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Concepts of Bareness (*Nuditas*) in Medieval Philosophy*

Keywords: Empiricism, Metaphysics of the Will, Bareness, Oxford Calculators

Słowa kluczowe: Empiryzm, Metafizyka Woli, Nagość, Kalkulatorzy Oksfordzcy

Abstract

The Aristotelian idiom, according to which the intellect is a “blank” or “bare slate” before it has experienced the sensory world was also used in empiricist arguments during the Middle Ages. In this short inquiry, I examine the use of the adjective *bare* (or *naked*) in both epistemology and metaphysics, focusing on fourteenth-century Oxford and the theologies of John Duns Scotus (in opposition to Henry of Ghent), as well as on the Oxford Calculators Thomas Bradwardine and Robert Halifax. While the metaphysical notion of bareness developed along the lines defined by Scotus, it constituted a counterpart to the empiricist strand of the same notion and represents an intriguing episode in the history of metaphysics.

* Research for this paper was funded in whole by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [PIN1943824].

I thank Mária Orosz and Patrycja Poniatowska for their help; and the Reviewers for their work.

1. Introduction

In a recent paper on medieval empiricism, Gregory Dawes observed that the Oxford Calculators did not “mark a break with the Aristotelian tradition of purely qualitative physics.”¹ This view has a long history and is largely accepted as valid. The Oxford Calculators were scientists active at the beginning of the fourteenth century, teaching and writing at the University of Oxford. They came closest to developing a mathematical approach to nature and succeeded in revising the Aristotelian account of motion—yet without employing what would now be considered typical scientific proofs. Thus, Dawes argued in favor of the progressive rise of empiricism; as he put it, “the combination of Aristotelian and Augustinian views in the work of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century philosophers and theologians, [led to] ... the eclipse of the doctrine of divine illumination and the gradual downplaying of the role of the intellect in the acquisition of knowledge.”²

The progressive rise of empiricism allowed several categories of thought to coexist. Dawes distinguished three types of empiricism: 1) *explanatory empiricism*, which emphasizes the role of observable events; 2) *genetic empiricism*, which originated with two Latin sentences, one longer—*nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, and the other, short and incisive, *tabula rasa* (“blank slate,” or more accurately “clean slate”) that characterizes the human being as an empiricist; and 3) *justificatory empiricism*, which, unlike explanatory empiricism, is not restricted to observable events. The third type is a more recent position, advanced by Karl Popper, according to which the way a scientific discovery is made—in other words, the scientific method—is irrelevant, it only has to work against experience.³ Only the first two forms of empiricism played a role during the Middle Ages, and, indeed, genetic empiricism and justificatory empiricism coexisted. In his narrative of medieval empiricism, Dawes quotes only traditional authorities: Roger Bacon and Robert Grosseteste, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus, William Ockham and John Buridan, Nicholas of Poland and Nicholas of Autrecourt.

¹ Dawes, 2023, online.

² Dawes, 2023, online.

³ Dawes, 2023, online.

The absence of the Oxford Calculators from this list calls for a closer look. It would be essential to explore their positions on empiricism in commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and *Posterior Analytics*, in Richard Swineshead's *Book of Calculations*, or in John Dumbleton's *Treatise on the Philosophy of Nature*. This, however, is not the aim of my paper.⁴ While I intend to examine some occurrences of the Aristotelian idiom "Every recipient must be devoid of the nature of what it receives." I also want to place the adjective *bare* (or *naked*) into its broader context and explore the significance of its diffusion into diverse fields, especially the metaphysics of the will. The initial Aristotelian statement, shaped by Aristotle's most important commentator, Averroes, underwent many changes in late medieval philosophy. As bareness was linked to the human will, and not only to the human intellect, it crystallized a complex approach linking the human abilities of willing, thinking, and sensing.

2. A Brief History of the Adjective *Bare*

The adjective *bare* (or *naked*) as related to abstract entities has a long history. It was first used, on the one hand, by Aristotle and his commentators, and on the other, in texts of Roman law. For Aristotle, the intellectual soul—which enables the soul to conjecture and to understand—was a substance without mixture, that is, pure, immaterial or non-corporeal. This characteristic led Averroes to affirm a process of dematerialization, or even denaturalization, of the cognized things through the soul in order to preserve the distinction between the receiver (immaterial) and the received (material) entities. As Averroes commented:

But the reason, for which the substance receiving these forms must necessarily not be a body or a power in a body, is evident from the propositions which Aristotle used in his discourse. One part of the reason is that this substance receives all material forms; and this is known of this intellect. But the second part of the reason is that every recipient must be devoid of the nature of what it receives, and that its substance is not the substance of the thing received in species.⁵

⁴ On John Dumbleton's work, see Sylvain Roudaut's contribution, in this issue.

⁵ Averroes, *Commentum libri De anima*, lib. III, comm. 4 (ed. Crawford, 1953, p. 385): "Quoniam autem substantia recipiens has formas necesse est ut non sit corpus neque virtus in corpore manifestum est ex propositionibus quibus Aristoteles usus est in hoc sermone.

Medieval thinkers both embraced and expanded this conceptual framework. They argued that receiving the form without the matter “consists in the fact that the soul receives special entities, so-called species (*species*), which are endowed with a representational function.”⁶ This topic was the subject of intense debates that lasted from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century.

Second, legal texts from Roman Antiquity related bareness to several concepts, such as agreement, consent, and right (*pactum*, *consensus*, *ius*), and even the will (*voluntas*). Bareness alternatively meant “not enforced” (e.g., a contract or an agreement) or “without consideration” (e.g., the will).⁷ Most interestingly, though not surprisingly, the “bare will” appears in fourteenth-century theological texts too, probably as the consequence of its former use during the thirteenth century, which saw several legal concepts being taken over into theology.⁸

A rough survey of further occurrences shows that the adjective was used in relation to diverse powers and concepts—for instance, to matter (*materia*), the soul, the act, the capacity (not power!), the will, and intelligence

Quarum una est quod ista substantia recipit omnes formas materiales; et hoc notum est de hoc intellectu. Secunda autem est quod omne recipiens aliquid necesse est ut sit denudatum a natura recepti, et ut sua substantia non sit substantia recepti in specie.” Aristotle’s text in *De anima*, III.1, 429a18–24 reads as follows: “Necesse est itaque, quoniam omnia intelligit, inmixtum esse, sicut dicit Anaxagoras, ut imperet, hoc autem est ut cognoscat. Intus apparens enim prohibebit extraneum et obstruet. Quare neque ipsius esse naturam neque unam, set aut hanc quod possibilis. Vocatus itaque anime intellectus (dico autem intellectum quo opinatur et intelligit anima) nichil est actu eorum que sunt ante intelligere.”

⁶ Perler, 1996, p. 231. See also the literature quoted in the footnotes there.

⁷ *Corpus Iuris Civilis Iustiniane* (1560, pp. 1023–1024): “Nudo consensu re integra ab emptione disceditur: et arrae datae repetuntur. Sed quia parte precii soluta res non est integra, ideo nudo consensu non receditur, sed ut res tradatur, agitur. [...] post traditionem interpositam nuda voluntas non resolvit emptionem, si non actus quoque priori similis retro agens venditionem interecesserit.” See also the *Institutions* of Gaius; *Gaii Institutionum commentarii IV* (ed. Heffter, 1841, p. 20): “Nam qui nudum ius Quiritium in seruo habet, is potestatem habere non intelligitur.” Stolte, who examined Greek translations of Latin legal texts, defined *bare* as follows; see Stolte, 2014, p. 894: “In legal usage, *nudus* indicates that something is missing, which normally one would expect to be present.” Stolte enumerates six different legal concepts from the *Institutions* (will, property, use, the name of the heir, convention, and promise) that used to be connected to bareness and were differently translated into Greek.

⁸ See Courtenay, 1997, for the way in which legal concepts influenced theological concepts of divine power.

(*anima, actus, capacitas, intelligentia*—all in John Duns Scotus O.F.M. (1265/1266–1308), who championed the use of the adjective)—and also to contemplation and truth (*contemplatio, veritas*—by Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274)). Somewhat later, theological literature emphasized, parallel to “bare narration” (*narratio nuda*), the notion of “bare confession” (*confessio nuda*), and not only *pura*, which underlines the distinctive character of *bare* as simple, undisguised, and unobscured.⁹ Richard FitzRalph (1299–1360), in the recently edited Book I, question 10 of his *Lecture on the Sentences*, in a manner close to Ancient Stoic philosophy, mentions “the bare created nature.”¹⁰ Adam Wodeham (ca. 1295–1358), a Franciscan contemporary of FitzRalph, situates bareness into a context close to the Oxford Calculators, using the Averroist explanation for the latitudes of forms.¹¹ In his commentary on the *Sentences*, Wodeham notes that the acquisition of a new degree of charity implies the “purification” (*denudatur*) of the former degree of charity.¹² Amidst these different developments, the Franciscan order may have developed a specific predilection for the notion of bareness. After all, to follow the naked Christ undressed is what Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan order, did. The concept of bareness indeed permeated both Franciscan spirituality and systematic theology.¹³

Taken together, these uses tend to represent the ideal and thus prior passive state of a power or concept. In a few instances, *bare* more simply serves to contrast or to distinguish different states. Yet, parallel to

⁹ For bare confession and narration, see Denery II, 2002, pp. 50, n. 28–29; 51; 51, n. 30; 55, n. 41.

¹⁰ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, lib. I, q. 10 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 221).

¹¹ For the latest account on the latitudes of forms, see Michałowska & Lukács, 2024, pp. 13–17.

¹² Adam Wodeham, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 17, q. 5. Available at: <https://reader.lombardpress.org/text/aw98wa/aw98wa-xg2664>. “[...] quaero utrum augmentatione caritatis vel alterius formae gradus omnis praeexistens corrumpatur cum novus gradus inducitur ita valet intelligendo quod in omni instanti sit totaliter nova forma. Videtur quod sic, quia secundum Commentatorem et Philosophum 3 *De anima* pluries oportet recipiens denudari a natura recepti, igitur anima quando novum gradum caritatis recipit, denudatur ab omnibus praecedentibus.”

¹³ See Châtillon, 1992, esp. pp. 252–254, for a list of texts using the adjective *bare*. The notion of bareness as exposing common human nature is related to its use in Stoic philosophy; see Benjamin, 2018.

the generalization of its use, bare states seem to have changed their meaning and to have become reproducible. They did not imply an initial state, but rather states that occur repeatedly. Being bare was neither a primary nor an ideal state, but part of the daily cognitive and empirical processes of human beings such as willing, thinking, and sensing. If this is so, then the broader context in which bareness is employed is not specifically empiricist, but rather ontological and epistemological.

In what follows, I first introduce the discussions of bareness by John Duns Scotus in the context of his debate with Henry of Ghent and their continuation by the Oxford Calculator Thomas Bradwardine. These discussions are necessary for understanding the roots of the late medieval concept of bareness and its implications for both metaphysics and epistemology. Second, I briefly consider two Calculators, Robert Halifax and Thomas Bradwardine, who endorsed the “bare slate” theory of the intellect with little to no modification compared to earlier doctrines.

3. Metaphysical Bareness

John Duns Scotus O.F.M.

John Duns Scotus was beyond doubt an authority for the Oxford Calculators. His debate with Henry of Ghent (1217–1293) represents a high point among the many discussions in the early fourteenth century concerning human cognition. For both reasons, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at Scotus’s contribution to developments regarding empiricism and bareness. Scotus’s debate with Henry has evidently attracted some scholarly attention, which considered the story relevant up to its reception by William Ockham. To summarize the issue: while Henry of Ghent defended the idea that human beings must be aided by divine illumination in order to attain certain and infallible knowledge and grasp “what an object truly is” (*quid sit in rei veritate*), Scotus denied this. He rather defined a natural capacity shared by humans to know different truths. For Gregory Dawes, precisely this outcome of the debate not only marked the end of the doctrine of divine illumination, but also opened the way toward “more thorough-going empiricism.”¹⁴

¹⁴ See again Dawes, 2023, online. For the latest paper on the debate and further literature on the topic, see Pini (2022), who discusses Scotus’s *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 3.

In the *Ordinatio*, Book I, distinction 3, Scotus put forward his first arguments against Henry and continued to dispute with him in distinction 12, question 4. Question 4 discusses “the number of productions,” production meaning the generation, by the Father, of the Son, according to the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. Yet this process, that is, the generation of the Son or the Word, is the same in human beings as well: “And in the whole same way we must understand the word to be formed *in us*.” (my emphasis)¹⁵ Scotus discussed in the same section that there are bare states of the intellect and the will. He did so amidst extensive quotes from Henry of Ghent. He introduced the connection of bare states in explaining first that, according to Henry of Ghent, there are only two essential acts, understanding and willing, based on which conceptual production takes place:

But this is explained by some [Henry of Ghent] in the following way: notional acts are founded on immanent essential acts; but there are only two essential acts abiding internally, and these are understanding and willing; therefore, there are only two notional acts that are productive internally, founded on the same essential acts.¹⁶

Scotus continued with a parallel underlying essential and notional acts: “A confirmation of the reason is that notional acts founded on essential acts are proportional to them, and so there cannot be a multiplication of notional acts founded on the same essential act.”¹⁷ Thus, the number of acts a human being produces as a substance—his essential immanent acts—corresponds to

An older, still much quoted paper is Macken, 1972. For earlier Franciscans’ views, see Schuhmacher, 2023.

¹⁵ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 2, pars 2, q. 4 (ed. Commissio Scotistica, 1950, p. 293): “Et per omnem eundem modum debemus sic intelligere verbum formari in nobis.” [transl. Simpson]

¹⁶ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 2, pars 2, q. 4 (ed. Commissio Scotistica, 1950, p. 287): “Sed hoc declaratur ab aliquibus: actus notionales fundantur super actus essentielles immanentes; sed tantum sunt duo actus essentielles manentes intra, qui sunt intelligere et velle; ergo sunt tantum duo actus notionales qui sunt productivi intra, fundati super eosdem essentielles.” [transl. Simpson] For Henry of Ghent’s empiricism see Pickavé, 2007, p. 44, n. 71. Further quotes with notions related to bareness include those in Pickavé, 2007, p. 65, n. 130 (*nuda divina essentia*); p. 152, n. 79 (*in nudo*); p. 226, n. 139 (*nuda cognitio*); p. 353, n. 117 (*nuda visio*); p. 358, n. 132 (*nuda visio*).

¹⁷ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 2, pars 2, q. 4 (ed. Commissio Scotistica, 1950, p. 288): “Confirmatur ratio, quia actus notionales fundati super actus essentielles

the number of acts that they produce when understanding, that is, to the number of notional acts.

Scotus then explained that, for Henry of Ghent, both the intellect and the will are separate from matter and can, after a first act of simple cognition, “turn themselves to themselves and to their simple acts and their objects.”¹⁸ This somewhat obscure formulation refers to the act of self-reflection that the intellect and the will are able to perform. Henry had described this turning back with the term “conversive intelligence” (*intellectus conversus*) noting that it has a counterpart in the will called “conversive volition” (*voluntas conversa*).¹⁹ The “turning themselves to themselves” occurs in a state pictured as their being “bare, pure, and mere powers” (*ut sunt nudaе, purae et solae potentiae*). Yet there is one difference between the intellect and the will in the very same state which Scotus quotes as follows:

For the intellect, after it has turned itself to the things to which it has turned, recognizes itself as a potentiality and a pure possibility; and in this way, as a naked (*nudus*) and pure intellect, it is naturally disposed to receive from those things, as a proper passive thing receives from its proper natural active thing, which active thing indeed is the intellect informed by simple knowledge, and this in respect of the formation of declarative knowledge. But the will, after it has turned to what it has turned itself, is in a state of a certain activity, and in this way, the bare (*nuda*) and pure will is naturally disposed to express something concerning those things, as a proper active thing about its proper passive thing; this passive thing is the very same will, informed by simple love, about which—when thus formed—the same will as naked (*ut nuda*) naturally expresses incentive love, who is the Holy Spirit in the divine Being [...].²⁰

adaequantur eis, et ita non possunt plurificari actus notionales fundati super actum eundem essentialem.” [transl. Simpson]

¹⁸ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 2, pars 2, q. 4 (ed. Commissio Scotistica, 1950, p. 289): “[...] se convertere super se et super eorum actus simplices et super obiecta eorum.” [transl. Simpson]

¹⁹ For Henry’s texts, see n. 20 *infra*.

²⁰ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, dist. 2, pars 2, q. 4 (ed. Commissio Scotistica, 1950, pp. 289–290): “Intellectus enim postquam est conversus ad illa ad quae conversus est se habet ut potentia quoddam et purum possibile, et hoc ut intellectus nudus et purus natus est recipere ab illis, sicut proprium passivum a suo activo proprio naturali, quod quidem activum est intellectus informatus notitia simplici, et hoc respectu formationis

Thus, the intellect receives as “a proper passive thing receives from its proper natural active thing,” while the will receives as “a proper active thing about its proper passive thing.” In sum, the difference of the will and the intellect is about the passive and active roles they assume.²¹

What is the outcome of the Henry–Scotus epistemological debate? As Giorgio Pini recently formulated it, while both Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus agree on the initial, bare state of the intellect, they diverge over its dependence on the senses. For Henry, the intellect requires an external, sensorial, even divine input; for Scotus, an intellect more independent of the senses can achieve certainty by itself.²² In their aftermath, the adjective “bare” was applied to both the intellect and the will; yet its meaning appears to have varied slightly.

Thomas Bradwardine

The Oxford Calculator who most fully embraced the adjective *bare* was Thomas Bradwardine (ca. 1295–1349). In his major theological work, *De causa Dei* (1344), Bradwardine repeatedly employed the concept of a bare nature and a bare will. For him, the intellect was superior to the mind, and the mind did not appear as either pure or bare.²³ Even the most basic human nature is characterized by mutability and an innate capacity for both virtue and sin. Bradwardine’s description of bare human nature is as if Eden and its nakedness had never existed, not even in the biblical narrative:

From these considerations, I take it to be clear that no rational creature is or can be without change, merit or sin by nature. [...] There is only God

notitiae declarativae. Voluntas autem postquam conversa est ad quae conversa est se habet ut activum quoddam, et hoc ut voluntas nuda et pura nata est exprimere de illis, sicut proprium activum de suo proprio passivo, quod est eadem voluntas, informata per amorem simplicem, de qua—sic formata—eadem voluntas ut nuda nata est exprimere amorem incentivum, qui est Spiritus Sanctus in divinis [...]” [transl. Simpson, amended Lukács] For Henry of Ghent’s text, see Henricus de Gandavo, *Summa*, a. 60, q. 1 (Badius, vol. II, f. 155r).

²¹ See the analysis and the further texts in Sorichetti, 2018, pp. 71–87, *et passim*. Sorichetti translated ‘conversus’ as *ripiegato*.

²² See Pini, 2023, esp. the concluding sections.

²³ See Lukács, 2022, p. 234.

in whom sin does not occur; the rest, since they have free will and were made in the image and likeness of God, can bend their will in either direction—this must be understood as referring to their bare (*nuda*) nature.²⁴

Every state of our will is essentially free; therefore, the state of the bare will as well. The bare will does not correspond to an ideal state of the will, but rather to the will capable of both virtuous and sinful action. This usage defines bareness as an epistemological-historical component of an individual, rather than as a metaphysical or ontological element.

Bradwardine's further account of bareness seems to contradict this statement. Every rational creature—humans and angels alike, except for God—is fitted with a bare will; thus, both humans and angels possess bare wills, but not God. The difference lies in the created versus the uncreated wills: humans and angels on the one side, God on the other. Bradwardine develops the metaphysical distinction between the will in God and the will in created beings into an ontological dependence, implying the human being's total and absolute need for God in all of its actions. Even its "bare act"—the act being another concept that could be described as *bare* (Bradwardine most likely borrowed it from Scotus)—is dependent on the divine being's co-willing:

A bare (*nuda*) will cannot perform a bare (*nudum*) act without God properly co-acting in it, as was demonstrated in the previous section; therefore, neither can a virtuous will perform a virtuous act without God properly co-acting.²⁵

²⁴ Thomas Bradwardine, *De causa Dei*, lib. II, cap. 17, cor. (ed. Savile, 1618, p. 406): "Ex his autem reputo manifestum, nullam creaturam rationalem esse aut posse esse immutabilem, immeribilem, aut impeccabilem per naturam. [...] Solus deus est, in quo peccatum non cadit; ceteri, cum sint liberi arbitrii, iuxta quod et homo ad imaginem et similitudinem dei factus est, in utraque parte possunt flectere suam voluntatem, quod oportet intelligi, quantum est de nuda eorum natura." [transl. Lukács] According to Scotus, the absolute power of God, the bare human nature, and salvation are all linked to God's immediate causal power; see Dettloff, 1954, p. 73, n. 216.

²⁵ Thomas Bradwardine, *De causa Dei*, lib. II, cap. 23 (ed. Savile, 1618, p. 560): "Voluntas nuda non potest agere actum nudum sine deo proprie coagente, sicut superius proximo docebatur; ergo nec voluntas virtuosa potest agere actum virtuosum sine deo proprie coagente." [transl. Lukács] For the bare act in Scotus, see Dettloff, 1954, p. 120; Nickl, 2005, p. 74.

If we compare Scotus's account with Bradwardine's, it appears that for both theologians the bare will is an active principle, while the bare intellect is passive.²⁶ The innovation that Bradwardine develops is God's co-action with the human being—his constant guidance and active participation in human decisions and actions. This co-action does not begin with the first virtuous or first sinful act; it is already present in the disposition of the human will. Indeed, God co-acts in the bare acts of the human will.²⁷ In this way, for Thomas Bradwardine, the bare intellect (the passive principle) remains independent of God, while the bare will (the active principle) depends on him.

4. Epistemological Bareness

Robert Halifax O.F.M.

Robert Halifax (d. ca. 1349) followed the path of the Oxford Calculators: he also quantified ethics and theology, two fields that the first generation of Calculators had combined with natural philosophy and logic. Halifax was a contemporary at the University of Oxford of Richard FitzRalph, Richard Kilvington, and Thomas Bradwardine. In his Questions on the *Sentences*, several topics address calculatory issues, including question 5, titled "Whether an act of the will can be produced instantaneously."²⁸ In this question, Halifax focused on motion and time with regard to the will. The title also reflects a new emphasis on the acts of the will, rather than on the acts of the human being as an acting person. Halifax argued that the mind, the intellect, and the will—in short, every rational component of a human being—moves with successive motion:

[...] the motion of the mind is the swiftest of all, according to the Philosopher in *On Indivisible Lines*. Therefore, the motion of the mind is successive rather than instantaneous. The consequence is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* IV: the swift and the slow are differences of motion in time.

²⁶ See Nickl, 2005, p. 86, n. 367.

²⁷ I would leave the question open whether God co-acts with angels and their wills too.

²⁸ Robert Halifax, *Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum*, q. 5, *Utrum aliquis actus voluntatis possit esse subito productus a voluntate* (ed. Michałowska & Lukács, forthcoming).

Hence, if the motion of the mind is the swiftest, it must occur in time, and so forth. The Philosopher likewise says in *On Memory and Reminiscence* that the intellect understands in continuous time, and for the same reason, the will wills in continuous time, and consequently successively.²⁹

The homogeneous functioning of different processes within the human being is reflected in the human intellect, which also functions in a homogeneous manner. Halifax uses these characteristics to show that Aristotle's empiricist argument, in fact, works:

To the Philosopher's dictum that every recipient is devoid of the nature of what it receives, I would say that what the Philosopher intends is that two accidental or substantial forms of the same species cannot exist together, especially in the same subject, unless they become one—just as two lights cannot be caused in the same part of the medium unless they emit the same light, provided they are of the same species.³⁰

This is a particular interpretation of the Aristotelian sentence. Halifax emphasizes not only the homogeneity of the knower (the intellect) and the known (the cognized thing), as was commonly done, but also their unity ("unless they become one"). Two identical accidental and substantial forms, of the same species, in the same subject, end up functioning as one—just as two lights, of the same species, in the same medium become one light. To clarify the functioning of the epistemological process, Halifax often referred to everyday experiences accessible to him and his contemporaries.

²⁹ Robert Halifax, *Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum*, q. 5 (ed. Michałowska & Lukács, forthcoming): "[...] motus mentis est velocissimus secundum Philosophum in libro *De lineis indivisibilibus*, ergo motus mentis est successivus et non instantaneus. Consequentia patet per Philosophum IV *Physicorum*: *velox et tardum sunt differentiae motus in tempore*, igitur si sit motus velocissimus mentis, erit in tempore, etc. Hoc idem dicit Philosophus *De memoria et reminiscencia* quod intellectus intellegit in continuo tempore et, eadem ratione, voluntas vult in continuo tempore, et per consequens successive." [transl. Lukács]

³⁰ Robert Halifax, *Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum*, q. 5 (ed. Michałowska & Lukács, forthcoming): "Ad illud Philosophi (quod) omne recipiens denudatur a natura recepti, dico quod Philosophus vult dicere quod duae formae accidentales eiusdem speciei vel substantiales non possunt esse simul, praecipue in eodem subiecto nisi faciant per se unum, sicut duo lumina non possunt causari in eadem parte medii nisi faciant idem lumen, dummodo sint eiusdem speciei." [transl. Lukács]

Furthermore, optics and astronomy were fields to which Halifax frequently turned throughout his *Questions on the Sentences* to explain human beings and to describe their intellectual and volitional acts.³¹ Here, the analogy with light emission refers to an ordinary case: take all kinds of natural light—fire-, candle-, star-, moon- and sunlight—and let it shine, from two identical sources, in the same place. According to Halifax, their lights will unite and form one and the same light.³² However, if sunlight and candlelight shine in the same room, they will not form one light; likewise, if light from the sun and a star shine in the sky, they will not unite. Accordingly, there is no act of intellection until the knower and the known are united—that is, until the intellectual nature of the known thing is united with the human intellect.

Thomas Bradwardine

Thomas Bradwardine argued against Averroes and his doctrine of the unity of the intellect by appealing to the notion of an initial, blank state of the mind. If all humans shared the same intellect, that intellect would imbue all human souls with its inherent knowledge. Bradwardine argued that this would prevent us from possessing an initial, pure state of mind. He illustrates his point in an imagined dialogue with Averroes, presented in *De causa Dei*, Book I, Chapter, 1, Corollary 36:

The opinion is also clearly held by Avicenna, Algazel, and almost all other philosophers. If this is so, then how do you [i.e., Averroes] presume to assert that it is false that the intellect, before it understands, is like a slate on which nothing is actually written or painted? [...] Are there not also many things understood to which no true imaginary intentions correspond? But what you suppose to be related to the intellect as sensible things are to sense, and that the intellect necessarily needs them to know anything, seems true, and from the opinion of the philosophers in the beginning, when the intellect is like a bare slate (*tabula nuda*) on which nothing is painted or written, until the species of knowable things is acquired.³³

³¹ See Lukács, 2023.

³² Augustine described the “chameleonic mind”: the mind takes up the color of the thing perceived and cognized; it unites with it through an accident. See Silva, 2019.

³³ Thomas Bradwardine, *De causa Dei*, lib. I, cap. 1, cor. 36 (ed. Savile, 1618, pp. 80, 83): “Istam quoque sententiam totam Avicenna, Algazel, et omnes pene philosophi alii plane tenent. Si igitur haec ita se habent, quomodo praesumis asserere falsum esse quod intellectus, antequam intelligat, est sicut tabula in qua nihil est actu scriptum aut pictum?”

Thus, the principle of an original bareness in the intellect is upheld by Bradwardine as well. The fact that he shares this pre-requisite with other thinkers reinforces its significance.

Later, in the same corollary of Book I, Chapter 1 of *De causa Dei*, Bradwardine offers a rare definition of the human being, emphasizing the rational will as “a power or part of the rational soul.” It is the rational will that guides the actions specific to the human being:

Moreover, who does not know that nature is the principle and cause of motion and rest, in which, based on *Physics*, Book II, Chapter 3, the first is *per se* and not according to an accident, wherefore that which moves an animal forward is its essential form, namely the soul itself, and is properly informing it, which both reason proves and philosophers dispute. But the human being is moved forward, speaks, eats, and does similar things through the rational soul, namely through the rational will, which is undoubtedly a certain power or part of the rational soul.³⁴

For Bradwardine, the principle of motion is nature. The first cause of motion exists *per se* and is identical with God. This idea—that the prime mover is God—was widely accepted, yet, in emphasizing that God is the first principle of nature, Bradwardine went further and defined God as part of nature—a far less widely accepted assumption than the former. In doing so, Bradwardine ensured that divine causality was integrated into the order of causes that directly concerns everything in the world, including the human being. This idea marks a radical departure from Aristotle’s prime mover, who, while being the unmoved source of motion in the universe,

[...] Nonne et multa sunt intellecta, quibus nullae verae intentiones imaginariae correspondent? Quod autem supponis intentiones imaginarias se habere ad intellectum, sicut sensibilia ad sensum, et intellectum ad cognoscendum quodcumque ipsis necessario indigere, verum videtur, et de sententia philosophorum in principio, quando intellectus est quasi tabula nuda, in qua nihil est pictum vel scriptum, donec cognoscibilium species acquirantur.” [transl. Lukács]

³⁴ Thomas Bradwardine, *De causa Dei*, lib. I, cap. 1, cor. 36 (ed. Savile, 1618, p. 86): “Amplius autem quis nesciat naturam esse principium et causam movendi et quiescendi, in quo primum est *per se* et non secundum accidens 2 *Physicorum* 3, quare et id quod movet animal processive esse formam eius essentialem, scilicet animam ipsam essentialiter et proprie informantem, quod et ratione comprobatur et philosophi contestantur. Homo autem movetur processive, loquitur, comedit, et similia operatur per animam rationalem, per voluntatem videlicet rationalem, quam potentiam quandam seu partem animae rationalis haud dubio constat esse.” [transl. Lukács]

did not participate in its causality. Hence, it is not surprising that Bradwardine, as explained in the previous chapter, defined God as co-acting with both the bare and the virtuous or vicious wills of the human being.

Both moments of bareness—the bareness of the intellect and the bareness of the will—demonstrate that Bradwardine was committed to assigning a wide-ranging participation of God in human causality and action.

5. Conclusion

Besides the general acceptance of the Aristotelian empiricist thesis and its Averroist epistemological corollary—according to which the human intellect is first in a state of bareness and, in knowing the external world, is “stripped off the nature it receives”—different and original theses about causality and dependence on the natural world and the divine emerged in the wake of these idioms. Beginning with Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus, the adjectives *bare* (or *naked*) began to play an important role in describing human capacities. Their “bare will” operated in tandem with the “bare intellect” and “bare acts” resulted from the “bare will.” These metaphysical supplements—parts of an adjectival and adverbial metaphysics that drove progress and innovation in fourteenth-century thought³⁵—constitute an important development in the history of bare states, alongside the empiricism versus illumination debate.

A few decades after this debate, the Oxford Calculators Thomas Bradwardine and Robert Halifax employed the same adjective in different contexts and ways. While Aristotle’s theories of the intellect were significantly expanded, the Averroist theories of the intellect were firmly rejected. Beyond agreeing on these two positions, Bradwardine and Halifax reached different conclusions and emphasized diverse points of focus.³⁶ Both maintained the idea of a close connection between human nature and the natural world. Yet, distinctively—and this remains the main

³⁵ Lukács, 2024, pp. 114, 147, 196.

³⁶ The topic was debated by other thinkers too, and continued on the Continent; for these, see the paper of Andrea Nannini in this issue. For the “bare natures” (*nudae naturae*) of Christ, which must also be of Oxford origin and were discussed in Viennese biblical exegesis, see Lukács, 2024, pp. 164–171, esp. p. 170, n. 51.

conclusion of this paper—Thomas Bradwardine used the bare state of the human will to demonstrate its full dependency on God.

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Citation

Lukács, E. A. (2026). Concepts of Bareness (*nuditas*) in Medieval Philosophy. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 25–42. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-02.