourteenth-century collections that have survived in more than five copies, while many earlier collections, such as Maurice de Provins's *Distinctiones* and Nicolas de Biard's *Distinctiones*, survive in several dozen copies. See the *Distinguo* database that lists surviving witnesses for each collection. *Distinguo*, dir. M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. (URL: <http://distinguo.huma-num.fr>, retrieved on 08/05/2025).

I argue that all large-scale collections share their vocabulary predominantly because they are based on the Bible. Yet, there are also certain features typical of fourteenth-century collections that differentiate them from most earlier collections. In addition, I show that there is variance between fourteenth-century collections that results from compilers' interests and sources.

The article also contributes to the methodological discussion of medieval lexicography. The common challenge in studying medieval vocabularies by computational methods is the variance in orthography and use of singular, plural or inflected word forms. The solution has been lemmatisation of headwords; various software has been developed to help with this, as datasets are often vast.<sup>7</sup> This article, however, shows that in the case of distinction collections, a comparison of lemmatised headwords does not give an exact picture of the difference between collections. It was typical of fourteenth-century collections to distinguish meanings of several lexemes from one family of words – words that share the same root – in one entry. The compilers did not typically announce all discussed words as headwords; one compiler could choose different lexemes as headwords than another compiler when discussing similar content. Therefore, the correspondence is relatively small if we compare only the lemmatised headwords between collections. To avoid the challenge that the variance in headwords creates, I suggest we should compare “root words” that stand for all lexemes that share the same root; the term does not appear in medieval sources, but it is used here to clarify the terminology.<sup>8</sup>

### **Large-scale fourteenth-century distinction collections and their compilers**

In this article, I compare three fourteenth-century collections, namely Arnaud Royard's (OFM, d. 1334) *Distinctiones super sacram scripturam* (hereafter *Distinctiones*), Petrus Berchorius's (OSB, c. 1290–1362) *Repertorium morale* (hereafter *Repertorium*), and Mathias of Linköping's (d. c. 1350) *Alphabetum distinccionum* (hereafter *Alphabetum*), with each other and with earlier distinction collections. The three collections were made around the same time, from the 1320s to the 1340s, and their compilers have a similar background in the study of theology in France in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Yet, there is no evidence that our three compilers knew or were influenced by each other. These three collections are selected because they share a common core of likeness that sets them apart from many other late medieval distinction collections. First, they do not seem to relate to specific occasions, such as a lecture series, but were made for a generic purpose and a broad audience. This is suggested by instructive prologues or epilogues, which offer guidance for the users of the collections.<sup>10</sup> Secondly and most importantly, they cover a comprehensive range of biblical vocabulary. Other collections of the

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. Verkerk et al., “L.A.S.L.A. and Collatinus: A Convergence in Lexica,” 99–108.

<sup>8</sup> For more about the relation of my method to medieval lexicography, see below.

<sup>9</sup> Samaran, “Pierre Bersuire,” 260; Delmas, “Les prologues de recueils de Distinctiones,” 237; Supponen, “Alphabetum distinccionum of Master Mathias of Linköping: Its Composition, Use and Literary Context,” 14–19.

<sup>10</sup> Arnaud Royard, *Distinctiones*, prologus, 248; Mathias Lincopensis, *Alphabetum distinccionum*, prologus, 145–47; Pierre Bersuire, *La collatio pro fine operis de Bersuire*, 149–70.

era are more selective in their word choices or comment only on a particular book of the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

Arnaud Royard was a French Franciscan prelate. He was highly educated in theology and wrote several theological works and sermons. At the time he wrote the *Distinctiones*, Arnaud was the archbishop of Salerno, and he dedicated the work to Robert of Anjou, the king of Jerusalem and Sicily. Arnaud's office and the dedication imply that the *Distinctiones* was finished between 1321 and 1332.<sup>12</sup> The work survives in at least five manuscripts. The transmission history of the work is not well known, but at least one of the copies was made outside of Italy, which suggests a broader distribution than a local one. The *Distinctiones* begins with a dedicatory prologue in which Arnaud explains the collection's purpose, content, and structure.

Petrus Berchorius (Pierre Bersuire) was a French scholar who was a Franciscan in his youth but entered the Benedictine order in the 1330s. He worked in the papal court in Avignon from the early 1320s until around 1349. During his time in Avignon, he compiled the *Repertorium*. The work comprises *distinctiones* but also other material for preaching. He dedicated the work to his protector in the papal court, the cardinal Pierre Desprès (in office 1320–1361). The first version of the work is dated approximately between 1335 and 1342. Around 1359, Petrus re-edited the work and furnished the second version with an epilogue called *Collacio pro fine operis*. In the epilogue, Petrus explains his intentions for compiling the *Repertorium* and describes the composition of the collection.<sup>13</sup> The *Repertorium* was the most popular of the three collections: the work circulated in at least twenty copies around Europe.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, how the copies relate to one another has not been studied.

Magister Mathias of Linköping (Mats Övidsson) is one of the most famous Swedish scholars from the late Middle Ages. Mathias was a canon of Linköping Cathedral and a confessor of Saint Birgitta of Sweden. He wrote four theological works, mainly for preaching purposes. The *Alphabetum* was likely finished from c. 1343 to c. 1350 when Mathias was active in the Linköping diocese in southeastern Sweden. The *Alphabetum* is not only a distinction collection, as it also includes concordance and encyclopaedic material, but the majority of the content is *distinctiones*.<sup>15</sup> Mathias connects his work to the tradition of distinction collections in the prologue of the *Alphabetum*, in which he states that he intends to distinguish the vocabulary of the Bible according to the four senses of biblical interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

The *Alphabetum* is known from two mid-fourteenth-century copies, MS Vadstena and MS Linköping.<sup>17</sup> They both originate from the Linköping diocese, suggesting that the work circulated only locally. Yet, in my doctoral thesis, which provides an overview of the work, I argued that the instructive prologue of the *Alphabetum* suggests it was

<sup>11</sup> E.g. John Lathbury's *Distinctiones* is a relatively compact collection and was put together from John's lectures by someone other than John himself. Wenzel, "Distinctiones and Sermons," 184–85.

<sup>12</sup> Delmas, "Les prologues de recueils de Distinctiones," 236–41.

<sup>13</sup> Samaran, "Pierre Bersuire," 259–301, 350–51; Rivers, "Another Look at the Career of Pierre Bersuire, O.S.B.," 93–97; Bijl, "Berchoriana," 155.

<sup>14</sup> Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum medii aevi*, no 6425–27.

<sup>15</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distincionum," 88–89, 105–11.

<sup>16</sup> Mathias Lincopensis, *Alphabetum distincionum, prologus*, 145–47.

<sup>17</sup> See the list of shelf marks of surviving leaves in Supponen, "Alphabetum distincionum," 192–202.

intended for a wider audience rather than for personal use.<sup>18</sup> Both copies survive as fragments because they were recycled during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as covers for the Swedish royal administration's account books. The better-surviving copy, once owned by Vadstena Abbey, is known from 88 fragments that cover around a quarter of the work's original content.<sup>19</sup>

## Sources and methods

In the analysis, I utilise data from the *Distinguo* database, which supplies the table of contents for distinction collections. Today, the database includes material from thirty-five collections from the twelfth century to the fifteenth century.<sup>20</sup> I also utilised the manuscripts named in the database to verify the data and compare the table of contents with the content. In addition, the prologues of the collections offer valuable information on compilers' views on word choices.

The material in typical distinction collections is organised in thematic entries provided with one or more headwords. The entries follow principally an alphabetical order, but not in such an absolute alphabetical order as we understand today. In our three late-medieval collections, however, the alphabetisation is not done only by the alphabet but also by a derivative method that groups words into families, in which the original word (*principalis* or *primitivus*) or root word, often a verb, is followed by other lexemes from the same root, regarded as its derivatives (*derivationes*). This organisation was used in various lexical works.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the fact that headword choices between collections vary, similar material can constitute one or more entries depending on the collection. For instance, as Appendix 2 illustrates, Petrus has a single entry, *Sternere, stratus*; Arnaud has two entries, *Sternere* and *Stratum*; and Mathias has three entries, *Sternere*, *Stratus*, and *Stratorium, stramentum*. Displaying words in separate entries may have been a practical solution or a way to highlight their importance. The words that have gained a separate entry often appear frequently in the Bible or have some specific meaning.

The analysis is divided into two parts. First, I compare specific features of the vocabularies of fourteenth-century collections with those of their earlier counterparts. These features are the number of headwords, the choice of various parts of speech, and the practice of combining several lexemes in a single entry. I use as a reference material seven earlier collections that include more than 900 headwords, so that they are at a similar scale to our three fourteenth-century collections. The data is compiled from the *Distinguo* database and provided in table form in Appendix 1. The number of headwords may have varied from manuscript copy to copy, and as noted below, the numbers given in the database result from the interpretation of modern scholarship. Although the numbers are not exact, they provide a sense of the size of the collections.

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<sup>18</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 87–89.

<sup>19</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Distinguo*, dir. M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. (URL: <http://distinguo.huma-num.fr/about.php>, retrieved on 08/05/2025).

<sup>21</sup> Weijers, "Lexicography in the Middle Ages," 140–43, 147; Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, 247–48. The term sometimes overlaps with etymology, but in the works in question, the grouping seems to relate purely to grammatical similarities.

Secondly, I compare the vocabularies of the three fourteenth-century collections in more detail. I analyse the “root words”, which means that I treat the lexemes from the same root as one variable, because comparing the headwords does not always expose the difference in the vocabulary. In our distinction collections, several lexemes are often combined in a single entry, but they are not necessarily named as headwords. Therefore, two entries with different headwords can discuss similar content. For example, the *Repertorium* and the *Alphabetum* include an entry with the headwords *timor*, *timere*. At the same time, the *Distinctiones* provides an entry with a single headword, *timor*, but both verb and noun appear in its *distinctiones*.<sup>22</sup> This method of comparing the “root words” shows thematic variance, but naturally, it does not reveal detailed differences in individual word choices.

The method also resolves the problem that each table of contents in the *Distinguo* database is more or less a result of scholarly interpretation of what constitutes a separate entry and what words are included in its headwords. In some cases, the table of contents can be derived directly from the manuscripts because the headwords are either announced at the beginning of the entry or the manuscript includes an index of headwords. Both apply to the case of the *Repertorium*. In other cases, such as the *Alphabetum* and the *Distinctiones*, more interpretation is needed to make the table of contents. In the *Alphabetum*’s case, the headwords are announced at the beginning of the entry, but because of the condition of the manuscripts, they are often lost. In my thesis, I reconstructed a significant part of the *Alphabetum*’s vocabulary by combining the headwords named in surviving leaves with the information provided by the contents and cross-references between entries. The reconstructed table of contents names headwords for 1598 entries, which is around half of the estimated original number of entries.<sup>23</sup> Yet, regarding headwords identified from cross-references, whether the lexeme has formed an entry or been part of some multiple headword entry is unclear. In the case of the *Distinctiones*, Arnaud does not always name the headwords at the beginning of the entry but provides them as part of a short clause; sometimes, the words discussed are mentioned later in the entry, and sometimes there is more than one lexeme that could be the headword.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the *Distinguo* database mainly provides a single headword, which means that the table of contents editor has chosen which lexemes she treats as a headword. In addition, she has sometimes combined two lexemes that appear in successive chapters as a single entry and other times as separate entries. For example, the headwords *nutrition* and *nutrire* are combined in a single entry, while *querendus est deus* and *querenda* are interpreted as individual entries.<sup>25</sup>

The results of this article are based on a comparison of the tables of contents in their entirety. Yet, because of the size of the dataset, I provide selected parts of the data in Appendix 2 to illustrate the

<sup>22</sup> Paris, BnF, NAL 882, fol. 158rv; Paris, BnF, MS Latin 8861, fols. 262v–263v; Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Medeltida pergamentomslag*, Fr 9086, fol. 1r–1v, Fr 9149, fol. 1r–1v; Helsinki, Kansalliskirjasto, *Fragmenta membranae*, V.TH.AA.115, fol. 6r.

<sup>23</sup> Supponen, “Alphabetum distinccionum,” 94–95, 231–311.

<sup>24</sup> In some copies, such as Vatican BAV, Vat.lat. 7630, the headwords are copied in the margins and included in an index. Yet, this does not reveal the compiler’s original idea of the headwords, because the copyist of the manuscript has added them.

<sup>25</sup> Paris, BnF, NAL 882, fols. 100r, 120v.

differences between collections. In the examples chosen, the vocabulary of the *Alphabetum* survives almost entirely.

### Fourteenth-century collections compared to earlier collections

In general, there is much variation in the vocabulary of the distinction collections, as the data in Appendix 1 illustrates. The core of the vocabulary that all collections share is biblical verbs and nouns (*nomina*).<sup>26</sup> In this article, “noun” refers to the category that includes substantives and adjectives. Numerals, pronouns, and proper names are discussed as separate categories because their occurrence varies from one collection to another. Three notable features, however, characterise fourteenth-century collections and differentiate them from earlier collections.

The first feature typical of late-medieval collections is that they often discuss several lexemes from the same root in a single entry. Mathias and Petrus, especially, frequently provide more than one headword to the entry, typically two to three.<sup>27</sup> They most often combine a verb with one or more nouns. In the surviving leaves of the *Alphabetum*, the maximum number of headwords in a single entry is four, such as *Uolucris, uolucres, uolatilis, uolatilia*. In the *Repertorium*, there are eight headwords in a single entry; however, this entry, *Sum, es, ero, eram, esse, fui, fuisse, fueram*, is an exceptional case as it provides various tenses of one word.<sup>28</sup> Arnaud does not highlight the headwords from the text in an equivalent manner to the two other compilers, but he sometimes distinguishes the meanings of lexemes that are not named as headwords, as mentioned above. The practice of discussing several lexemes in one entry rarely appears in the earlier collections; when it does, the word is typically a synonym. Thomas de Pavia’s (c. 1212 – c. 1280) *Dictionarium bovis* is the only earlier collection in which multiple headwords are regularly used.<sup>29</sup>

The second feature differentiating fourteenth-century collections from earlier ones is that later collections cover a wider range of biblical vocabulary. This is evident in the number of headwords. The number of entries in the large-scale earlier collections varied from c. 900 to c. 1500.<sup>30</sup> Mathias’s and Petrus’s collections are distinct from any other collection. The *Alphabetum* comprised around 3000 entries, and the *Repertorium* comprised 2499 entries.<sup>31</sup> Arnaud’s *Distinctiones*, with its 1407 entries, seems to be in an intermediate terrain between earlier collections and its fourteenth-century companions regarding the

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<sup>26</sup> The exception is anonymous *Liber qui dicitur Angelus*, in which there is only one verb.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>28</sup> Paris, BnF, MS Latin 8861, fols. 227r–229v.

<sup>29</sup> Marjorie Burghart, Svetlana Yatsyk. *Tommaso da Pavia, Dictionarium Bovis*, in *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/tommaso-da-pavia-dictionarium-bovis>, retrieved on 16/5/2025).

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>31</sup> Sanna Supponen. *Mathias Lincopensis, Alphabetum distincionum*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2024-12-12. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/mathias-lincopensis-alphabetum>, retrieved on 17/04/2025); Marjorie Burghart. *Petrus Berchorius, Repertorium morale*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/petrus-berchorius-repertorium-morale>, retrieved on 17/04/2025).



number of entries.<sup>32</sup> Two earlier collections, the above-mentioned Thomas de Pavia's collection with its 1501 entries and Alain de Lille's (c. 1128–1202) *Summa "quot modis"* with its 1464 entries, seem comparable.<sup>33</sup> Arnaud, however, discusses more lexemes than the number of entries suggests, as mentioned above.

The third feature is that the fourteenth-century collections are more comprehensive regarding the variance in parts of speech. They add parts of speech, namely the pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, and proper names, that were untypical of earlier collections. Sophie Delmas points out that Arnaud included specific categories in the vocabulary of the *Distinctiones*, such as pronouns, numerals, adverbs, conjunctions, and proper names that were typically absent from thirteenth-century collections.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Mathias explains in the *Alphabetum*'s prologue that he included verbs, nouns, adverbs and proper names in his collection.<sup>35</sup> I have previously suggested that because pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions are not mentioned in the prologue or found in the surviving leaves of the *Alphabetum*, they were not part of the collection in the first place.<sup>36</sup> Petrus is even more all-encompassing as he also included prepositions in his collection.<sup>37</sup> As Appendix 1 illustrates, the grammatical words, adverbs, and proper names are not typically included in the earlier collections, and even in the collections in which they appear, there are not many. For example, Durand de Huesca (c. 1160–1124) and Alain de Lille include words from every part of speech but only some examples of the abovementioned parts of speech. The fact that the compilers of earlier collections do not usually include these parts of speech in their vocabularies may relate to the view that grammatical words were seen as unsuitable for divisions in scholastic sermons, as some *artes predicandi* manuals suggest.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, including grammatical words into some collections may also reflect the changing uses of the collections, as suggested below.

Another grammatical difference between collections is the frequency of proper nouns. Petrus and Mathias systematically cover biblical names, both places and persons; Arnaud also has many place names, but individuals' names are rare exceptions, such as *Elyas*, *Gabriel*, and *Zacharias*. In earlier collections, the names of biblical characters appear seldom, which may relate to the practice of

<sup>32</sup> Marjorie Burghart. Arnaud Royard, *Distinctiones*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/arnaud-royard-distinctiones>, retrieved on 17/04/2025).

<sup>33</sup> Marjorie Burghart. *Alanus de Insula, Distinctiones dictionum theologiarum / Summa quot modis*, in *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2022-07-20. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/alanus-de-insula-dist-summa>, retrieved on 15/5/2025). In addition, the table of contents of Petrus Cantor's *Distinctiones Abel* comprises 1517 entries, but many of the entries are heralded with the same headword that is contextualised in a different manner. Therefore, this is not comparable with other collections. Petrus Cantor, *Distinctiones Abel*.

<sup>34</sup> Delmas, "Les prologues de recueils de Distinctiones," 246–47.

<sup>35</sup> Mathias Lincopensis, *Alphabetum distincionum, prologus*, 145: "non omnia vocabula, que in correspondenciis sunt, inuenies hic annotata, sed tantum nomina et verba in Scripturis frequentata et paucissima aduerbia cum nominibus propriis..."

<sup>36</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distincionum," 101.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Bersuire, *La collatio pro fine operis de Bersuire*, 157: "sic de aduerbiis & coniuncionibus, pronominiibus eciam & preposicionibus & eciam de multis participiis, verbis & nominibus, vel quia michi inutilia videbantur, vel quia de ipsis parum aut nichil inueniebam in concordanciis."

<sup>38</sup> Wenzel, *Medieval "Artes Praedicandi", A Synthesis of Scholastic Sermon Structure*, 72.



discussing these in separate collections, called *Interpretationes nominum hebraeorum*.<sup>39</sup>

To conclude, the fourteenth-century collections' compilers wanted to give users more variety in vocabulary. This may be because the collections were intended for broader uses. This is evident in Mathias's and Petrus's cases, as the collections also comprise material other than *distinctiones*. Further comment on the intended use would, however, require a more detailed analysis of the content of the collections. Next, I will show that there are also some notable differences between the fourteenth-century collections.

### Differences between fourteenth-century collections

As collections are based primarily on the Bible, it is unsurprising that the three collections share most of their vocabulary. Yet, they all include lexemes that do not appear in other collections. Arnaud's *Distinctiones* stands out by being more compact and, in a way, more traditional in its choice of words as noted above. The *Repertorium* includes 1317 "root words" that are not in the *Distinctiones*. The *Alphabetum* is the most comprehensive of the three; its reconstructed table contains 492 "root words" that do not appear in Petrus's collections; the number must be considerably more, as the reconstructed index covers only around 40 per cent of the original headwords.<sup>40</sup> A detailed analysis of the lexemes reveals that the differences between vocabularies mainly relate to grammatical and thematic issues.

The first difference between collections is that Petrus was more interested in grammar than the other two. The *Repertorium* covered more parts of speech than the others, as mentioned above. Petrus is the only one who provided prepositions. He also included pronouns and conjunctions more extensively than Arnaud. Appendix 2 illustrates the case: the *Repertorium* includes the headwords *tam*, *tibi*, *uos*, *uestri*, *uobis*, and *uobiscum*, while the *Distinctiones* has only the last one mentioned. Petrus's interest in grammar is also shown in the content of these entries: they begin with a grammatical description of the lexeme, which resembles the content of dictionaries.<sup>41</sup> A similar interest in grammar also appears in some smaller-scale earlier collections, such as Ralph of Longchamp's (c. 1155 – c. 1215) *Distinctiones* in the early thirteenth century.<sup>42</sup>

The second difference is that Petrus and Mathias systematically included in their collections words about the physical world, such as animals, plants, minerals, natural phenomena, diseases and anatomy. This material is more often encountered in encyclopaedias than in distinction collections, but it was utilised in sermon-making.<sup>43</sup> The significant number of words pertaining to the natural world may relate to Petrus's and Mathias's general interest in encyclopaedic

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<sup>39</sup> About *Interpretationes nominum hebraeorum*, see Bataillon, "Les instruments de travail des prédicateurs au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle."

<sup>40</sup> On the *Alphabetum*'s original number of headwords, see Supponen, "Alphabetum distinctionum," 94.

<sup>41</sup> E.g.: "Ab. Nota qui ista prepositio ab idem videtur significare sicut .a. nec videtur esse differentia nisi..." Paris, BnF, MS Latin 8862, fol. 3r. See also Samaran, "Pierre Bersuire," 352.

<sup>42</sup> Ainonen, "Making New from Old," 57, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Binkley, "Preachers' Responses to Thirteenth-Century Encyclopaedism"; Delmas, "Bartholomew the Englishman, 'Master of the Properties of Things': Between Exegesis and Preaching," 251–60.

knowledge. Petrus's interest is especially evident in his other work, *Reductorium morale*, a moralised adaptation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's (before 1203–1272) encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum*.<sup>44</sup> In Mathias's case, this fascination is apparent in the *Alphabetum* itself as he combines encyclopaedic descriptions of the properties of things with the distinctions in a single collection.<sup>45</sup> This multifaceted nature of the *Alphabetum* is particularly evident in one category of words, non-biblical words, which is a unique feature within the collections included in the *Distinguo* database. Mathias added to his collection non-biblical words related to nature, such as *formicaleon* and *salvia*. I have previously argued that Mathias has adopted this material from biblical commentaries and encyclopaedias, such as the *De proprietatibus rerum*.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Mathias and Petrus aided their readers by providing various preaching materials in a single work by adding the encyclopaedic material together with the *distinctiones*.

Another reason for the differences in vocabulary may be the compilers' source material. All three compilers likely used some existing wordlist, such as a concordance, as a base for their collection's vocabulary. As noted above, the alphabetical arrangement of our three collections resembles lexicography that utilises the derivative method. My preliminary study of the third concordance of St Jacques suggests that some late medieval concordances are organised according to a combination of alphabetisation and the derivative method.<sup>47</sup> Petrus even states directly in the *Repertorium*'s epilogue that he has utilised a concordance compiled by Giraldus Valet. <sup>48</sup> This concordance and its author have not been identified.<sup>49</sup> I have previously suggested that Mathias used the vocabulary of the third concordance of St Jacques as a starting point for the vocabulary of the *Alphabetum*.<sup>50</sup> In the *Distinctiones*' case, there are hints of some exploitation of concordance as Arnaud says: 'I have not always followed the alphabetical order used in concordances but arranged the words according to their similarity'.<sup>51</sup> Using an existing wordlist was a practical solution that saved time and energy. However, the relationship between distinction collections and wordlists used as their sources is not simple. For example, Mathias omitted lexemes that appear in the third concordance of St Jacques and added material from other sources.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Petrus states in his epilogue that he has added some

<sup>44</sup> On the *Reductorium morale*, see Samaran, "Pierre Bersuire," 304–49.

<sup>45</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 138–67.

<sup>46</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 100, 112, 145–49.

<sup>47</sup> So far, the arrangement of concordances has been scarcely studied. The Rouses seem to think that the exceptions in alphabetical order result from an error in the alphabetisation process. Rouse and Rouse, "The Verbal Concordance to the Scriptures," 11–12, 18, notes 43–44.

<sup>48</sup> Pierre Bersuire, *La collatio pro fine operis de Bersuire*, ed. van der Bijl 1965, 156: "Et circa hoc nota quod istud opus procedit per ordinem alphabeti per dicciones & vocabula prout in concordanciis super Bibliam ordinatur. Omnes enim dicciones que in Magnis Concordanciis continentur, quas scilicet frater Giraldus Valet, de ordine fratrum minorum composuit, que scilicet mille centum dicciones ultra communes concordancias tenant."

<sup>49</sup> Gieben, "Berchoriana Giraldus Valet, O.Min., Source of the Repertorium Morale," 62; Samaran, "Pierre Bersuire," 351.

<sup>50</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 126.

<sup>51</sup> Arnaud Royard, *Distinctiones, prologus*, 248: "In quibus non semper servavi ordinem alphabeti prout in Concordantiis ponitur, sed aliquando vocabula juxta similitudinem ordinavi..."

<sup>52</sup> Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 159–67.

hundred words not found in the concordance he has used as a source.<sup>53</sup>

Naturally, personal preferences also played a part in compiling vocabulary. This is suggested by the fact that although the *Distinctiones* is more concise than the *Repertorium*, Arnaud includes 163 root words that Petrus did not. In Appendix 2, the headwords *fouere*, *statera*, *sterquilinum*, and *titulus* illustrate the case. This material comprises various kinds of verbs and nouns without any common denominator, which suggests that these word-choice differences result from individual preference.

## Conclusions

The study suggests that the core vocabulary of distinction collections was verbs and nouns of the Bible throughout the genre's history. Yet, the genre transformed with the passing time regarding word choices. The fourteenth-century collections differ from their earlier counterparts in various respects, such as the extent and arrangement of the vocabulary and choice of parts of speech. In this article, the earlier collections are used only as reference material. Studying the long-term changes in vocabulary in more detail could be fruitful for seeing whether some features or word choices are standard for all collections and what kind of variations occur over time.

A comparison of the content of fourteenth-century collections suggests that differences in vocabulary relate to using different lexicons as their base. Yet, the differences also reveal compilers' interests and intentions. Petrus's interest in grammatical matters shows in his selection of words. Similarly, he and Mathias added material more often found in encyclopaedias. These additions are likely related to the intended use of the works and the variety of material within the collections. However, to analyse these, it would be necessary to study the collections' structure and content.

Computational methods are necessary to study the similarity and variance of vocabulary in more detail and on a broader timescale. Yet, the article reveals that utilising these methods to study vocabularies is challenging in the case of distinction collections. Because a single entry can be heralded with several headwords, and many entries also discuss lexemes that are not named in headwords, the table of contents, even in lemmatised form, is not necessarily comparable material. There are two possible solutions. First, one could analyse the full text to name all lexemes discussed in each collection and compare the content. This would be very laborious and time-consuming, especially given that we do not have editions of these works. Another more practical solution could be to compare the "root words" instead of the lemma of each lexeme, as I did here by hand. In comparing "root words", we lose the nuances of variance in the word level, for example, whether the compiler discusses a verb, noun, or both. Still, it reveals broader thematic connections and differences. After all, combining several lexemes in a single entry suggests that the essence of the distinction collections lays in the themes and not individual words.

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<sup>53</sup> Pierre Bersuire, *La collatio pro fine operis de Bersuire*, ed. van der Bijl 1965, 156: "quibus etiam ego prope centum dicciones superaddidi".

## Appendix 1: Appearance of various parts of speech and practice to combine words under one entry in large-scale distinctions collections

Dark grey indicates that the feature is frequent, and light grey means that the feature appears only occasionally, or its appearance is otherwise limited. The data is collected from tables of contents of named collections in the *Distinguo* database.<sup>54</sup>

Collection	Century	Number of Entries	Pronouns	Cardinal numbers	Adverbs	Conjunctions	Ad/Prepositions	Proper nouns	Multiple headwords
Mathias of Linköping <i>Alphabetum distinccionum</i> <sup>55</sup>	14 <sup>t</sup> h	~30 00	0	2 0	17	0	0	64	x
Petrus Berchorius <i>Repertorium morale</i>	14 <sup>t</sup> h	249 9	8 5	2 5	18 5	4 9	2 8	12 9	x
Arnaud Royard <i>Distinctiones</i>	14 <sup>t</sup> h	140 7	1 0	9	46	2	3	8	x
Thomas de Pavie <i>Dictionarium Bovis</i>	13 <sup>t</sup> h	150 1	4	5	20	1	1	3	x
Maurice de Provins <i>Distinctiones</i>	13 <sup>t</sup> h	111 6	0	0	8	1	0	0	-
Durand de Huesca <i>Distinctiones</i>	12 <sup>t</sup> h - 13 <sup>t</sup> h	119 8	7	0	21	4	7	7	x <sup>56</sup>
Petrus Capuanus <i>Alphabetum in artem sermocinandi</i>	12 <sup>t</sup> h - 13 <sup>t</sup> h	114 3	6	0	22	0	0	7	x <sup>57</sup>
Anonymous <i>Liber dicitur Angelus</i>	12 <sup>t</sup> h	947	0	0	3	0	0	3	-
Alain de Lille <i>Summa "quot modis"</i>	12 <sup>t</sup> h	146 4	4	0	35	4	1 9	2 4	x <sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Distinguo*, dir. M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. (URL: <http://distinguo.huma-num.fr/about.php>, retrieved on 08/05/2025). The full dataset used in this article: (URL: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17700907>, retrieved 24/11/2025).

<sup>55</sup> The entries survive only in part, and thus Mathias's collection is not comparable with others in terms of the number of parts of speech. Pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions are not found in surviving leaves, but one cannot exclude the possibility that these have been part of the collection. About the estimation of the number of entries, see Supponen, "Alphabetum distinccionum," 94.

<sup>56</sup> Only synonyms.

<sup>57</sup> Only synonyms.

<sup>58</sup> Only synonyms.

## Appendix 2: Selected parts of the Repertorium morale's, the Distinctiones's, and the Alphabetum's table of contents

The entries that share words from the same root are marked with a grey background. The table's order of words is sometimes modified to illustrate the differences better. In the *Alphabetum*, the headwords marked with an asterisk are deduced from the cross-references and the headwords in brackets are deduced from surviving contents in cases where the headword is lost.

Petrus's <i>Repertorium</i> <sup>59</sup>	Mathias's <i>Alphabetum</i> <sup>60</sup>	Arnaud's <i>Distinctionum</i> <sup>61</sup>
Fodere	[Fodere]	Fodere
Folium	Folium	Folium
	Fomes	
Fons	Fons	Fons
	Foramen	
Fores	Foris, -res	
Foris, foras		
	Forceps, -pes	
	Formare, formacio*	Formatio
Forma	Forma, formula	Forma
	Formica	
	Fo[rm]icaleon	
Formidare, formido	Formidare, formido	Formidare
Formare, fornax	Fornax	Fornax
Fornicatio	Fornicari, fornicacio	Fornicatio
Forte, forsitan		
	Fortis*	
Fortitudo	Fortitudo*	Fortitudo
	ʔ <sup>62</sup>	Fouere
Stagnum	Stagnum <sup>63</sup>	Stagnum <sup>64</sup>
Stare, stabilis, stabilitas	Stare	Stare
Statim	Status	Stabilitas

<sup>59</sup> Paris, BnF, MS Latin 8861, fols. 262v–263v. Marjorie Burghart. *Petrus Berchorius, Repertorium morale*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/petrus-berchorius-repertorium-morale>, retrieved on 17/04/2025).

<sup>60</sup> Stockholm, Riksarkivet, *Medeltida pergamentomslag*, Fr 9086, fol. 1r–1v, Fr 9149, fol. 1r–1v; Helsinki, Kansalliskirjasto, *Fragmenta membranae*, V.TH.AA.115, fol. 6r. Sanna Supponen. *Mathias Lincopensis, Alphabetum distinctionum*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2024-12-12. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/mathias-lincopensis-alphabetum>, retrieved on 17/04/2025).

<sup>61</sup> Paris, BnF, NAL 882, fol. 158rv. Marjorie Burghart. *Arnaud Royard, Distinctiones*. In *Distinguo*, dir M. Burghart, Lyon: CNRS - CIHAM UMR 5648. 2021-06-11. (URL: <https://distinguo.huma-num.fr/collections/arnaud-royard-distinctiones>, retrieved on 17/04/2025).

<sup>62</sup> Because of a missing leaf, we do not know whether the headword *fouere* was included in the *Alphabetum*.

<sup>63</sup> The order changed: the entry *Stagnum* appears in the source after the entry *Stadium*.

<sup>64</sup> The order changed: the entry *Stagnum* appears in the source after the entry *Stabilitas*.

Statio	Stabilis, stabilire	
	Stabulum	
	Stacte	
	Stadium, stadia	
	Stannum	
	Stater, statera	Statera
Statua	Statua	Statura
Statura	Statuere	Statua
Statuere		Statuere
	Stephanus	
Stella	Stella	Stella
	Stellio	
Stercus, sterquilinum	Stercus	
Sterilitas, sterilis	Sterilis	Sterilitas
Sternere, stratus	Sternere	Sternere
	Stratus	Stratum
	Stratorium, stramentum	
	Sternutacio	
	Sterquilinum	Sterquilinum
	Stigma	
Stilla, stillare, stillicidium	Stillare, stilla, stillicidium	Stillatio
	Stibium	
	Stilus	
Stimulus, stimulare	Stimulare, stimulari	Stimulus
Stipendium	Stipendium	Stipendium
Stipes	Stipes	
Stipula	Stipula, stipulum	Stipula
Stirps <sup>65</sup>	Styrps	Stirps
Stola	Stola	Stola
	[Sto]machus	
	Storax	
	Stra[gulum]	
	Stri[dere]	
Stringere	Stri[ngere]	
	[Stru]cio	
	Struere vel strues	
Studere, studium	Studere, studium	Studere
Stultitia	Stultus, stulticia	Stultitia
Stupor, stupere	? <sup>66</sup>	Stupor

<sup>65</sup> The order changed: *Stirps* appears in the source after *Stipes*.

<sup>66</sup> Because of a missing leaf, we do not know whether the headword *stupor* was included in the *Alphabetum*.

Tabernaculum	? <sup>67</sup>	Tabernaculum
Tabescere	? <sup>68</sup>	Tabescere
Tabula	[Tabula]	Tabula
Tacere, taciturnitas	Tacere, taciturnitas	Taciturnitas
Thalamus	Talamus	
Talentum	Talentum	Talentum
Talis	Talia	Talis
	Talpa	
	Talus	
	Tallos	
Tam		
	Thamar	
Tangere	Tangere, tactus	Tangere
Tanquam		
Tantus		Tantus
Tantum		
	Tapeta, tapecia	
Tarditas	Tardare	Tarditas
Tarsis	Tarsis	
	Tartarus	
Taurus	Taurus	Taurus
	Taxus	
Tyara	Tyara	
Tibi		
Tibia	Tibia	
	Tignum	
	Tigris	
Timere, timor <sup>69</sup>	Timere, timor	Timor
Thimiama	Timiama	
Timotheus	Thimotheus	
Tympanum	Timpanum	
Tinea	Tinea	
Tingere, tinctura	Tingere	
	Tinnire	
	Tintinnabulum	
	Tina	
	Typsana	
	Tipus	

<sup>67</sup> Because of a missing leaf, we do not know whether the headword *tabernaculum* was included in the *Alphabetum*.

<sup>68</sup> Because of a missing leaf, we do not know whether the headword *tabescere* was included in the *Alphabetum*.

<sup>69</sup> The order changed: the entry *Timere, timor* appears in the source before the entry *Thimiama*.



Tyrannus <sup>70</sup>	Tyrannus	Tyrannus
Tirus	Tirus	
	Titulus	Titulus
	Titus	
	Tophet	
Tollere	Tollere	Tollere
	Thobias	
	Tolerare	
Tonitruum	Tonare, tonitruum	Tonitruum
	Tondere	
	Topacius, topacion	
	Thorax	
Torcular	Torcular	Torcular
	Torrere, torris	
Torrens	Torrens	Torrens
	Tornare, tornus, tornatura, tornatilis	
	Torpor	
Tormentum	[Torqu]ere	Torquere
Torquere, tortus, tortum	[Torques]	Torques
	[Torta]	
	[Tormentum]	
	[Thorus]	
Totus	[Totus]	Totum cor requirit Deus
Uos		
Uestri		
Uobis		
Uobiscum, nobiscum, mecum, secum		Uobiscum est Deus
Uocare, uocatus	Uocare, uocatio, uox	Uocatio
Uociferari	Uociferari, uociferacio	Uox
Uox		
Uolare, uolucris, uolatile, uolatus	Uolare, uolans	Uolatus
	Uolucris, uolucres, uolatilis, uolatilia	Uolucer
	Uoluere, uolutare	
Uoluptas <sup>71</sup>	Uoluptas	Uoluptas
Uolumen	Uolumen	Uolumen diuine legis
	Uomer	Uomer

<sup>70</sup> The order changed: the entry *Tyrannus* appears in the source after the entry *Tirus*.

<sup>71</sup> The order changed: the entry *Uoluptas* appears in the source after the entry *Uolumen*.

Uomitus, uomere	Uomere, uomitus	
Uorare, uorax	Uorare, uorago	Uorare
Uouere, uotum	Uouere, uotum	Uotum

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