

Analiza & Egzystencja

czasopismo filozoficzne

AiE!V

75

2026

**At the Intersections of Willing, Thinking, and Sensing:
Late Medieval Concepts of the Human**

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Uniwersytet Szczeciński

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Wersja papierowa jest wersją podstawową

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ISSN (print) 1734-9923 | ISSN (online) 2300-7621

WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE UNIwersYTETU SZCZECIŃSKIEGO

Wydanie I. Ark. wyd. 11,0. Ark. druk. 11,8. Format A5. Nakład 40 egz.

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EDITORIAL

Editorial

This special issue of *Analiza i Egzystencja* is dedicated to *The Intersection of Willing, Thinking, and Sensing: Late Medieval Concepts of the Human*. Its varied contributions show that many issues that might be described as psychological and anthropological were addressed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries from a plurality of perspectives, intertwining logic, theories of perception and cognition, physics, medical physiology, ethics, and theology. This plurality of models and viewpoints is also reflected in the backgrounds of the contributors to this volume; while trained as philosophers, they have each previously worked in disciplines related to these fields, ranging from theology to ethics, from logic to medicine, from cognitive theory to physics, and from ontology to semiotics. Taken together, their essays demonstrate that multidisciplinary approaches to the study of medieval texts are both fruitful and increasingly indispensable for understanding the cultural dynamics of the late Middle Ages.

Marek Gensler's contribution is devoted to Walter Burley's (c. 1275–c. 1345) discussion of the role of the heart and the brain in human and animal cognition in his commentary on Aristotle's *Parva naturalia*. Gensler highlights Burley's attempts to reconcile the Aristotelian theory, which considered the heart to be the principle of perception and the location of sleep, with the Avicennian view (itself inspired by Galenic physiology and medicine), which located this principle in the brain. Burley assigns the primary role to the heart and a secondary one to the brain. As Gensler notes in his conclusion, the limitation of Burley's approach lies in his reliance on a speculative, rather than an experiential, perspective when dealing with medico-anatomical and physiological issues.

Edit Anna Lukács examines the concept of nakedness in fourteenth-century metaphysical and epistemological discussions and its impact on prevailing forms of empiricism. Lukács traces the development of the adjective “bare” as applied to the intellect and the will, from the late thirteenth-century theological and epistemological debate between John Duns Scotus and Henry of Ghent to the way it was used by the Oxford Calculators, particularly Robert Halifax (d. c. 1349) and Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1295–1349). The latter employs the notion of bareness to insist that worldly events depend on God, whom he conceives not merely as the Aristotelian unmoved mover but as an active participant in the universe.

Andrea Nannini discusses John Rodington’s (?–1348) anti-Ockhamist polemic on the relationship between the intellect and the will, especially in connection with the beatific vision. Rodington supports the Scotist position on the freedom of the will and the contingency of the beatific vision itself. In particular, he adopts the framework developed by the Franciscan Francis of Marchia and, to preserve the freedom of the will, he insists on the distinction between the essential will (unchangeable by any external object, whether created or uncreated) and the accidental will (whose degrees of adherence depend on the quality of the object).

Michael W. Dunne’s essay examines Richard FitzRalph’s (1299–1360) account of the human mind in his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. FitzRalph seeks to bring together the hylomorphic framework of Aristotelian psychology with a neo-Augustinian approach grounded in a careful rereading of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. Dunne’s contribution demonstrates that FitzRalph’s neo-Augustinianism should not be interpreted as a conservative insensitivity to contemporary innovations. This is evident in his inquiry into the distinctiveness or identity of memory, the intellect, and the will (issues on which Augustine did not express himself clearly) and in his discussion of the distinction between the human soul and its rational, sensitive, and vegetative faculties, which leave room for a reconciliation with the positions of Aristotle and Averroes.

Monika Michałowska analyzes Roger Roseth’s (d. after 1347) position within Oxford debates on voluntarism in the first half of the fourteenth century. Roseth developed his theories of the will in a commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, which was apparently composed without being preceded by formal lectures. In question 2, Roseth follows and employs FitzRalph’s arguments on the relationship between cognition

and volition, also proposing his own ideas and solutions. In particular, Roseth develops a series of analogies between cognition/volition and natural phenomena, such as the relationship between the intensity of light and the intensity of its perception. These analogies lead him to the conclusion that an increased intensity of the cognition of an object does not result in the will's increased desire to attain it and, therefore, that the freedom of the will is unaffected.

Sylvain Roudaut's contribution examines John Dumbleton's anthropology, especially the relationship between the human soul and its faculties as discussed in Dumbleton's still under-researched *Summa logicae et philosophiae naturalis*, a work that remains largely unedited. Although Dumbleton avails himself of analytical techniques characteristic of the Oxford Calculators, he also embraces reductionist positions inspired by William Ockham, including in his treatment of the relationship between the soul and its operations. In studying the human body, Dumbleton develops a corpuscularian model, in which certain phenomena can be explained in terms of material entities and the processes they generate, such as nutrition and the perception of flavors. These views result in his endorsement of the theory that both primary and secondary qualities inhere in prime matter and the theory of the plurality of forms, both with regard to the body and its organs and with regard to the soul.

Claudia Appolloni presents a preliminary analysis of a question from a *Sentences* commentary penned by the English Franciscan Richard Brinkley between 1355 and 1360. Long considered lost and known only through a summary produced in the 1380s, the work has recently been identified by Appolloni in a manuscript held by the National Library of Florence. Her contribution discusses the fallibility of the senses, a topic that Brinkley addresses in a section of Question 1 of his commentary. Brinkley's analysis goes beyond sensory illusions or phenomena involving the persistence of perception in the sensory organ, issues already discussed by theologians such as Peter Auriol and Gregory of Rimini. He also examines physiological phenomena such as diplopia and employs thought experiments involving divine intervention in order to deny the existence of sensible species and to reject the theory of their multiplication through the medium as an explanation of perception. On this basis, he concludes that the possibility of error is intrinsic to the sensory faculty itself. By exploring human cognition in such terms, he ultimately grounds assent to the truths of faith in divinely

illuminated and assisted human reason, as opposed to purely human reason, which is confined to the knowledge of things and is never immune to error.

Finally, Costantino Marmo's contribution focuses on a chronologically earlier issue in addressing the topic central to Radulphus Brito's extensive philosophical work from the end of the thirteenth century. Specifically, Brito considers the possibility of knowing essences (or substances) through their accidents, which are at once the proper sensibles of the various sense organs and the effects of the substances themselves—in short, everything that humans can know through sensation. Brito's discussion is remarkable in that it shifts from the first version of his commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* to his commentary on Book I of Aristotle's *De anima*, a transition that suggests that the problem lies at the intersection of logic and theories of cognition. This change of the textual setting is accompanied by a corresponding change in Brito's position, bringing with it a clarification of the structure of the internal senses (reflected in an additional, still unedited, question appended to Brito's commentary on Book II of the *De anima*), though without making explicit the epistemological and semiotic implications of that position.

This issue evolved from the papers read at the international conference *At the Intersections of Willing, Thinking, and Sensing: Late Medieval Concepts of the Human*, which was collaboratively organized by the University of Bologna and the Medical University of Łódź and held at the Department of Arts, University of Bologna, on 19–20 May, 2025.

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ARTICLES

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Walter Burley on the Role of the Heart and the Brain in Human Cognition*

Keywords: Commentaries on *De somno et vigilia*, Medieval Aristotelianism, Medieval Oxford Philosophy, Natural Philosophy

Słowa kluczowe: Komentarze do *De somno et vigilia*, Średniowieczny Arystotelizm, Średniowieczna Filozofia Oksfordzka, Filozofia Przyrody

Abstract

Walter Burley’s commentary on Aristotle’s *De somno et vigilia* discusses a number of issues that go beyond explanations of sleep and dreaming. One of these is the role of the brain and the heart in human sense perception. While Burley eventually supports Aristotle’s view that the heart is the organ of the common sense and thus “the principle” of sensory cognition, he finds a cognitive role for the brain, too, even though he also identifies its other “occupations.” The complex scheme of relations between various organs of both the exterior and the interior senses bespeaks medieval scholars’ attention to the physiological aspect of cognition.

* This work was supported by the Polish National Science Centre (NCN) grant n. 2023/51/B/HS1/00308: Geoffrey of Aspall’s Theory of Sensual Cognition. Critical Edition and Historical-Philosophical Analysis of His “Quaestiones super De sensu et sensato Aristotelis.”

I would like to thank professor Eileen Sweeney for correcting my English.

1. Introduction

The image of the heart as the symbol of love is probably one of the last vestiges of its association, before William Harvey (1578–1657), with things much nobler than the pumping of the blood: emotions and cognition. This notion of the heart was widely recognized in pre-modern times, as implied by ample evidence found across a wide range of literary genres. The brain, by contrast, was somewhat neglected, as if the early authors were not sure what role it could play. Needless to say, the heart and the brain were both discussed in philosophical writings, too. In the Middle Ages, a more “scientific” approach to the heart as a sensory organ developed in the thirteenth century after Latin translations of Aristotle, Avicenna, and other thinkers had reached universities in Western Europe. By the turn of the fourteenth century, scholars at Paris, Oxford, and other centers of learning could consult relatively rich libraries of both old and new writings on psychology and physiology.

Walter Burley (ca. 1275–ca. 1345) was one of these scholars. Having begun his regency in the Faculty of Arts at Oxford in 1301, he spent the following six to seven years teaching there and commenting on many of Aristotle’s texts that were part of the curriculum, including a set of short treatises on psychology and physiology, known as the *Parva naturalia*. Burley’s commentary on Aristotle’s *De somno et vigilia*, which belongs to this set, discusses a number of issues that go beyond explanations of sleep and dreaming. To guide his commentary on Aristotle’s text, Burley, as is his wont, relies on a prior commentator and uses a question commentary on *De somno et vigilia* by the Oxonian Simon of Faversham (1260–1306) as his source material. In the second part of his own commentary, Burley analyzes actions of the various (external and internal) senses in sleep and waking. Besides providing the literal commentary that explains the issues dealt with by Aristotle, he raises four questions (the numbers indicate their positions in the commentary): (5) whether sleep occurs earlier than waking in animals; (6) whether sleep is a passion of the common sense or of another particular sense; (7) whether sleep is a passion of the heart; (8) whether the heart (rather than the brain) first conceives of sense perceptions.¹ While question 8 contains

¹ Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 66.

material from Simon of Faversham's question 5, no direct borrowings of this kind have been identified in the remaining questions. Apart from question 5, all of Burley's questions address the functions of the brain and the heart not only in sleep but also in wakefulness.

2. Anatomical and Physiological Background

To start with, Burley notably believes that the functions of the brain and the heart are not limited to cognitive processes; both organs, he insists, have several roles to play, and their actions pertain to the sensitive and the vegetative soul. As a result, the processes involved in the psychological and physiological roles are intertwined, with the former being dependent on the latter. In view of this relationship, I will first look into Burley's comments on human anatomy and the physiology of the heart and the brain, before moving to his discussion of their cognitive functions.

The heart and the brain do not receive equal treatment in Burley's commentary. References to the cognitive role of the heart are much more frequent and straightforward, whereas references to the brain usually occur in the polemical context. It is easy to understand this asymmetry. Specifically, whereas Burley endorses Aristotle's view of the heart as the first principle of the senses (*primum principium sensitivum*),² he also discusses a competing theory that locates the *primum principium sensitivum* in the brain.³ Correctly ascribing this notion to Avicenna, Burley is unwilling to discard Avicenna's idea outright, but tries to reconcile the two theories by having both organs receive proper attention.

The anatomical arguments in the dispute on the cognitive role of the heart and the brain concern their positions in the body and their relations to the nervous system. Burley's reasoning regarding the nervous system is not developed at length; he simply states that the principle of the senses is situated in the organ that is the first principle of the nerves and that, according to one opinion, the principle of the nerves is identified with the brain,⁴

² Aristoteles, *De somno et vigilia*, 2, 455b, 34–456a, 2.

³ Avicenna, *Liber de anima*, pars V, cap. 8 (ed. van Riet, 1968, pp. 181:46–182:70).

⁴ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “(3) Praeterea, ibi est primum principium sensitivum, ubi est primum

although he himself thinks that it is in the heart.⁵ Regrettably, Burley gives no reasons for either of the alternative standpoints, as if he was wary of engaging in purely medical issues, which required a better knowledge of anatomy than his.

The argument concerning the position of the first principle of the senses in the brain is more developed. In this respect, Burley cites the opinion of Avicenna, who claimed that the principle of the senses was located in the anterior part of the brain.⁶ This view is supported with one argument, stating that the principle of the senses should be located in the part of the body that maintains the temperature of the vital spirit (*spiritus*), a fiery-airy vivifying substance produced from the lightest elements in the heart, that is best for the performance of the senses. This optimum condition is obtained in the brain, because its coldness tempers the heat of the spiritus, whereas it is at its hottest in the heart. Burley relates Avicenna's argument:

The first principle of the senses is in the part in which the spirits are better proportioned for completing the act of sensing, but the spirits are better proportioned in the brain, because the more temperate the heat of the spirits, the better their proportion; now their heat is more temperate in the brain, because the coldness of the brain tempers the heat, and their heat is at its most intense in the heart.⁷

principium nervorum, quia nervi sunt organa sensuum, sed primum principium nervorum est in cerebro; igitur et cetera.”

⁵ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 185): “(Ad 3) Ad aliud dicendum quod primum principium nervorum est a corde et non a cerebro; ideo et cetera.”

⁶ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “(2) Praeterea, Avicenna dicit quod primum sensitivum est in anteriori parte capitis medullosa, igitur non est in corde.”

⁷ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “(1) [...] primum sensitivum est in ista parte, ubi spiritus sunt magis proportionales ad operationem sensuum complendam, sed spiritus sunt magis proportionales in cerebro, quia, quanto spiritus habent caliditatem magis temperatam, magis sunt proportionales; sed magis temperatam caliditatem habent in cerebro, quia per frigiditatem cerebri temperatur caliditas et in corde est calidum excellens.”

3. The Role of the Heart

In contrast to this brevity, the opposite opinion, which Burley attributes to Averroes and himself embraces, is discussed more extensively.⁸ This view holds that the common sense is located in the heart,⁹ for a number of reasons. First, it is stated that every particular sense is situated in a particular part of the body. Since the senses are not equal in power in animals, Burley proposes that, reasonably speaking, the power that is absolutely the first in an animal should be bound to the part of the body that is absolutely the first as well.¹⁰ The question is which power is absolutely first and which part of the body is first.

For Burley, the power of sensation is the first power of an animal, which is a sentient being. By the same token, the first organ that develops in the generation of the body must be the principle of the senses. However, the issue is more complex than it seems, for the principle of the senses can mean two things: either something that is the terminus for alterations originating in all the senses or something that is the immediate terminus for alterations originating in three senses: sight, hearing, and smell.¹¹ The latter understanding, which is more particular, is discussed in the next section; here, I focus on the former—and more general—one.

If the former understanding of the principle of the senses is adopted, it must be situated in the heart, because Burley regards the heart as the first organ formed in the generation of an animal. He supports his claim with Simon of Faversham's observation that, on being hit, the heart shrinks,

⁸ Averroes Cordubensis, *In De somno et vigilia* (ed. Shields, pp. 84:54–85:3).

⁹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “Oppositum dicit Commentator hic. Dicit enim quod sensus communis est in corde.”

¹⁰ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “Et hoc probatur per rationem sic: determinatus sensus est in determinata parte corporis, igitur videtur quod in parte corporis simpliciter prima oportet esse virtus simpliciter prima.”

¹¹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 182): “Dicendum quod per primum sensitivum possumus duo intelligere. Uno modo dicitur illud esse sensitivum primum ad quod terminantur immutationes omnium sensuum. Alio modo dicitur illud sensitivum primum ad quod immediate terminantur immutationes trium sensuum, scilicet visus, auditus et olfactus.”

which indicates a tactile reaction and thus proves that the heart is the site of the sense of touch¹² (itself the first of the senses, according to Aristotle¹³). This makes Burley conclude that the heart must also be the locus of the common sense since, besides touching, it also perceives itself touching, and this reflexive perception is characteristic of the common sense. Burley argues:

According to the first formulation, the first principle of the senses is in the heart, but according to the second formulation, it is in the brain. The reason for the former is that the heart is the first of the animal's bodily parts to be generated, and upon being generated it has the sense of touch, because it [reacts by] withdrawing itself when hit. That would not happen if there were no touch in it. And if there is touch, there is also the common sense, because a being that possesses the power of touch not only touches but perceives itself touching, which can only happen by the common sense. Therefore, the common sense is in the heart before other parts [of the body] are generated, regarding the common sense understood as the terminus of all changes in all [the other] senses.¹⁴

This idea is corroborated by the observation that the heart is the last organ to die, because when the other parts of the body are already cold, it is still alive and has the sensing power. As, according to Burley, there can be no sense without the common sense, the common sense must be located in the heart.¹⁵

¹² See Simon de Faversham, *Quaestiones in De somno et vigilia*, q. 5 (ed. Ebbesen, 2013, pp. 114–115): “Animal est animal propter sensitivum primum; nunc autem primum sensitivum in animali est ipsum cor, cuius ratio est quia formato corde non formatis aliis partibus ipsum retrahit se si pungatur, et hoc non esset nisi sensitivum esset in ipso.”

¹³ Aristoteles, *De anima*, II,3, 414b, 3–6.

¹⁴ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, pp. 182–183): “Primum sensitivum primo modo dictum est in corde, sed primum sensitivum secundo modo dictum est in cerebro. Ratio primi est, quia cor est prima pars quae generatur inter partes animalis, et corde generato est ibi tactus, quia, si pungatur, retrahit se. Quod non esset, nisi esset ibi tactus, et, si tactus, igitur sensus communis, quoniam habens tactum non solum tangit, sed percipit se tangere, quod non esset nisi per sensum communem; igitur sensus communis est in corde antequam aliae partes generentur, loquendo de sensu communi ad quem terminantur omnes immutationes omnium sensuum.”

¹⁵ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 183): “Similiter, cor est pars quae ultimo morietur, quia aliis partibus infrigidatis

Another pair of arguments in support of the idea that the heart is the location of the common sense is informed by the claim that there is a link between sensation and motion. In one of them, Burley adduces Aristotle's view that the principle of the senses and motion is the same¹⁶ and argues that the principle of motion is in the heart. This is because the principle of motion must be located where it can activate both the right side and the left side of the body. The central position of the heart in the body warrants this, which alone is sufficient to prove that the heart is the location of the principle of motion and, consequently, of the senses.¹⁷ In the other argument, Burley states that the power (*vigor*) that moves everything is caused by the perseverance (*perseverantia*) of the vital spirits. He reasons that if the principle of the spiritus is in the heart, the principle of motion is also in the heart; and if the principle of motion is in the heart, the principle of the senses is in the heart, too.¹⁸

4. The Role of the Brain

Having provided arguments in support of his main claim—that the heart is the location of the principle of the senses understood as the terminus for alterations originating in all the senses—Burley can now make concessions to the Avicennian solution and argue that the brain is the principle of the senses

et quasi mortificatis adhuc vivit cor et in eo est sensus; sed nullus sensus est sine sensu communi.”

¹⁶ Aristoteles, *De somno et vigilia*, 2, 455b, 34–456a, 2.

¹⁷ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 183): “Item, idem est principium motus et sensus per Philosophum. Sed primum principium movens in animali est in corde, nam movens et motum sunt distincta et movens prius est moto naturaliter. Sed in animali inveniuntur duae partes moveri, scilicet pars dextra et pars sinistra, igitur moventur ab aliquo priori eis secundum naturam. Et hoc non potest esse, nisi sit aliquod situatum in medio ipsorum quod sit prius ipsis secundum naturam; et hoc est ipsum cor.”

¹⁸ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, pp. 183–184): “Item, omne quod movet, per vigorem movet. Vigor autem causatur ex perseverantia spiritus. [...] Sed principium cuiuslibet spiritus motivi originaliter est a corde, igitur primum principium motivum est in corde. Sed, ubi est primum principium motivum, ibi est primum principium sensitivum; igitur primum principium sensitivum est in corde.”

understood as the immediate terminus for alterations originating in three senses: sight, hearing, and smell.¹⁹ The reason for this compromise is that the senses function in different ways and require different conditions for their performance. Some senses need the most intense heat, because they are acted upon in a more material manner by more material qualities, while others need moderate heat. The former, specifically touch and taste, must have their principles located in the heart, which is the hottest organ in the body and the principle of heat.²⁰ The remaining three senses, whose organs are acted upon in a more spiritual manner, require moderate heat for their performance. This is why their principles are located in the brain, which is cold by nature and thus mitigates the heat coming from the heart. Nonetheless, as there is no complete judgement of alterations in these senses until they come to the heart, the absolute principle of the senses must be in the heart. It is interesting to see how Burley organizes his argument to reconcile the two opposite opinions:

But the other senses, which are altered by objects through temperate heat and are changed more spiritually, are situated next to the brain, where the heat coming from the heart is moderated by the coldness of the brain. Therefore, the brain is the first principle of these senses, even though the process of change comes to an end in the heart because, granting that alterations of [some] senses reach the brain, still there is no complete judgement of the alterations there until they reach the first principle of the senses, which is the heart. Therefore, the first principle of the senses in the absolute sense is in the heart.²¹

¹⁹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 184): “Loquendo tamen de primo sensitivo ad quod terminantur immutationes trium sensuum, dico quod illud est in cerebro.”

²⁰ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 184): “Et ratio est, quia quidam sensus indigent excellenti caliditate ad hoc quod sentiant, quia immutantur materialiter et a qualitatibus magis materialibus. A corde autem est primum principium caliditatis. Et ideo organa talium sensuum situata sunt iuxta cor, cuiusmodi sunt tactus et gustus.”

²¹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 184): “Sed alii sensus qui immutantur ab obiectis per caliditatem temperatam et spiritualius immutantur organa ipsorum sunt situata iuxta cerebrum, ubi per frigiditatem cerebri caliditas quae est a corde est temperata. Ideo cerebrum est primum principium istorum sensuum, verumtamen immutationes illorum sensuum ultimo terminantur ad cor, quia, etsi alterationes sensuum perveniunt ad cerebrum, adhuc non est ibi complete

Of course, when talking of “spiritual” changes, Burley uses the term in its materialist meaning of a vital spirit that consists of fiery and airy matter, simply stressing their subtler nature. In the same vein, when he talks of the “more material” qualities of touch and taste, he underlines their less subtle nature. According to Burley, this is what Avicenna actually had in mind when stating that the first principle of the senses was located in the anterior part of the brain.²²

5. Cooperation Between the Heart and the Brain

Once the division of labor between the heart and the brain has been established, Burley can discuss other issues. In line with the main focus of the text he comments on, he analyzes the functioning of the senses during sleep. In this respect, he also insists on the involvement of both the brain and the heart. Since sleep means, among other things, the suspension of cognition, in which both organs are instrumental, it is important to know what is switched off, where, and for what reason. As before, Burley draws on physiology to explain the psychological process and ponders whether sleep belongs to the heart or to the brain, seeing that sleep is the attribute of the part of the body whose power is bound in sleep.²³

His answer is complex, like his solution to the problem of the first principle of the senses. He reports that there are two opinions on this issue, with one attributing sleep to the brain and the other ascribing it to the heart. Although Burley himself favors the latter, he gives due attention to the former, too.²⁴ Interestingly, his main reason for supporting the “heart option” seems to be related to its locomotive, rather than cognitive, function.

iudicium de alteratione antequam perveniant ad primum sensitivum, ut ad cor. Et ideo primum sensitivum est in corde simpliciter.”

²² Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 8 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 184): “Et hoc vult Avicenna qui dicit quod primum sensitivum non simpliciter sed secundum quid, id est respectu trium sensuum, est in anteriori parte capitis.”

²³ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 179): “Quaeritur: cuius partis corporis somnus sit passio, utrum scilicet cordis? Et videtur quod non, nam somnus est passio illius partis cuius virtus ligatur in somno.”

²⁴ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 180): “Ad quaestionem dicunt quidam quod somnus est passio cerebri et quidam quod est passio cordis.”

Because the principle of motion and rest must be the same, and the heart is, as we have seen, the principle of motion, the heart must also be the principle of sleep, given that sleep is a kind of rest.²⁵ Burley responds to a possible objection—that somnambulists can walk while asleep—elsewhere, saying that the organ of motion is situated next to the heart and thus is not strongly affected by the descent of the cooled vapor.²⁶ However, he does not explain why the similar position of the principles of touch and taste does not produce similar results and treats all the exterior senses in the same way.²⁷ At the same time, in describing wakefulness, he states that it consists of an act of perception or, at least, a disposition for it, whose absolute principle is in the heart, thus fully acknowledging the heart's cognitive function.²⁸

Burley notes that even those who claim that sleep is a passion of the brain admit that the principle of sleep is in the heart, because the latter is also the principle of all acts of perception with respect to its origin and its first act. Nevertheless, they insist that the brain is the principle of the senses with respect to operations and the second act, that is, the one that follows the act of the heart, in which perception originates. Since sleep is the immobilization of the senses with respect to operations and the second act, it must be a passion of the brain.²⁹ This notion is also substantiated by the observation

²⁵ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 180): “Praeterea, idem est principium motus et quietis, sed cor est principium motus animalis; igitur cor est principium quietis, sed somnus est quies animalis, ergo cor est principium somni; igitur somnus est passio cordis.”

²⁶ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 10 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 193): “Immobilitatio in sensus exterioribus contingit ex hoc quod calor procedens a corde non influit virtutem in organa sensuum exteriorum propter descensum vaporis in frigidati. Sed non oportet quod organum motus immobilitetur, quia organum motus situatum est iuxta cor.”

²⁷ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, (6) *Consequenter autem cum his*, (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 198): “Intelligendum est quod evaporationes ad cerebrum elevatae et ibidem in frigidatae propter gravitatem suam necesse est descendere non solum per easdem vias sed per alias, ut per concavitates nervorum deferentium spiritus vitales et calorem ad organa sensuum exteriorum; et tunc impediendo influxum sensus communis ad sensus exteriores causatur somnus.”

²⁸ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 181): “Vigilia consistat in actu sentiendi vel in dispositione ad actum sentiendi.”

²⁹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 180): “Sed dicunt quod cor est principium somni et omnium actionum sentiendi quantum ad originem et quantum ad actum primum. Sed cerebrum est principium

that because the brain is where the vapors, the descent of which causes sleep, are cooled, sleep must be a passion of the brain.³⁰

When discussing the opinion that sleep is a passion of the heart, Burley first notes that some conclude the following: sleep is principally the passion of the heart, so sleep must also take place in the heart, just like the common sense, whose passion sleep is.³¹ Although this argument seems coherent and compelling, Burley rejects it. His own opinion calls for a meticulous explanation of the complexity of sleep, which, in his view, cannot be confined to any particular organ of the body, but occurs in every part of it. (Given this, Burley defines sleep by reference to the motor functions.) This is clear when considering the cognitive functions. Sleep does not just inactivate one sense, but affects all of them. For this reason, sleep should not be linked either only to the brain or only to the heart. Similarly, since wakefulness essentially entails an act of perception of whatever sense, it is present in all the organs of the senses. As both sleep and wakefulness impact the whole of the body, they can be regarded as being subjectively in the entire body. Yet, sleep and wakefulness are principally in the heart, because it is the primary part of every animal and the source of all powers of the other organs, including the organs of the senses. The length and complexity of Burley's reasoning on this issue warrant quoting in full:

But neither of these opinions is valid, because from [the fact that] sleep is the immobilization of the senses, and not just one sense but any sense, it follows that sleep immobilizes the senses everywhere, so, since all the senses are immobilized in sleep, sleep must occur in each organ of the senses. Therefore, it is not to be assumed that sleep is only in the brain or only in the heart.

sensitivum quantum ad operationem et quantum ad actum secundum. Et, quia somnus est immobilitatio sensuum quantum ad operationem et quantum ad actum secundum, ideo dicunt quod somnus est passio cerebri.”

³⁰ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 180): “Dicentes tamen quod est passio cerebri dicunt hoc, quia somnus causatur ex elevatione vaporum ad cerebrum. Cum enim vapores eleventur ad cerebrum et ibi infrigidantur, fiunt vapores graves et descendunt propter gravitatem et obturant meatus spirituum et impediunt, ne sensus communis possit influere virtutem ad sensus exteriores.”

³¹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 180): “Et alii dicunt quod somnus est passio cordis principaliter, ita quod inter partes corporales principaliter habet fieri in corde. Et hoc est, quia cor est principium motus omnium sensuum, ideo est principium quietis, et sic est principium somni. Et similiter sensus communis (cuius somnus est passio) est in corde; ideo somnus est subiective in corde.”

Similarly, wakefulness consists in an act of sense perception, so, since an act of sense perception is in the organ of each and every sense, wakefulness must occur in the organ of whichever sense. Therefore, since sleep and wakefulness occur with respect to the same [subject], it follows that sleep is in the organ of each and every sense, so it is neither only in the brain nor only in the heart. For this reason, it should be said that sleep is subjectively in the sleeper and is not determined to any part of the body in such a way that it is in no other one. This is because sleep and wakefulness occur with respect to the same subject. But wakefulness is in the whole body, because it consists of the act of sense perception, and the act of sense perception occurs in each and every part of the body, or at least each part of an animal, while awake, is disposed to an act of sense perception. Therefore, since wakefulness consists of the act of sense perception or of a disposition for it, it is evident that wakefulness is in the entire body and, consequently, that sleep is in the entire body. Yet, the heart is the principal part of the body, and the power of every other part is drawn from the heart; for this reason, the heart is the first principle of the senses. For the same reason, wakefulness is principally in the heart, as is sleep.³²

At the same time, the brain is the efficient cause of sleep, because it is where the vapors, whose descent causes sleep, are cooled.³³

³² Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, pp. 180–181): “Sed neutra istarum opinionum valet, nam ex quo somnus est ligatio sensuum et non solum unius sensus, sed cuiuslibet sensus, oportet quod somnus sit ubicumque ligatur sensus, et tunc, cum ligentur omnes sensus in somno, oportet quod somnus sit in organo cuiuslibet sensus; igitur non est ponere quod somnus sit solum in cerebro nec etiam solum in corde. Similiter, vigilia consistit in actu sentiendi, cum igitur actus sentiendi sit in organo cuiuslibet sensus, oportet quod in organo cuiuslibet sensus sit vigilia. Cum igitur somnus et vigilia habent fieri circa idem, sequitur quod somnus habet esse in organo cuiuslibet sensus; igitur non solum habet esse in cerebro nec solum in corde. Ideo dicendum est quod somnus est subiective in dormiente et non est determinate in una parte corporis, ita quod non in alia; cuius ratio est: quia somnus et vigilia habent fieri circa idem subiectum. Sed vigilia habet esse in toto corpore, quoniam vigilia consistit in actu sentiendi et in qualibet parte corporis est actus sentiendi, vel saltem quaelibet pars animalis in vigilando est disposita ad sentiendum in actu. Cum igitur vigilia consistat in actu sentiendi vel in dispositione ad actum sentiendi, patet quod vigilia habet esse in toto corpore, et per consequens somnus habet esse in toto corpore. Verumtamen cor est principalis pars animalis et a corde influitur virtus cuilibet alteri parti; ideo cor est primum principium sentiendi. Et ideo vigilia habet principaliter esse in corde, et ideo somnus habet principaliter esse in corde.”

³³ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 7 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 181): “Aliae rationes probant quod cerebrum est causa effectiva somni.”

Burley's examination of sleep also yields interesting insights into the relations between the common sense, which is located in the heart, and the external senses. Burley cites Aristotle's opinion in Book III of *De anima*, where the relation between the common sense and the particular senses is compared to that between the center of a circle and the lines that run from the center to the circumference:³⁴ the common sense is the foundation upon which the exterior senses are established. For this reason, when the common sense is immobilized, the exterior senses are immobilized as well.³⁵ To explain this relation more accurately, Burley avails himself of another comparison, likening the common sense to a cloud situated between an individual and the sun. As the cloud prevents the sunlight from reaching the individual, so the common sense, when deactivated, prevents the heat and the spiritus from reaching the external senses and turns them back to the internal ones.³⁶ This action makes memory, phantasy, and judgement free to act.³⁷ This example underlines the preeminence of the common sense over the other senses with respect to the immediate flow of the powers to act.³⁸

³⁴ Aristoteles, *De anima*, III, 10, 433b, 30–31.

³⁵ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 6 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 177): “Ad quaestionem dicendum quod somnus est passio sensus communis; cuius ratio est: nam in somno ligantur omnes sensus exteriores, igitur necesse est aliquid primo ligari super quo fundantur sensus exteriores. Huiusmodi est sensus communis, nam per Philosophum secundo (sic!) *De anima* sensus communis est velut centrum, quoniam se habet ad sensus particulares sicut centrum in circulo se habet ad lineas exeuntes a centro ad circumferentiam. Et ideo sensus communis est illud quod primo ligatur in somno.”

³⁶ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 6 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 178): “Somnus non est passio sensus particularis, sed cessante sensu communi a sua operatione cessant omnes alii sensus a suis operationibus; ergo somnus est passio sensus communis. Unde intelligendum quod sensus communis est inter sensus exteriores et interiores sicut nubes inter nos et Solem. Unde, sicut nubes prohibet lumen Solis venire ad nos et facit ipsum reflecti versus Solem, sic sensus communis ligatus prohibet influentiam caloris et spiritus pervenire ad sensus exteriores et facit ipsa reflecti ad sensus interiores.”

³⁷ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 6 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 179): “Dicendum quod in somno non solum debilitatur virtus exterior, sed primo et principaliter debilitatur virtus interior, scilicet sensus communis. Unde, licet quidam sensus interiores, ut phantastica et memorativa, solvantur in somno (quae virtutes sunt retentivae specierum sensibilibium), et etiam aestimativa (quae percipit species non sensatas), tamen sensus communis (qui est receptivus specierum sensibilibium) ligatur in somno.”

³⁸ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 6 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 178): “Dicendum est quod unus sensus dicitur esse alio prior tripliciter:

This reasoning leads Burley to conclude that the role of the common sense corresponds to that of the most eminent power or the power that rules over the other senses. When it ceases to perform its operations, they stop theirs, too.³⁹

6. Conclusion

My brief overview of Burley's remarks on the role of the brain and the heart in animal cognition in three questions of his commentary on *De somno et vigilia* suggests some conclusions. Admittedly, as this theme is not central to Burley's argument in the questions, the relevant material is somewhat scant, yet it is not insufficient for reconstructing his views on the issue. As is typical of Burley, his position is conciliatory. It is underpinned by the distinction between the absolute and relative understanding of the principle of the senses, which was drawn by Simon of Faversham in question 5 of his commentary on *De somno et vigilia*.⁴⁰ Burley is aware that Aristotle believed the brain to have a largely vegetative role and to function as the body's cooler for the spiritus transporting heat from the heart.⁴¹ Aristotle also argued that the three external senses—sight, hearing, and smell—were positioned next to the brain because this location created suitable conditions for their operations. Burley accepts this explanation but adds, following Avicenna,

aut quantum ad vitae necessitatem aut quantum ad immediatam virtutis influentiam aut quantum ad cognitionem. Quantum [...] ad immediatam virtutis influentiam est sensus communis prior aliis."

³⁹ Walter Burley, *Commentarius in De somno et vigilia*, q. 6 (ed. Gensler & Mansfeld, 2025, p. 178): "Unde sensus communis inter alios sensus est sicut princeps, cui omnes alii sensus innituntur. Ideo sensu communi vacante et cessante a sua operatione cessant omnes alii sensus a suis operationibus."

⁴⁰ Simon de Faversham, *Quaestiones in De somno et vigilia*, q. 5 (ed. Ebbesen, 2013, p. 115): "Unde sensitivum primum dupliciter potest dici: vel sensitivum primum simpliciter, et sic est in corde, vel respectu istorum trium sensuum, et sic est in cerebro. Et quod sensitivum primum simpliciter sit in corde signum est quia licet alterationes sensuum perveniant ad cerebrum, ibi non est completum et perfectum iudicium, sed oportet quod a cerebro perveniant ad cor et ibi perventis statim de ipsis est iudicium completum et terminatum; et ideo sensitivum primum simpliciter est in corde, sensitivum primum secundum quid est in cerebro."

⁴¹ Aristoteles, *De somno et vigilia*, 3, 414b, 23–30.

that the brain is actually the principle of these senses, albeit in a secondary way.⁴² What is really important for sensory cognition, however, is the heart. Strange though it may be, Burley does not articulate any objections to Aristotle's view, which attributed so many different functions to a relatively small and simple organ. The main reason for Burley's endorsement of this view is that, apparently, his approach to anatomy and physiology is speculative, rather than experiential. This can be seen, for instance, in the importance Burley ascribes to the argument in which the centrality of the heart in the body determines its role as the principle of heat, the principle of the spiritus, the principle of motion, and the principle of the senses. All things considered, this part of Aristotelian teaching was something that Walter Burley evidently learned by heart.

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⁴² Avicenna, *Liber de anima*, pars V, cap. 8 (ed. van Riet, 1968, pp. 181:46–182:70).

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Citation

Gensler, M. (2026). Walter Burley on the role of the heart and the brain in human cognition. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 9–24. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-01.

ARTICLES

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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.

ARTICLES

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John Rodington: The Primacy of the Will over the Intellect in Relation to the Ultimate End*

Keywords: Beatific Enjoyment, Contingency of Fruition, Metaphysics, Rodington, Free Will

Słowa kluczowe: Uszczęśliwiające Oglądanie, Kontyngencja Spełnienia, Metafizyka, Rodington, Wolna Wola

Abstract

In this paper I present John Rodington's opinion on the contingent fruition of the supreme good. Upholding Duns Scotus's opinion against William Ockham's criticism, Rodington states that the beatific enjoyment is contingent and depends only on the will. In debating this issue, Rodington delves into the nature of the human will, which he conceives as entirely independent from the intellect's knowledge. In relation to this specific aspect, Rodington distances himself from Richard FitzRalph, despite the fact that the two authors display certain conceptual affinities, which the present article seeks to highlight. Furthermore, Rodington manifests a notable affinity with the theses advanced by Francis of Marchia, an Italian Franciscan who occupies a comparatively marginal position within the English intellectual milieu. The study concludes with a concise examination of what Rodington designates as *dubia*, a series of subordinate questions that engage with the most distinctive and original dimensions of his thought.

* The research for this article has been funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, under grant agreement UMO-2022/47/B/HS1/00071.

1. Introduction

A widely shared idea about the English Franciscan John Rodington (?–1348) is that he was a follower of John Duns Scotus (ca. 1265–1308) and disagreed with some views of William Ockham (ca. 1287–1347).¹ As is the case with many other medieval masters, the scarcity of critical editions is one of the principal obstacles that prevent Rodington's thought from being widely known. Apart from Martin Tweedale's Ph.D. dissertation, which dates back to 1965,² very few questions from Rodington's *Sentences* commentary and from his *Quodlibet* have been edited so far.³ Rodington's *Sentences* commentary is supposed to have been composed at Oxford around 1328,⁴ while it is uncertain whether or not he had previously stayed in Paris, but, if so, it must have been before 1322.

My paper focuses on the analysis of an unpublished question by Rodington, which I have transcribed in its entirety, and which I will approach from both a theoretical perspective—by examining its most significant doctrinal content—and a historical-philosophical one, by situating Rodington in relation to the most relevant authors of the period. I will analyze Rodington's *Sentences* commentary, Book I, distinction 1, question 4,⁵ where he asks whether the intellectual knowledge of the ultimate end determines and necessitates the will to enjoy it (*Quarto, quaero utrum fine apprehenso per intellectum*

¹ Courtenay, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780192683120.013.23935>: “In the areas of his thought that have been studied, such as his views on human cognition, the object of knowledge, and the doctrine of grace and justification, Rodington shows himself to have been a follower and defender of Duns Scotus, and critical of some of the opinions of William Ockham.” See also Schabel & Friedman, 2003, pp. 42–43: “[...] the Franciscan John of Rodington takes as his point of departure a detailed critique of the view of William of Ockham from a Scotistic point of view.”

² Tweedale, 1965, containing editions of Rodington's Prologue, qq. 1–4, and I Sent., dist. 2, qq. 1, 6, dist. 3, q. 3.

³ For an edition of Rodington, I Sent., dist. 11, see Schabel, & Friedman, 2003, pp. 80–88; for an edition of Rodington, I Sent., dist. 3, q. 3, see Nardi, 1952, pp. 74–92 (re-edited by Tweedale in his Ph.D. dissertation).

⁴ Schabel & Friedman, 2003, p. 43: “[...] Rodington's *Sentences* commentary, which stems from lectures probably given in 1328–29 [...]”

⁵ My analysis is based on manuscript *V* (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5306) checked against manuscript *P* (Tarragona, Biblioteca provincial, 93).

voluntas necessario fruatur illo).⁶ This question proves to be crucial in bringing to light a plurality of elements: the attempt to preserve the validity of Duns Scotus's philosophy; a sharply articulated critique of William Ockham's approach; a close intellectual affinity with Richard FitzRalph; and the likely confirmation of Rodington's Parisian stay, insofar as Rodington refers on several occasions to the Franciscan Francis of Marchia (ca. 1285/1290–after 1343), an author apparently not given particular consideration by Oxford-based thinkers. The wording of Rodington's question is almost identical to that of Duns Scotus,⁷ who also asked whether the will necessarily enjoyed the ultimate end known through the intellect (*Utrum scilicet fine apprehenso per intellectum necesse sit voluntatem frui eo*).⁸ Scotus relied on his concept of the freedom of the will, which rested on the will's ability to suspend its acts, to solve the issue by claiming that the enjoyment of the supreme good was contingent. He proposed four conclusions warranting the contingency of enjoyment: in general, in particular, without supernaturally elevating habit, and even in the presence of charity, whereby he repeatedly stated that the will *non necessario fruatur*.⁹ In Scotus's terms, the contingency (that is, non-necessity) of enjoyment does not entail its possible absence, but only the fact that the "control" of the act of loving God entirely depends on the will. At first glance, even Ockham embraces an identical outcome,

⁶ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, ff. 38vb–44ra; P, ff. 36rb–41vb).

⁷ It is thus possible to add Rodington to the small group of English authors who upheld Duns Scotus's position, including Henry of Harclay, John of Reading, and the Benedictine Robert Greystones. See Henninger, Andrews & Ottman, 2017, p. lxxx: "From our examination of this long question, it is clear that Henry of Harclay and Greystones are among the very few at Oxford to share and defend Duns Scotus's teaching on the contingency of beatific fruition. Guido Alliney has uncovered only one other defender of Scotus's doctrine at this time at Oxford, John of Reading."

⁸ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 1, pars 2, q. 2, n. 77 (editio Vaticana, II, 1950, p. 59).

⁹ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 1, pars 2, q. 2, nn. 143–146 (editio Vaticana, II, 1950, pp. 96–97): "Quantum ad primum articulum dico quod sicut voluntas fruatur non necessario his quae sunt ad finem, sic nec fine obscure apprehenso et in universali. Quantum ad secundum articulum concedo cum prima opinione quod non necessario fruatur fine obscure viso et in particulari. Quantum ad tertium articulum dico quod voluntas elevata non necessario quantum est ex parte sui fruatur fine sic viso. Quantum ad quartum dico quod voluntas non elevata supernaturaliter potest frui illo fine."

affirming that the will contingently and freely enjoys the supreme good.¹⁰ However, on closer inspection, all of Ockham's subsequent conclusions make the opposite point, insisting that human beings (*in via*) and even saints (*in patria*) constantly have the ability to nill God.¹¹ What the possibility of nilling God involves is not merely the suspension of the act of loving God, but rather a positive act of nilling the supreme good understood as such.

Although the root of the two arguments is similar—namely, the will can control its own acts, irrespective of what the intellect has understood in relation to the willed object—their outcomes are totally different, as the “moderate” Scotistic outcome (the good will contingently chooses to enjoy and love God) is supplanted by a “harsher” result: the possibility of refusing God as such. Echoes of the conflict between these two radically different approaches also reverberate in Richard FitzRalph (ca. 1300–1360), who was well aware of the novelty of both Scotus's and Ockham's thought, as recently shown by Monika Michałowska and Michael W. Dunne in their edition of FitzRalph's *Lectura super Sententias*, question 10.¹² More than that, FitzRalph could actually have been Rodington's *socius*,¹³ which would confirm the date of Rodington's *Sentences* commentary at around 1328/1329.

¹⁰ William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 503): “Prima igitur conclusio erit ista quod voluntas contingenter et libere—modo exposito—fruitur fine ultimo ostenso in universali.”

¹¹ William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, pp. 504–506): “Secunda conclusio est quod aliquis potest nolle beatitudinem in particulari. Tertia conclusio est quod aliquis potest nolle beatitudinem in particulari creditam esse possibilem, ita quod potest nolle habere beatitudinem. Quarta conclusio est quod videns divinam essentiam et carens fruitione beatifica potest nolle illam fruitionem. Quinta conclusio est quod talis videns divinam essentiam, carens per potentiam divinam absolutam dilectione Dei,—de quo patebit in quarto,—potest nolle Deum.”

¹² Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 29: “Rather, when invoking Scotus's concept of the will's capability to suspend its own acts, which was one of the greatest novelties of Scotus's voluntarism, FitzRalph seems in fact to refer to other thinkers whose writings indeed upheld the possibility of nilling God. [...] Nilling God freely and with a clear cognition was an issue that surfaced time and again in discussions at Oxford, with the prevalent stance denying human beings such an option. However, there were authors—prominently, William Ockham—who professed a different view on this subject and might be subsumed under the enigmatic *plurimi moderni doctores* moniker.”

¹³ See Dunne, 2023, pp. 63, n. 5, 64, 70.

2. After Duns Scotus and Ockham

Rodington's *Sentences* commentary has a peculiar structure. Unlike most of the English commentaries of the time, which are question-based, it is a distinction-based *Lectura*, where each distinction encompasses one or more questions.¹⁴ After a few arguments pro and contra, each question is divided into two distinct sections: the first one contains the conclusions that answer the opening question, complete with their sets of proofs, objections, and solutions; the second one, labelled as *dubia*, proposes a series of sub-questions. Each *dubium* has its own set of arguments pro and contra, and the arguments that are rebutted reveal which part of the *dubium* is true and which is false. In the modern edition, each of these *dubia* takes up from half a page up to a page and a half.

Devoted to the solution of the question, the first part of distinction 1, question 4, contains four conclusions, which are almost identical to those provided by Duns Scotus.¹⁵ They establish the contingency of the act of enjoyment¹⁶ according to different levels: *in universali*, *in particulari*, *cum caritate*, and *superelevata*.¹⁷ The first and the third levels are crucial, since the objections against these conclusions represent a long string of arguments coming from Ockham's *Sentences* commentary, which highlights Rodington's attitude as a concerted attempt to reassert the value of Duns Scotus's perspective after Ockham's harsh criticism.

¹⁴ See Lechner, 1935, pp. 236–246, for a complete *tabula quaestionum* covering all four books of Rodington's *Sentences* commentary.

¹⁵ See above, footnote 9.

¹⁶ See also Robert Greystones, *Lectura super Sententias*, I, dist. 1, q. 3 (ed. Henninger, Andrews & Ottman, 2017, p. 172): "Teneo igitur quod voluntas velit contingenter finem ostensum, sicut ea quae sunt ad finem. Et hoc maxime quia quilibet experitur hoc in seipso." Despite his affinity to Scotus, Greystones does not appear to share Rodington's constant rejection of Ockham's positions.

¹⁷ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4, concl. 1–4 (V, ff. 38vb–41rb): "Prima conclusio est quod voluntas non necessario fruitur fine ultimo in universali apprehenso [...]. Secunda conclusio, quod non necessario fruitur fine obscure apprehenso et in particulari, et hoc dico necessitate naturali [...]. Tertia conclusio, quod stante caritate et claritate visionis voluntas potest non frui fine clare viso [...]. Quarta conclusio, quod voluntas supernaturaliter elevata per habitum non necessario fine ultimo fruitur." See footnote 9 above.

Yet the issue is in fact inherently more complex than this straightforward approach might suggest. Because both Duns Scotus and Ockham seem to espouse, at least in their first conclusions, the same notion of the ultimate end being enjoyed in a contingent manner,¹⁸ it should be understood more accurately why Rodington contradicts Ockham with so much patience and persistence. The first reason is that Duns Scotus advanced his first conclusion with five main arguments (presented by Rodington in a different order than in Scotus's text),¹⁹ which contained elements that Ockham refused to accept.²⁰ Without elucidating them here, let me note that one of these arguments implies the formal distinction between the intellect and the will, which Ockham repeatedly rejected.²¹ This issue is philosophically fundamental: the formal distinction between the intellect and the will enables the intellect to grasp the truth of being, and the will the goodness of being. Hence, it is no coincidence that a metaphysical reductionist, like Ockham, simply disregarded the idea of the formal distinction, and it is equally important to examine why and how other philosophers and theologians responded to Ockham's metaphysical minimalist approach.

Another, more profound reason is connected with the fact that Rodington appears to refute Ockham's theses by imputing excessive empiricism to him. Indeed, the first argument that sustains Ockham's first conclusion (namely, that the enjoyment of the ultimate end is contingent) is grounded in the inference that the intellect can affirm that no beatitude is possible because the only existing reality is the one we live in.²² The implicit belief that the wayfarer's

¹⁸ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 1, pars 2, q. 2, concl. 1, n. 143 (editio Vaticana, II, 1950, p. 96); William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 503).

¹⁹ See John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 1, pars 2, q. 2, nn. 80, 92–93, 133 (editio Vaticana, II, 1950, pp. 60, 66–67, 88–89).

²⁰ See William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, pp. 491–492, 493–494, 495, 498).

²¹ William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 491): “Praeterea, intellectus et voluntas nullo modo distinguuntur ex parte rei, et tamen secundum istum intellectus necessario causat intellectionem, et contingenter et libere voluntas causat volitionem.” On the conflict between Ockham and Duns Scotus over the formal distinction, see my recent paper (Nannini, 2026).

²² John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 39va): “Ad istam conclusionem arguunt isti qui dicunt ad rationes Doctoris aliter sic: ‘Illud potest esse nolitum quod potest recta ratione dictari esse nolendum; sed intellectus

own condition was the sole one that existed could lead Ockham to claim that the intellect was able to nill beatitude because there was no state of existence, which would be the condition of the *frutor* (or *comprehensor*) in *patria*. Ockham's second, even more empirical argument, states that since anyone might desire to not-be, anyone might also refuse or nill beatitude because not being blessed directly follows from non-being. In this case, too, the argument is based on the materialistic premise that one's body, or one's material existence, is the only kind of existence involved in the desire of not-being at all.²³ Ockham's third argument, which has received little attention, states that believers can freely choose to sin so that, consequently, they do not desire beatitude.²⁴

In his reply to Ockham, Rodington affirms that the first argument is incorrect because it cannot be inferred, from the point of view of this life, that there is no further life, or that there is only this level of existence. As Rodington states, it can be rightly maintained that there might be no beatitude, at least for someone, but not that beatitude as such is impossible.²⁵

potest dictare beatitudinem non esse possibilem, quia potest credere tantum statum istum esse possibilem quem videmus; igitur potest nolle quod isti statui repugnat, et sic nolle beatitudinem.' For Ockham's text, see William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 503).

²³ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 39va): "Secundo, 'Quicumque potest efficaciter velle antecedens, potest velle consequens scitum esse consequens vel opinatum; sed aliquis potest efficaciter velle non esse, et non esse beatum consequens est ad non esse, et hoc potest sciri evidenter; igitur.' Minor patet de occidentibus se ipsos, qui fuerunt multi." For Ockham's text, see William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 504).

²⁴ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 39va): "Tertio sic, aliqui fideles elegerunt peccare, scientes vel credentes se poena aeterna dammandos pro peccato; igitur noluerunt beatitudinem in communi nec in particulari: credebant enim, si non peccarent, quod haberent beatitudinem." For Ockham's text, which is more refined than Rodington's version, see William Ockham, *Scriptum in librum Primum Sententiarum, Ordinatio*, dist. 1, q. 6 (ed. Brown & Gál, 1967, p. 504).

²⁵ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 39va–b): "Ad primum, prima ratio non videtur concludere, quia concessa maiori, qualiter accipis beatitudinem in minori? Aut in particulari, quam beatitudinem expectamus, et sic nihil aliud istam conclusionem, aut beatitudinem in communi quam omnes homines appetunt [...], et tamen videtur minor falsa, quia scilicet aliquis <non> potest dictare talem beatitudinem non esse possibile. Et quando probatur 'quia potest credere', videtur quod non sequitur

So, while the empiricist way of arguing (the razor) confines the possible within the exclusive boundaries of what can be experienced, a broader philosophical attitude conceives of the possible as more extensive than the domain of what currently exists or can be experienced now. Rodington appears to share the latter approach, and this explains why he takes issue with Ockham's objections so persistently.

Rodington's answer to the second argument continues along these lines. He attacks Ockham by asking how it can be conceived that someone desires to not-be at all. What exactly does Ockham mean by non-being? Non-being as such, Rodington points out, would be bizarre, and it is highly doubtful that someone might actually desire absolute non-being. A person might imaginably not want to be, in the sense that they do not desire to live any longer in their material body, from which they suffer a lot.²⁶ Rodington implicitly restates here his previous argument that the domain of existence is far bigger than one's mere material life, thus assuming that philosophy should not be restricted to the realm of what can be experienced through the senses.

At this point, the matter becomes intriguing as FitzRalph, too, relies on the same device when debating the same argument from Ockham: to equate the desire to commit suicide with the desire to not-be at all is misguided; it should rather be understood as the person no longer wanting to live in their material body, which only causes them to suffer.²⁷ The crucial aspect of this argument is not the conception of "non-existence" as such, which has a long

ex hoc quod posset dictare beatitudinem non esse possibilem, sed forte quod beatitudo non sit, non tamen quod non sit possibilis, cum includeret contradictionem ex terminis summum bonum non esse posse esse."

²⁶ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, ff. 39vb–40ra): "Similiter, posito quod assumptum secundi argumenti sit verum, tamen in alio peccaret argumentum: arguitur 'aliquis potest velle non-esse, et ad non-esse sequitur non esse beatum'; quaero: qualiter accipis 'non-esse'? Aut non esse simpliciter, aut non esse in corpore in quo miseria patitur. Si primo modo, dubium est an aliquis potest velle sic non esse. Sed quidquid sit de hoc, argumentum non probat de occidentibus se ipsos, quia tantum volunt non esse in corpore mortali in quo molestias patiuntur."

²⁷ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 1, art. 3 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 34, footnote 69): "Ad quartum cum arguitur quod viator potest velle se non esse, si intellegatur per non esse omnino nihil esse secundum animam et secundum corpus [...], dico quod hoc est falsum, sicut ibi dicit Augustinus, et concedo quod aliqui se ipsos occiderunt sed non ut non essent, sed ut non amplius miseri essent."

tradition in the history of philosophy, but rather the fact that both Rodington and FitzRalph use the same “anti-empiricist argument” against the same interlocutor (Ockham). This suggests that they were probably *socii*, quoting and influencing each other at this stage in their careers.

The third argument from Ockham, that believers can commit sins, is not properly solved. Yet Rodington makes an interesting point about it, which opens a new section of his question. Namely, a direct proportionality between knowledge and desire would imply that the more one knows, the more one is able to love, but this reasoning is patently false, according to Rodington, who resorts to the classic argument saying that an old woman can love much more than a theologian.²⁸

3. Proportion and Proportionality: Knowledge and Desire

Consequently, the correlation between the level of knowledge and the necessity of desiring is dismantled. Admitting that it is not knowledge (not even the clearest possible one) that determines the necessity of enjoyment raises the question of how the will can contingently desire and love the supreme good. There are only two alternatives: either the act of enjoyment can be made not to be enjoyment by God’s intervention (*de potentia absoluta*), or the will maintains its control of every object and every act, regardless of the amount or quality of the subject’s acquired knowledge.²⁹

²⁸ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40ra): “Praeterea, argumenta sua nihil valent ad conclusionem, quia conclusio est, si ostenderetur aliquid summum bonum et apprehendatur, utrum aliquis potest non velle. Nec autem argumenta sua probant quod potest dictari non esse aliquid summum bonum. Ideo arguo pro conclusione Doctoris: si ex cognitione tali sequitur necessario volitio, ipsa stante, quanto aliquis sic magis cognoscat, tanto magis diligit, quod falsum est, quia vetula minus cognoscit quam philosophus, tamen magis diligit.”

²⁹ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40ra): “Tertia conclusio, quod stante caritate et claritate visionis voluntas potest non frui fine clare viso. Ista conclusio potest intelligi multipliciter: vel quod, stantibus illis quae Deus posset facere, quod non sit dilectio, vel quod voluntas possit suspendere actum suum. Quantum ad primum intellectum, dico quod sic, quia omne absolutum creatum distinctum ab alio potest Deus conservare sine alio; sed clara visio et fruitio sunt huiusmodi; igitur [...]” (V, f. 40rb): “Quantum ad secundum intellectum, utrum beatus posset suspendere actum suum etc., sicut voluntas potest etc. Quod sic, quia si necessario fruitur Deo,

This is a rather standard Scotistic approach to the issue, but in the Calculators' philosophical-theological tradition,³⁰ this line of reasoning can be extended to observe that while it is entirely natural that an object of greater intensity—a more beautiful or more pleasant one—generally makes it more difficult for the will to resist it, challenging questions arise when an infinite object, namely the divine essence, is at stake. Does such an object make it infinitely difficult for the will to resist it?³¹ If it were so, the will would not be fully free. At the same time, saying that the will can resist such an object invites a counterargument. Specifically, this kind of inference implies that every living entity possesses an effort (*conatus*) with which it interacts with the surrounding world. Different entities can have various efforts, and the intensity of a particular effort might determine what a living entity can do and what it cannot do.³² In order to resist an infinite attractive object, the will should have an infinite effort, which immediately risks overlapping with God's infinity.

The solution provided by Rodington apparently avoids both these unwelcome outcomes. It splits the will into two layers, distinguishing between essential and accidental freedom. Strictly speaking, essential freedom is the will itself, which is in total control of its power, and accidental freedom is the will that can be more or less facilitated or hindered in pursuit of an object by the object itself.³³ A graphic representation of this structure

hoc non esset nisi ratione voluntatis, vel caritatis, vel visionis. Non primum, quia eadem est in vi[t]a et in patria, et in vi[t]a non fruitur necessario; igitur. Nec secundum, propter idem. Nec tertium, quia sic quando non videret non causaret dilectionem necessario, et quando videret necessario causaret dilectionem, igitur tunc visio esset pars potentiae volitivae vel potentia volitiva.”

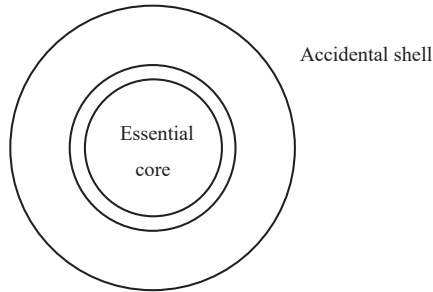
³⁰ About the Calculators' tradition, see the recent book by Lukács & Michałowska, 2024.

³¹ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40va): “Praeterea, obiectum magis intensum inducit maiorem difficultatem; igitur infinitum obiectum inducit infinitam difficultatem [...]. Quanto ratio obiectiva inducit maiorem difficultatem, tanto requiritur maior conatus potentiae ad resistendum, et quanto augetur difficultas, tanto proportionaliter requiritur maior conatus; conatus autem infinitus non est possibilis in virtute finita.”

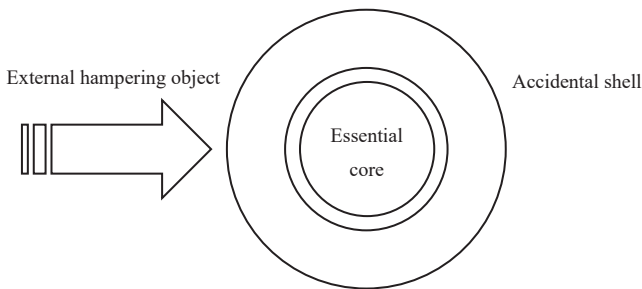
³² Michael Szlachta has extensively discussed the *conatus* theory, attributing its origin to Richard Middleton as the founder of this concept. See Szlachta, 2026.

³³ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40va): “[...] dico quod quaedam est libertas essentialis, quaedam accidentalis. Essentialem voco

can be easily provided if “essential freedom” is regarded as an unmodifiable core, and “accidental freedom” as a modifiable responding shell.³⁴



An external object can act upon and influence the accidental shell of the will, but it cannot affect its essential core.³⁵ Thus an intense object may diminish the accidental shell of the will, and a more intense external object may diminish the accidental shell even more, but the essential core of the will remains unaffected (and metaphysically unaffected).

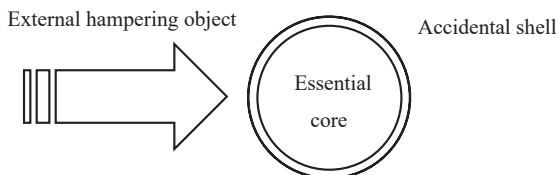


qua simpliciter potest voluntas in actum suum; accidentalem voco qua potest faciliter vel non” (italics mine). On the first-person “dico,” see below, p. 000.

³⁴ This may be an elaboration of Anselm’s doctrine of the essential and accidental freedom of the will. See, for instance, Anselm, *De libertate arbitrii*, cap. 1 and cap. 13 (ed. Schmitt, 1946, pp. 207–209, 225).

³⁵ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40vb): “[...] maior allectio vel minor nihil diminuit vel auget de libertate essentiali quae non est nisi ipsa voluntas.”

We might also imagine a total annihilation of the accidental shell of the will (its accidental freedom), and the will concomitantly confronting the maximum possible difficulty in resisting the object.



Unfortunately (for the external object!), the essential core of the will is left intact so that it preserves its ability to control its acts. Such a structure has an impact first and foremost on the effort (*conatus*) theory, implying that the core of the will is simply its essential ability to act or to not-act (without any degree of intensity), while it is only its external shell that is exposed to the effects of an external hampering object. No greater or lesser effort is essentially required for the exercise of the will because even if an object of infinite influence is posited, the essential freedom of the will retains its ability for action or non-action in relation to it. In other words, two layers are distinguished, one consisting in the attraction of the object (acting on the will), the other in the will itself (responding to the object). This distinction enables Rodington to affirm the absolute freedom of the will, which cannot be overridden by any external object, regardless of its intensity. Moreover, this distinction allows for a clearer understanding of the attempt to go beyond Ockham by reinstating Scotus's doctrine of contingent fruition: it is not necessary to admit a positive act of nilling (*nolle*) God, since the freedom of the will is such that it remains essentially free with respect to any object whatsoever, including the divine essence. This is not because the will does not, or cannot, desire God, but rather because it always chooses God with absolute freedom and merit.

Besides, the distinction between these two levels in the will might apparently be another point of contact with FitzRalph's thought, since he also distinguishes between freedom *per se* and freedom *per accidens*.³⁶

³⁶ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 1, art. 3 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 35, footnote 72): "Ideo ad istum articulum dico quod libertas contradictionis est duplex respectu alicuius: una per se et alia per accidens. Libertas per se respectu alicuius

However, FitzRalph's distinction is embedded in a broader theory of the intellect/will relationship, where the will is much more dependent on the intellect's knowledge than Rodington's will. Consequently, FitzRalph cannot be considered Rodington's source in this particular respect. Noticeably, the theory of accidental and essential freedom is derived from the Italian Franciscan Francis of Marchia, who presents it in exactly the same terms as Rodington: essential freedom is the will as such, while accidental freedom coincides with greater or lesser ease in producing the will's action.³⁷ Since Francis of Marchia was active a few years before Rodington, the theory presumably comes from Marchia himself, contradicting Rodington's first-person "dico."³⁸ To my knowledge, Francis of Marchia, who lectured in Paris in 1319/1320, does not appear to have been one of the Oxonians' privileged sources. Jointly, these facts imply that Rodington traveled to Paris and his stay predated 1328, the year of his *Lectura super Sententias*.

The link between the two Franciscans is further corroborated by another reference in which Rodington mentions Francis of Marchia. It is found in Book I, distinction 2, question 6, of Rodington's *Sentences* commentary. In his rebuttal of Duns Scotus's theory of the univocity of being (which is, indeed, an exceptional case of Rodington parting ways with Duns Scotus), Rodington mentions a set of arguments, all of them called *viae* (*prima via*, *secunda via*, etc.),³⁹ where the first argument is explicitly attributed to

est potestas volendi illud et non volendi stantibus his quae nunc ponuntur in voluntate et in intellectu scilicet cognitione et aliis. Libertas per accidens est potestas volendi aliquid et illud non volendi per corruptionem vel amissionem alicuius nunc habiti a voluntate vel intellectu sicut sit per diversionem ad aliquo considerato."

³⁷ Francis of Marchia *Commentarius in IV libros Petri Lombardi*, lib. I, dist. 1, q. 9, art. 2, nn. 62–63 (ed. Mariani, 2006, p. 140): "Responsio: potest dici quod duplex est libertas voluntatis: quedam enim est libertas essentialis, et ista est ad posse simpliciter; quedam est libertas voluntatis accidentaliter, qua voluntas potest faciliter elicere actum et faciliter non elicere ipsum, et haec est libertas secundum quid. Prima est inseparabilis a voluntate, nec diminuitur per aliquem habitum, nec aliquis habitus, quantumcumque in infinitum augeatur, attingit ipsam; set habitus respectu huiusmodi oppositi, diminuit secundam libertatem respectu alterius oppositi, et in tantum posset augeri quod simpliciter tolleretur ipsam."

³⁸ See above, footnote 33.

³⁹ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 2, q. 6 (ed. Tweedale, 1965, pp. 404–406): "Sed primo probetur quod non convenit aliquid reale esse commune deo et creaturae indifferens de se ad utrumque. Sic si esset aliquod (indifferens de se

“a certain doctor.” Tweedale was not able to identify that “doctor,” but this seven-way argumentation is drawn from Francis of Marchia’s *Sentences* commentary, Book I, distinction 8,⁴⁰ which is quoted in an abridged but clearly recognizable form.

When applying the essential/accidental argument, Rodington explains that an infinite alluring object would induce so much difficulty in the accidental freedom of the will that the opposite act (rejection) is *de facto* precluded; this, however, does not mean that it is impossible as such.⁴¹ A metaphysical structure like this one implies that there are multiple layers of reality, and any relationship between various elements must be established between entities that belong to the same layer. The essential core of the will remains entirely impervious to the pleasure exerted by any created or uncreated object, and this indicates that the freedom of the will is, according to Rodington, absolute. This inference is substantiated by the fact that Rodington immediately connects the essential/accidental freedom theory (according to which no external object altogether can possibly necessitate the will) with Duns Scotus’s theory,

ad utrumque), determinetur ad illa vel se ipso vel per aliud. Non se ipso, cum sit possibile ad illa; nec per posterius, quia praesupponit prius determinatum ad ipsum; nec per prius, cum nihil sit prius tali conceptu et illis quae determinantur [...]. Ista ratio est cuiusdam doctoris. Non concludit, quia maior videtur falsa, quia quando aliquid magis accedit ad aequivocationem tanto magis determinatur ad supposita. Secundo arguitur via necessitatis divinae, quia illud commune aut est de se necesse esse aut non [...]. Tertio arguitur via infinitatis. Nihil includens aliquid potentiale est infinitum intensive; sed si esset tale commune ad deum etc., deus includeretur aliquid potentiale, quia illud commune etc.; igitur (etc.). Quarto via actualitatis, quis tale commune habet differentias extra rationem suam ad quas est in potentia, et sic aliquid in deo esset in potentia. Quinto via simplicitatis, quia aut illa intentio est de se potentialis, et sic in deo esset potentialis, aut non est de se potentialis, et tunc nulla ratio posterior est magis potentialis, quia non contrahens magis quam contractum; et ita nihil in creatura est potentiale, sed purus actus sicut deus. Sexto via perfectionis, quia entis per participationem in aliquibus habet tantum de perfectione in uno sicut in alio. Septimo via unitatis, quia ex quo uniformiter se haberet ad deum etc. (et ad creaturam), ita praedicaretur in abstracto de creatura sicut de deo.”

⁴⁰ Francis of Marchia, *Commentarius in IV libros Petri Lombardi*, lib. I, dist. 8, q. 2, art. 2, nn. 16–17 (ed. Mariani, 2006, pp. 479–487).

⁴¹ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40vb): “Praeterea, si ratio concluderet, non concludit plus nisi quod inducit tantam difficultatem quae excludit omnem actum ad oppositum de facto; non tamen concludit impossibilitatem ad oppositum, quia possibilitas ad oppositum semper manet.”

which holds that the will is free toward opposite acts, objects, and effects.⁴² Since Rodington provides an explicit reference to Scotus's *Sentences* commentary, Book I, distinction 39,⁴³ Rodington's question is bolstered and enriched by his use of Francis of Marchia's theory to support Duns Scotus's notion of the absolute freedom of the will beyond any possible necessitation, at the same time refusing a more "metaphysically minimalist" approach like Ockham's. In fact, Duns Scotus's framework of the freedom of the will requires regarding contingency as a metaphysical matrix of possibilities and the will as an active agent that generates a selection of these possibilities.⁴⁴

4. The *Dubia* Section: Some Insights into Rodington's Most Original Approaches

To delve into the sixteen *dubia* of the second part of Rodington's question would be impossible in this paper. One of them, however, deserves at least a short examination. Addressing the issue of the instantaneous or temporal nature of volitions, which was an oft-discussed theme in the period,⁴⁵ Rodington states that the will (element 1) can use its own freedom (element 2) in a twofold way: positively, generating an act (element 3), or privatively,

⁴² John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4 (V, f. 40vb): "Ad primum, quod quanto est magis voluntarium tanto potest esse magis liberum libertate accidentali, non essentiali, quia maior allectio vel minor nihil diminuit vel augeat de libertate essentiali quae non est nisi ipsa voluntas. Maior igitur est vera, et minor falsa, unde dico quod esset contra libertatem essentialem quod necessitaretur ad aliquod obiectum vel ad aliquem effectum ita quod non posset in oppositum, sicut ait Doctor, quia est libera ad oppositos actus et ad oppositos effectus et ad opposita obiecta, et potest imperare diversos effectus."

⁴³ John Duns Scotus, *Lectura I*, dist. 39, q. unica, n. 45 (editio Vaticana, XVII, 1960, p. 493): "Voluntas enim nostra libera est ad actus oppositos (ut ad volendum et nolum, et amandum et odiendum), et secundo mediantibus actibus oppositis est libera ad obiecta opposita ut libere tendat in ea, et tertio est libera ad effectus quos producit sive immediate sive movendo alias potentias executivas."

⁴⁴ See Nannini, 2023, pp. 129–187.

⁴⁵ On instantaneous volition and the Oxford milieu, see Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, pp. 19–28.

suspending its action.⁴⁶ Thus, any free act of the will is not an atom-like, indivisible object; rather, it is akin to a process, where several components and phases are involved. This raises the issue of the instantaneousness of volition in specific terms: what is the instantaneous element in the volitional process, if there is one in the first place? Is it the volition itself? Or is it the willed act? Rodington seems to share the idea that the volition in the sense of the *electio* of an act is the instantaneous element, but when the election is the positive choice of an act, the subsequent act itself is necessarily temporal. The act will have a temporal beginning and a temporal end and will extend over various instants. Were it not so, every volition would have to be admitted to be wholly instantaneous, and this would lead to the idea of an infinite series of volitions (one for every instant of time), which is something that Rodington does not appear inclined to accept.⁴⁷

However, the instantaneous nature of volition cannot be wholly excluded either, and this is where another point of contact with FitzRalph is found. FitzRalph, too, admits instantaneous volition although he does not rule out the existence of temporal volitions as well.⁴⁸ In this way, the will is not always and not inevitably necessitated to perform a temporal act (if it does not want to); nor is it limited to a singular instant within which to express its freedom. In this sense, both Rodington and FitzRalph appear to maximize the active capacity of the will.

⁴⁶ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4, dubium 3 (V, f. 41vb): “[...] dico quod (1) [voluntas] potest uti (2) libertate sua positive, idest (3) per actum, vel privative, et hoc potest sine actu, quia hoc non est nisi non elicere aliquem actum.”

⁴⁷ John Rodington, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 1, q. 4, dubium 3 (V, f. 41ra): “Ideo aliter potest dici quod volitio potest esse per instans, ita quod non duret plus, sed quod eliciantur tot volitiones quot sunt instantia in tempore, hoc est impossibile, quia si quis eliciat nunc unam volitionem, necessario antequam potest elicere aliam erit tempus tale intermedium in quo erunt infinita instantia, licet quasi imperceptibiliter videretur quod una volitio potest esse prius aliam, et tunc dico quod necessario erunt finitae volitiones, non infinitae, et sic finitum meritum.”

⁴⁸ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 10, art. 2 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, pp. 197–198): “Cum ergo quaeritur utrum volitio fiat subito, ita quod sit aliquod primum instans volitionis, vel in tempore, ita quod non sit primum instans volitionis, dico quod alicuius volitionis creatae est primum instans, scilicet istius volitionis quae generatur per intensionem, scilicet per partem qualitativam ante aliam, sicut credo semper esse in hominibus.”

5. Conclusion

FitzRalph, again, offers us a conclusive hint by identifying three positions—two extreme and one moderate—on the relation between the intellect and the will. The two extreme positions affirm either that nothing whatsoever, not even clear and perfect knowledge, can necessitate the will, or that the act of loving something is premised on the prior (and somehow necessitating) act of knowing it.⁴⁹ An intermediate position, like FitzRalph's, tries to avoid both the extremes, but since it grants the intellect (or knowledge) a prominent role vis-à-vis the will,⁵⁰ I have the impression that it tends to frame the will as a rational appetite, thereby undermining its true and purely desiderative nature. For his part, Rodington appears to be one of the authors—of Scotistic inspiration—who tend to preserve an entirely autonomous role for the will. This approach will lead to a strong form of voluntarism, holding not that the will can do what it wants, but that every activity of the will, whether positively culminating in an act, or privatively suspending action, entirely depends on the will of an individual human being, irrespective of what the intellect has suggested. This is the only way to grant a moral merit to any action as grounded not in its own trueness, but in the free choice of the human agent.

⁴⁹ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 10, art. 2 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 237): “In isto articulo sunt tres opiniones: duae extremae et una media. Prima est quod ad nullam comprehensionem alicuius rei sequitur necessario amor sive volitio, immo nec ad claram visionem essentiae divinae sequitur volitio sive amor istius, sed ipso ostenso clare potest voluntas actum suum suspendere et non velle [...]. Et haec est opinio Subtilis Doctoris I libro, distinctione 1, quaestione 4, et est etiam opinio doctorum modernorum plurium;” (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 239): “Alia est opinio opposita huic, scilicet quod ex notitia actuali cuiuscumque delectabilis vel commodi sequitur necessario delectatio et volitio. Cuius opinionis ratio talis est, quia delectabile apprehensum quantum est ex se agit naturaliter et uno modo in appetitu animalis bruti et hominis sive angeli.”

⁵⁰ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 10, art. 2 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 244): “Si tamen in intellectu fuerit notitia aliqua actualis distincta et clara alicuius obiecti per se delectabilis et non fuerit tunc in intellectu notitia alia actualis per quam apparet illud non esse prosequendum, tunc dico quod ad talem notitiam sequitur necessario pro tunc delectatio et amor simili modo.” See Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, pp. 34–37.

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Citation

Nannini, A. (2026). John Rodington: The primacy of the will over the intellect in relation to the ultimate end. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 43–62. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-03.



„Analiza i Egzystencja” 75 (2026), 63–85
ISSN (print): 1734-9923
ISSN (online): 2300-7621
DOI: 10.18276/aie.2026.75-04

ARTICLES

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Richard FitzRalph on Mind: Reconciling Augustine and Aristotle*

Keywords: Cognition; Volition; Soul; Medieval Philosophy

Słowa kluczowe: Poznanie, Wola, Dusza, Filozofia Średniowieczna

Abstract

This article examines Richard FitzRalph's treatment of the human mind in his *Lectura on the Sentences*, focusing on his treatment of Augustinian and Aristotelian conceptions of cognition and volition. By situating FitzRalph within the broader scholastic debates of the early fourteenth century, with Neo-Augustinianism in particular, it argues that his analysis represents both a careful exegesis of Augustine's *De Trinitate* and an engagement with the Aristotelian hylomorphic framework. The study highlights FitzRalph's nuanced approach to the distinctness of memory, intellect, and will, his treatment of species in memory, and his effort to secure a middle path between identity and distinction theories of the soul's powers.

* The research for this article has been funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, under grant agreement UMO-2022/47/B/HS1/00071.

1. Introduction

In an article entitled “Richard FitzRalph on Whether Cognition and Volition Are Really the Same: Solving an Augustinian Puzzle,” Severin Kitanov comments as follows:

As can be seen from a closer examination of FitzRalph’s early work, his *Lectura on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard, FitzRalph is a very conscientious reader of Augustine. FitzRalph frequently cites the text of major Augustinian works at length, and he demonstrates sensitivity to subtle nuances of meaning in Augustine’s writing. FitzRalph’s solution to the problem of identity and difference between cognition and volition is the outcome of a careful exegesis of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, and it represents at the same time an attempt to secure a *via media* in the early 14th century scholastic debate regarding the ontological status of the faculties or powers of the human soul, a position that acknowledges the multidimensionality and diversity of the soul’s operations concurrently affirming the substantial unity and integrity of the soul.¹

FitzRalph (1299–1360) belongs to the Neo-Augustinian revival at Oxford, a varied and internally contested movement whose participants both influenced and disagreed with each other. Through his patron, Bishop John de Grandisson of Exeter (1292–1369), he forms part of an intellectual tradition extending through Richard Bury (1287–1345) to the *De causa Dei* of Thomas Bradwardine (1300–1349), while also influencing continental authors such as Gregory of Rimini (1300–1358). FitzRalph’s Neo-Augustinianism has been examined by a number of authors² and is now seen, contrary to earlier opinion, not as evidence of a backward-looking conservatism but of a dynamic engagement with contemporary debates. In FitzRalph’s case these centered on the topic of God’s foreknowledge, human freedom, prophecy, and future contingents.³ In turning to a close reading of the text of Augustine itself, the renewal of “Augustinian” thought sought by thinkers such as FitzRalph was to address problems which were beginning to trouble their contemporaries and in the context of the Oxford of FitzRalph’s time this

¹ Kitanov, 2017, p. 81.

² See, Kitanov, 2017, Dunne & Nolan, 2023a, Dunne & Nolan, 2023b.

³ See, Slotemaker, 2017; Kitanov, 2017; Nolan, 2017; Dunne, 2023a, 2023b.

meant also engaging with the alternative system of Aristotle and his Commentator on knowing and willing. FitzRalph does this through a detailed analysis of Augustine's teaching on intellect, memory and will in the *De Trinitate*.⁴ This did not mean a rejection of the Aristotelian approach, but, as we shall see, an attempt at a reconciliation between the two insofar as this was possible.

As Eric Saak has noted in a number of works, there are many difficulties in employing the term Augustinian and Augustinianism in a precise and accepted sense apart from, for example, the Order of Augustinian Hermits (OESA).⁵ Saak has also deeply engaged with the positions of earlier scholars such as Trapp and Oberman and the notion of a *via Gregorii* leading from a fourteenth-century Augustinianism (*schola Augustiniana moderna*) down to Martin Luther and the corresponding attempt to trace back from some of Luther's concerns into the thought of the later Middle Ages.⁶ Closer scrutiny does not completely undermine this narrative, but it does require significant analysis and contextualization of a very complex reception history.

⁴ As Slotemaker (2017) points out, the concentration in the historiography on those themes such as grace and redemption which come to the fore at the time of the Reformation, especially with regard to Martin Luther, has meant a neglect of other themes in medieval Augustinianism, especially regarding philosophical theology as discussed in the Sentences Commentaries of the time. He comments (2017, p. 19) that "[...] despite the fact that Augustine's *De Trinitate* was one of the most important theological sources for late medieval scholastics, there is almost no literature on the reception of Augustine's *De Trinitate* [...]."

⁵ Saak, 2012, p. 224: "We must come to the realization that to understand 'late medieval Augustinianism' historically, the only legitimate historical referent is the historical noun that was the social and psychic systems of the late medieval Augustinian Hermits who uniquely identified themselves with their created image of Augustine. This historical Augustinianism distinguished itself from all previous medieval appropriations of Augustine. Philosophical or theological definitions of the term 'Augustinian' or 'Augustinianism' cannot provide the historical foundation for the designation of the label, even if they can provide a philosophical or theological definition. Moreover, modern or contemporary interpretations of the 'historical Augustine' cannot provide the basis for the historical interpretation of Augustine or Augustinianism. A genuinely historical Augustinianism can only be based on the historical interpretation and understanding of what it meant to be an 'Augustinian', which in the later Middle Ages was inseparable from membership in the OESA and those who followed Augustine's religion."

⁶ Saak, 2017, pp. 3–10, 14. See also Saak, 2013, pp. 63–66.

I do not attempt to resolve these issues here, but simply to contribute to a fuller understanding of developments at Oxford in the 1330s, a decade that deserves closer attention as the setting for one of the Neo-Augustinian revival's most important works, Thomas Bradwardine's *De causa Dei*. FitzRalph is also sometimes included among these new Pelagians as a semi-Pelagian.⁷

The term "Augustinian" then seems to be problematic as it has been used loosely by scholars to indicate a number of positions, ideas, stances as well as organizations and institutions. I think that, *pace* Saak, this is a situation which is likely to continue. Already over four decades ago, William Courtenay commented: "Augustinianism may be, like nominalism, one of the most ill-defined and confusing of labels."⁸ Trying to give a precise outline of what "Augustinianism" was seems doomed to failure and using it as a label to describe the later medieval reception of Augustine's works seems ill-advised. For example, scholars have spoken of "Franciscan Augustinianism" associated with Bonaventure and then the "Second Augustinian School" associated with Henry of Ghent, John Duns Scotus, and later Scotists.⁹ These neat distinctions break down if one looks at the thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose use of Neoplatonic sources has already been explored and established,¹⁰ and who, in so many ways, is a faithful follower of Augustine.¹¹

Courtenay comments that the Augustinianism of the fourteenth century, influenced by a more intense reading of Augustine, is usually divided into two phases: an initial shift observed in Giles of Rome toward an affective theology, with an emphasis on God as will and love, the primacy of grace, and the divine initiative in salvation. One idea from this first stage that proved especially important for FitzRalph was dominion, the lordship of grace, that only someone in a state of grace had the right to exercise authority over persons and property.¹² Courtenay then mentions the second stage, considered the most important, beginning with Bradwardine at Oxford and then Gregory of Rimini and Hugolino of Orvieto.

⁷ See, for example, Schabel, 2023, p. 232.

⁸ Courtenay, 1980, p. 58.

⁹ Courtenay, 1980, p. 59, referring to distinctions made by Gilson.

¹⁰ See, for example, Hankey, 2011.

¹¹ The point is well made by Schumacher, 2011, pp. 154–180.

¹² Courtenay, 1980, p. 59.

The “movement,” if we may call it that, is characterized by a source-critical approach to the writings of Augustine which involves longer, accurate quotations with precise references,¹³ something which we also see in FitzRalph.¹⁴ There seems to be a shift towards themes from the later Augustine which touch on grace and predestination, to which is linked the question of the contingency of the future. FitzRalph’s role was not to initiate an original movement but, through the development of new arguments and methodologies (close to those of the Oxford Calculators), to strengthen an existing trend. As a result, questions such as future contingents became the dominant focus at Oxford for more than a decade after his *Lectura on the Sentences* (1328–1329).

Courtenay suggested the adoption of the term Neo-Augustinianism (which I have done here) to indicate a body of ideas that “derive from but need not be faithful to St. Augustine,”¹⁵ or, indeed, I might add, could even “go beyond Augustine.” As Genest comments in discussing FitzRalph’s treatment of God as a possible deceiver: the God of Richard FitzRalph is no longer the God of Augustine.¹⁶ Courtenay also makes the important point that the emergence of Neo-Augustinianism at Oxford differed from Paris in that at Oxford it did not originate from members of the Augustinian Order. Although originally only a suspicion, Courtenay’s intuition that the second stage of Neo-Augustinianism at Oxford began before 1344¹⁷—the date of appearance of Bradwardine’s *De causa Dei* and roughly the date of the *Lectura* of Gregory of Rimini at Paris—is certainly being confirmed as editions of earlier writers become available. And among “the several factors” which come together in the decade before Bradwardine, that of FitzRalph must now also be taken into account.

¹³ Courtenay, 1980, p. 59.

¹⁴ This seemed to be a tendency down to the time of Luther. As Saak (2017, p. 91) writes: “Thus, Luther exhibited a source erudition with respect to Augustine’s works, at least to some extent, of a kind that Damasus Trapp noted among the OESA’s late medieval new Augustinian school (*schola Augustiniana moderna*), filling in imprecise references in Lombard with specific citations.”

¹⁵ Courtenay, 1980, p. 61.

¹⁶ Genest, 2023, p. 280: “The God of FitzRalph, who does not deceive but who *could* deceive, and could do so because he does not come under the normal moral law, is not at all the God of Augustine.”

¹⁷ Courtenay, 1980, p. 65.

An earlier contention that FitzRalph's "Neo-Augustinianism" was essentially that of Henry of Ghent and Anselm and somehow a conservative approach that did not engage with contemporary innovations is not now a position which can be maintained. Such a position would commit much the same error as describing Aquinas as essentially Aristotelian to the exclusion of all else. FitzRalph's Neo-Augustinian reception of Augustine is highly context-dependent (something we are only beginning to appreciate) and it is directed towards specific goals and contemporary problems, particularly the revelation of future contingents.

If the more general problem of the reception of Augustine's writings in the later Middle Ages remains difficult, the same can be said of the reception of the *De Trinitate*, which will largely concern us in what follows. Indeed, as Kany states with regard to Latin pre-modern reception of this work, a "reliable account of the reception of the *De Trinitate* is not yet available."¹⁸ This is certainly true, and *a fortiori*, of Oxford in the 1330s. My aim is not to provide a comprehensive account of that history but merely to identify an important point of departure in the Oxford of the 1330s, where FitzRalph's use of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, together with Aristotle and Henry of Ghent, reveals the distinctive contribution he made.

It is in Book I, questions 6–9, of Richard FitzRalph's *Lectura on the Sentences* (1328–1329, revised 1330–1331) where this confrontation and attempted reconciliation of the two systems is presented. The questions and articles which follow show an unmistakable debt to Augustine and his *De Trinitate*:

Question 6 Whether the human mind is an image of the uncreated Trinity.

Art. 1 Whether memory, intelligence and will can be really distinguished from each other.

Art. 2 Whether there is some cognitive habitus in a rational spirit.

Art. 3 Whether actual cognition can be really distinguished from the species in memory.

Art. 4 Whether cognition and volition are really the same.

Art. 5 Whether the parts of the created image are equal.

Art. 6 Reply to the principal question.

Question 7 Whether the mind itself and certain habitus present to it are principles in the memory with respect to it.

¹⁸ Kany, 2013, p. 389 and note 4 above.

Question 8 Whether from the presence of a species in memory actual cognition follows necessarily by means of it.

Question 9 Whether the agent intellect is part of the image.¹⁹

The latter questions are in fact articles or unfinished pieces, which were not incorporated into a single question (namely question 6, as we might expect), during FitzRalph's revision of his *opus correctum*. Further study is needed on this phenomenon—I recently addressed this with regard to Book I, question 11: Whether contradictory desires or affections can be in the same will at the same time, and which is part of the *appetitus contrarii* debate. This is an unfinished and not determined question which nonetheless is of interest especially since part of the argument makes its way into question 10.²⁰

¹⁹ Quaestio 6 *Utrum mens humana sit ymago trinitatis increate.*

Art. 1 *Utrum memoria, intelligentia et voluntas distinguantur ab invicem realiter.*

Art. 2 *Utrum in spiritu rationali sit aliquis habitus cognitivus.*

Art. 3 *Utrum actualis cogitatio distinguatur realiter a specie in memoria.*

Art. 4 *Utrum cognitio et volitio sint idem realiter.*

Art. 5 *Utrum partes ymagineis create sint equales.*

Art. 6 *Ad questionem principalem.*

Quaestio 7 *Utrum mens ipsa et ceteri habitus sibi presentes sint principia in memoria respectu sui.*

Quaestio 8 *Utrum ex presentia speciei in memoria sequatur necessario cogitatio actualis per illam.*

Quaestio 9 *Utrum intellectus agens sit aliqua pars ymagineis.*

²⁰ See Dunne, 2024. It remains an open question as to the function or role of such floating articles. Were they notes for the actual debates? Or handy lists of arguments with potential solutions? Indeed, FitzRalph was well known for increasing the stock of standard arguments and the detail of questions, e.g., his question on future contingents expands greatly on, say, Ockham's treatment of the topic. No doubt future studies will shed light on the matter but for the moment I would simply indicate that as far as the content is concerned, that these "questions" 7–9 do seem to depart from the close reading of and connection with the *De Trinitate* in question 6 and seem to address more technical issues, such as the understanding of the agent intellect in Aristotle and Averroes, on the one hand, and Henry of Ghent on the other (question 9). Again, and not to be solved at this point, the puzzle still remains as to the question concerning the preservation of a different arrangement of the text in manuscript Oriel College, 15, containing material not found anywhere else but which seem to be stylistically different from the rest of the text. Again, the version of question 7, as transmitted in Oriel College,

2. The Powers of the Soul Debates

These texts from FitzRalph's *Lectura*, I, questions 6–9, can be seen as part of the debates concerning the powers of the soul. A recent book of translations by Russell Friedman and Can Laurens Löwe²¹ has highlighted this, taking us from Bonaventure (1221–1274), through Albert the Great (1200–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) up to John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) and William Ockham (1287–1347) and so to within a decade or so of FitzRalph's treatment of the topics. The question of the soul and its powers normally came up in the course of commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (Book I, distinction 3; Book II, distinction 16), itself drawing upon Augustine's *De Trinitate*. As mentioned above, FitzRalph is part of an Augustinian revival and thus it is no surprise that this topic, the human mind as an image of the Trinity, will be suffused with a critical reconstruction of Augustine's authority from the texts themselves. In general, when discussing the human mind as an image of the Trinity writers concentrated on the triadic structure of the human mind as composed of intellect, memory, and will. A related problem is that if the three divine persons are really distinct, would that not suggest that intellect memory and will are also really distinct? Indeed, this is precisely the question FitzRalph poses in the first article: are memory, understanding, and will really distinct from one another? And, by a further twist, are they also distinct from the mind itself? In the very first argument, Aristotle and Averroes are introduced on the role of the intellect as the place where the species are preserved, thereby arguing for the identity and not distinctness between intellect and memory. The topic of the role of the species in memory seemed to be of particular focus in the debates of 1328–1329 and at Oxford in the years directly following.²²

It is not immediately apparent that something rather curious underlies these debates. On the one hand, there is a centuries old tradition, certainly going back to Augustine, of a very religious personal and spiritual

15 as question 9, gives a very different structure from that which is found in the other manuscripts and gives the replies to arguments also not found elsewhere but which seem to be authentic.

²¹ Friedman & Löwe, 2025.

²² See Dunne, 2023a, pp. 77–82.

conception of understanding and memory, one which lends itself to a theological understanding of an innate desire for truth, beauty, and goodness as leading to our ultimate rest in God as truth, goodness, and beauty itself. Aristotle is thought of as different: naturalistic, scientific, and rather secular. Given their differing points of departure, mapping one theory of mind on to the other is certainly going to be a challenge. Yet FitzRalph, like many before and after him, seems to take it for granted that the two traditions can be reconciled and that Aristotle (384–322 BC) and Averroes (1126–1198) can be read consistently with Augustine (354–430) and Henry of Ghent (1217–1293). As we shall see below, this is particularly evident in FitzRalph's treatment of the role of the agent intellect.

In his introduction to the medieval debates on the relation between the soul and its powers, Löwe²³ points out that, on the medieval Christian Aristotelian account there is a close link between the substantial form of the human being, its soul, and its powers. But what is the nature of this connection? Does the essence of the soul correspond to its powers or to its vital operations (*potentiae animae*)? Löwe distinguishes between *identity theory*, according to which the soul is simply its powers, and *distinction theory*, according to which the soul is distinct from its powers. Ockham, for example, is taken as a defender of strong identity theory, i.e., any given part of the soul is identical to the soul. Löwe illustrates this with the example of Socrates: his power of thought is identical with his soul and so too is his will. The same applies to every power of the soul, which are thereby identical with one another.²⁴ Thus, thinking is identical with willing, and together they constitute a single power of the soul.

For Löwe, Aquinas represents a version of distinction theory, that the powers of the soul are qualities distinct from the essence of the soul. Another version of distinction theory was defended by Duns Scotus, namely, the powers of the soul are distinct from the essence of the soul through their *rationes formales*.

If we now turn to Augustine himself: by mind, Augustine understands the human soul according to its “optimal functioning.”²⁵ Unlike the Aristotelian approach he does not understand the human soul as being essentially

²³ Löwe, 2025, pp. 1–4.

²⁴ Löwe, 2025, p. 5.

²⁵ Löwe, 2025, p. 6; note 14.

the form of the body but sees it as an immaterial substance in its own right.²⁶ But like Aristotle, Augustine thinks that our soul accounts for life and is the center of all of our vital powers. The highest function of our soul is linked to the three most perfect powers, the rational, i.e., memory, understanding and will. These correspond to our power to store ideas, to think about them, and so to will something. These three powers are one mind, not three substances but one substance also reflecting Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁷ The image or comparison is quite clear, but not the metaphysical foundation:²⁸ it is not clear whether Augustine thinks that memory, understanding, and will are identical to the mind or distinct from it. Although Augustine appears to favor a strong identity theory, there are also passages that suggest a version of distinction theory.²⁹ The potential for confusion was therefore considerable. Medieval thinkers readily embraced Augustine's image theory, but they did not reach a unanimous conclusion about the relation between the mind and its powers:

There are, then, textual tensions in Augustine's account of the relation between the mind and its powers. It is hardly surprising that these tensions had a significant impact on how Augustine was read by Latin medieval thinkers, who wholeheartedly embraced his image doctrine. Given Augustine's different and incompatible-seeming remarks about the relation of the mind to its powers, there was no unanimity among his medieval commentators as to how his account of this relation ought to be understood.³⁰

With the arrival of Aristotle's writings and their general acceptance by the mid-thirteenth century, the exegesis of Augustine's text and triadic conception of mind is accompanied by broader considerations as to the nature of the soul itself and its powers as suggested by Aristotle's tripartite division of soul.

The development of the debate is reflected in FitzRalph's own treatment of it. His concern is not only whether the mind is identical with, or distinct from, the powers of memory, understanding, and will. He also asks

²⁶ Löwe, 2025, p. 7.

²⁷ See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book X, chapter 12 (ed. Mountain & Glorie, 1968, pp. 213–214), and Löwe, p. 6, note 13 for further sources in Augustine.

²⁸ See Löwe, 2025, p. 8.

²⁹ See Löwe, 2025, p. 9.

³⁰ See Löwe, 2025, p. 10.

the broader—more Aristotelian—question whether the human soul is identical with, or distinct from, all of its vital powers, including the rational, sensory and vegetative powers. Thinkers sought an answer within the Augustinian paradigm initially, but developments arose through recourse to Aristotle's *De anima* and the *Metaphysics*, and to the notions of form, potency, and act, and no longer focusing on the human soul only, but on different kinds of soul. This marks the shift to hylomorphism: the human soul, although of a special kind, is nevertheless a substantial form among many. Löwe calls this the “de-anthropocentrizing” of the debate post 1250.³¹ One of Richard FitzRalph's concerns is therefore to relate and reconcile the Augustinian and Aristotelian conceptions of mind, while also taking positions on Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Duns Scotus.

3. Species

Another topic that featured prominently in the debates over the powers of the soul was that of species, particularly after Ockham's rejection of species theory as most thinkers sought to defend and reinforce it.³² FitzRalph accepted the existence of both intelligible and sensible species and seems to assume the entire process of the multiplication of species. The objects generate species which are impressed on the senses before the senses act; an impressed species is the means by which the soul knows an object through a likeness or similitude. In a very personal statement, FitzRalph refers to someone he had once heard who vigorously argued against the existence of species. It may be that FitzRalph actually heard Ockham himself since he was old enough to have heard the Venerable Inceptor teach at Oxford, but, if not Ockham himself, then one of his close followers, since on this point—the rejection of species—Ockham was almost universally opposed. FitzRalph also confesses that he himself doubted the existence of species, thinking that everything was either a substance or a mixture of the elemental qualities, to which, rather intriguingly, he adds light but does not unfortunately develop this. He thinks that the denial of species comes from ordinary everyday experience where people rather uncritically adopt a crude realism, thinking

³¹ Löwe, 2025, p. 16.

³² See Tachau, 1988, pp. 236–242.

that “sight is seeing and hearing is hearing”³³ because they do not realize that what they see and hear is the reception of the visual and auditory species. Indeed, in one argument FitzRalph entertains—almost anticipating Bishop Berkeley—the possibility that God could directly impress species on our minds without the existence of anything “behind” them. Species remain necessary for knowledge, but their being caused by a physical reality does not.

FitzRalph also accepts the creation of intelligible species and their storage by memory (intellectual). Sensible and intellectual species are necessary for cognition, but these impressed species are not identical with the acts of sensation, cognition or intellection. The species on its own as received in the sense organ is not enough to account for sensation, the will or the appetite has to focus on the object for sensation to take place. He also accepts that as in the case of angelic knowledge, God could impress the species directly without the need for anything extramental through God’s absolute power. That said, FitzRalph is also concerned with rejecting the view that sensation is identical with the species and affirming that the act is a thing other than the species in the intellectual memory. He accepted the general outlines of Scotus’s theories and the critique of Henry of Ghent among others and seems to accept the existence of species as corporeal or physical entities.³⁴

In the *Lectura* I, question 6, article 3, the problem is raised regarding the relationship between actual cognition and the species in memory. As Löwe puts it, memory is our power to store “cognitive contents”, understanding our power concurrently to think about them and then our power to will something.³⁵ But is actual cognition of the species distinct from its preservation in memory?

³³ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, f. 147rb): “Puto dico quod isti si non sentirent species in oculis suis nec sonos participant in auribus omnino non crederent talia esse, set dicerent quod visus esset sua visio et auditus audicio et aer lucidus esset lumen sicut ego quemdam valentem aliquando audiui dicentem sic. Et dicunt aliqui quod omnis color est lux et omnis sapor est qualitates prime connixte et odor est sapor, immo ego aliquando non credebam aliquid esse nisi substantiam vel aliquam 5 qualitatuum primarum scilicet quattuor elementares et lucem.”

³⁴ As to how FitzRalph’s arguments impressed and influenced Adam Wodeham both on this topic and others, see Dunne, 2023a, pp. 89–91.

³⁵ Löwe, 2025, p. 7.

For FitzRalph, objects generate species which are impressed on the senses before the senses act; the senses are first active, then passive. Again, the understanding must first receive a species before it produces an actual cognition. FitzRalph's distinct contribution here seems to be a shift away from a focus on the *species in medio* to the *species in memoria*. He affirms the creation of intelligible species and their storage by the intellectual memory. Ultimately, FitzRalph regards his own position as close to that of Henry of Ghent. As he notes, Henry holds that actual knowledge is really distinct from the species preserved in the intellectual memory, because otherwise knowledge would not be an act of the intellect but would instead be caused directly by the species itself. FitzRalph continues, stating that it seems to him that actual knowledge can only take place if one takes the intellect to be its efficient cause.³⁶ Interestingly—and not uniquely in FitzRalph—in the *Lectura* many of the difficulties raised by species theory are simply not addressed, not least the transformation of the sensible species into immaterial species, presumably under the action of the agent intellect. Here they are considered by FitzRalph as given within internal mental processes. There is no mention yet of the agent intellect or of the other intellects.

4. Knowledge and Willing

As we have seen, for FitzRalph species in memory and actual cognition are not the same. What, then, of knowledge and willing? Are they the same? After examining various arguments, FitzRalph concludes that they are not. Having reviewed the arguments, he maintains that willing something is not the same as knowing it, even if the act of willing something is the knowledge of the same because it is present to the intellect. His reason is when the will wills it necessarily carries out its action, just like any other agent.

³⁶ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 4 (PI, f. 31vb): “Ideo videtur michi esse dicendum in isto articulo, sicut dicit Doctor Sollempnis, 7 Quodlibet, q. 13: quod actualis cogitacio sit distincta realiter a specie in memoria sive in intellectu: quia aliter non videtur michi quod cogitacio actualis esset accio intellectus, quod tamen conceditur ab omnibus. Non enim videtur michi posse intelligi quomodo esset eius accio, nisi intellectus esset eius causa efficiens; et si intellectus est causa efficiens eius, tunc non est species que prefuit, quia ista prius fuit in causa, et ideo nunc non fit ab aliquo nouiter, quando intellectus actu intelligit.”

Thus, the action of the will of the one willing, after he did not will, is something new which arose in it and from it, not something that existed before the act of willing.³⁷

In his concise answer, FitzRalph states that willing with respect to a certain thing is not the cognition of the same even if both occur at the same time when the object is present to both. Indeed, the will acts like any other agent and thus the action of the will after not willing is something new, which arises by and from itself and certainly not as a result of an earlier act.

This section of the *Lectura* has been investigated in some detail by Kitanov.³⁸ FitzRalph's position that volition presupposes cognition and cannot occur naturally without a preceding act of cognition is analyzed by Kitanov both as presented in the reply to the article and in the arguments for and against. FitzRalph's debt to Augustine in the *De Trinitate* is unmistakable given, as one would expect, the preponderance of citations from this work in the text when it comes to discussing how the powers and acts of the human soul reflect the Trinity.³⁹

Kitanov examines FitzRalph's response to arg. 9 where he takes the objection to be that the human will has a memory and intelligence of its own, somewhat independent of the mind itself. Therefore, the questions become, on the one hand, "how far can you push the distinction between the intellect and will and their corresponding activities"; and on the other hand to what extent these activities are integrated in the human mind.⁴⁰ Kitanov interprets the "*cognitio sui ipsius*" in the text as indicating the following argument: "the volition of the thing is perhaps the cognition of itself [the volition] insofar as it [the volition] is present to the intellect. This approach allows Kitanov to clarify FitzRalph's position that volition does not take place

³⁷ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 4, ad art. (*Pl*, f. 34ra): "Propter illa argumenta teneo hanc partem: scilicet, quod volucio respectu alicuius rei non est cognitio eiusdem; quamvis fortassis volucio alicuius rei sit cognitio sui ipsius, propter hoc quod ipsa est presens intellectui: et propter hanc causam, quia voluntas in volendo necessario agit suam accionem, sicut quodlibet aliud agens, et ideo actio voluntatis volentis postquam non voluit est aliquid de novo factum in seipsa et a seipsa, non aliquid prius factum antequam ipsa uelit."

³⁸ Kitanov, 2017, pp. 90–93.

³⁹ Kitanov, 2017, p. 90.

⁴⁰ Kitanov, 2017, p. 91.

in isolation from the rest of the mind, which FitzRalph regards as one. Thus, when the will wants something, the intellect is simultaneously aware of this:

One may perhaps say that the volitional activity of the soul is on some very basic level cognitively transparent, insofar as the volition of any given object also involves the soul's awareness of itself as willing.⁴¹

Thus, Kitanov concludes that for FitzRalph the volition of any object is accompanied by reflexive awareness and that volition is cognition of itself rather than cognition of the object willed.⁴²

5. Memory, Understanding, and Will

Returning to the initial problem posed: are memory, understanding, and will really distinct from each other? FitzRalph's answer seems close to that of Scotus and perhaps also that of Walter Chatton (1290–1343), and that is that they are distinct (the position Chatton defended against Ockham). FitzRalph here argues against the position of Aquinas, namely that understanding and memory are one power but that the understanding and will are two powers. Following Avicenna (980–1037), Aquinas argues that the identity of being and power (*esse est posse*) is found only in God and that, in all other beings, essence is distinct from power.⁴³ FitzRalph points out that in fact Aquinas is contradicting himself because in the case of prime matter he accepts that its substance or essence is its power or potency.⁴⁴ Henry of Ghent's *reductio ad absurdum* argument is also referenced.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Kitanov, 2017, p. 92.

⁴² Kitanov, 2017, pp. 92–93.

⁴³ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, f. 27ra): “In isto articulo tenet Thomas, prima parte *Scripti*, dist. 3, art. 3, q. 2, quod intellectus et memoria sunt una potentia, sed intellectus et voluntas duae. Probat hoc per haec quod in solo Deo esse est posse, ut dicit expresse Avicenna, ergo in aliis a Deo essentia non est potentia [...]”

⁴⁴ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, f. 27ra): “Contra Thomam [...] Praeterea, potentia materiae primae est sua substantia sicut ipse ibidem dicit, ergo in aliqua creatura essentia est potentia.”

⁴⁵ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, f. 27ra): “Praeterea, tunc potentia illius potentiae esset aliud ab ipsa, et sic in infinitum.” (Vide de isto Doctorem Sollemnem, 3 *Quodlibet*, q. 14).

Löwe calls Aquinas's argument the category argument: a power must be in the same category as its operation and observes that why this should be so is unclear, but Aquinas found it compelling as an argument and refers to it a number of times.⁴⁶ In all other creatures besides God, Aquinas argues, an operation is an accident. For example, if we consider our vital operations none of them are essential to us, because most of them come and go. Even vital operations such as our heartbeat are not used to define what a human being is, and so this too must be an accident. Thus, all the powers that give rise to our vital operations must also be accidents and these of course are the powers of the soul.

Henry of Ghent, who FitzRalph quotes in opposition to Aquinas, holds that all substances essentially possess certain powers including the soul, and so there is no reason to hold that the powers are accidents of the soul, calling such a view "very frivolous."⁴⁷ In his answer FitzRalph uses a distinction, made by Scotus⁴⁸—though not attributed to him here in the *Lectura*—between the two meanings of the Latin word "*potentia*" as indicating potential or power—we must presume that it had become a commonplace by FitzRalph's time. Scotus thinks that Aquinas's category argument, namely that

⁴⁶ Löwe, 2025, p. 17.

⁴⁷ See Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* III, q. 14 (Paris ed. 1518 f. 67): "[...] patet quod multum frivolum est dicere quod forma substantialis, vel substantia aliqua per suam essentiam non potest esse principium alicuius operationis accidentalis: sed solum per aliquod accidentale sibi inhaerens: vt idcirco quia entire, intelligere, et huiusmodi operations sunt accidentals animae, dicamus quod non procedunt ab anima, nisi per potentiam: quae est accidens in ea, vt anima separata, vel homo informatus anima intelligit non per substantiam ipsius animae sed per aliquid de secunda specie qualitatis, quod est proprietas existens in ea sicut ignis non calefacit nisi qualitate sua: quae est calor." Translation in Friedman & Löwe, 2025, pp. 72–95; here at p. 78: "[...] it is clear that it is very frivolous to say that through its essence a substantial form or a substance cannot be the principle of an accidental operation, but only through something accidental inhering in it, so that since sensing, understanding, and other operations are accidental to the soul, we should say that they only proceed from the soul through a power that is an accident, as if a separated soul or a human being informed by a soul would understand not through the soul's substance itself, but rather through something belonging to the second species of quality, which is a property existing in the soul, just as fire only heats through its quality which is heat."

⁴⁸ John Duns Scotus, *Commentary on the Sentences (Reportatio A)*, II, dist. 16, ed. Wadding, pp. 345–346; see discussion in Löwe, 2025, p. 29; van den Bercken, 2015. [transl. Friedman & Löwe, 2025, pp. 145–166]

a vital power is an accident because its operation is likewise an accident⁴⁹ rests on an equivocation made by Aquinas of the term potency as used by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*.⁵⁰ Thus, for Scotus, potency can be understood as first, a power which is a causal principle that has actuality in its own right and remains in existence when actualized; for example, my ability to speak English is an actual property of mine and when I do not exercise it, it does not cease to exist; and second, as a potential mode of being, namely, a possible object which does not as yet exist.

Scotus holds that Aquinas's category principle does not hold true of powers but only of potencies. Scotus here follows Henry and argues that not every power can be in the same category as its act, on the pain of an infinite regress (as seen above and quoted by FitzRalph). Not everything can be in potency and the regress must be halted by admitting that a power is an essential feature of a substance, and is thus a power, and its potential activity, need not be in the same category, contrary to what Aquinas maintained.

Applying this then FitzRalph states:

Memory, understanding, and will can be understood in two ways: first, as acts, and second, as the powers from which those acts proceed or in which they reside (...) thus, I maintain that memory, understanding, and will are not really distinct within one mind; here, I understand memorative power to mean intellectual memory rather than sensitive memory, which is not our concern in this article. This is clear in as much as the essence of the human mind is made directly in the image of its maker and therefore directly through its essence it can know its creator, having knowledge in itself as through an active power, even if it requires its own proper action.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See, Löwe, 2025, p. 29.

⁵⁰ See for example, Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V 12 1019a 14–15; IX i, 1046a 10–13. John Duns Scotus, *Commentary on the Sentences (Reportata Parisiensis)*, II, dist. 16 (ed. Wadding, p. 345): “In reply to the first argument I say that ‘potency’ (potential) is taken in two ways. In one way, ‘potency’ is taken as a principle of being and so understood it is divided into active and passive principles, as is clear from *Metaphysics* V and IX. In another way potency and act are taken as differentiae of being.” [transl. Friedman & Löwe, 2025, p. 149]

⁵¹ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, ff. 27rb–va): “Ideo dico ad illum articulum cum queritur: Utrum memoria, etc., quod quaelibet istarum intentionem memoria, intelligentia, et voluntas accipitur dupliciter ad propositum: uno modo pro actu, alio modo pro potentia a qua vel in qua est actus—et sic est ad propositum. Unde sic dico, quod memoria, intelligentia et voluntas, non sunt distincte realiter in una mente—et intelligo

He then criticizes Henry's statement that all the powers of the soul are the very essence of the soul because that would imply that all the powers of the soul, not only intellectual but also sensitive, would derive from the rational soul. He then refers in detail to the condemnation at Oxford by Robert Kilwardby (1215–1279) that the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual souls are one simple form. FitzRalph comments that it can be argued and shown that man has an extended sensitive soul like other animals especially since the intellectual soul is created and is not produced by man and through procreation. He notes that if an animal can produce an animal soul, so much more should it be possible for a man, the perfect animal, to do so. Nor does it seem that the vegetative and sensitive soul in man and animals is any different but whether one posits one soul or two in man, the sensitive powers derive from the sensitive soul and intellectual powers from the intellectual soul.⁵² However, it should be noted that the activity of any part is ultimately the activity of the whole and is only of the part in an accidental way. The powers of the soul are not really distinct from the soul but are distinguished only insofar as they are exercised through one part rather than another. The three acts of the mind remain distinct as acts: first memory, then understanding, and finally willing.

6. Agent Intellect

The final example of FitzRalph's attempt to reconcile Augustine and Aristotle comes in Book I, question 9 regarding the Agent Intellect. After a lengthy collection of arguments drawn primarily from Aristotle and Averroes,⁵³ the answer inspired by Henry of Ghent is to identify the Agent Intellect

per potentiam memorativam in proposito memoriam [*PI*, f. 27va] intellectivam, non sensitivam, quia de illa non est articulus. Istud patet per hoc quod essentia mentis humanae facta est immediate ad imaginem sui conditoris, et immediate nulla interposita alia creatura ipsa illi adhaeret, sicut dicit Augustinus, libro 83 *Questionum*, q. 52. Et ideo ipsa per suam essentiam immediate potest suum creatorem cognoscere habita cognitione in se tamquam per potentiam activam, etsi requirat actionem suam propriam." [transl. M.W.D.]

⁵² See, Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 6, art. 3 (*PI*, f. 27rb).

⁵³ FitzRalph's constant use of Philosopher together with the Commentator, or an Aristotle read through the lens of Averroes, led some scholars to opine that FitzRalph was an Averroist but, in fact, his is the standard practice of the time.

with God and, as such, it is not a part of the image. In FitzRalph's opinion (*videtur mihi*), the Agent Intellect is not part of the image of the rational mind because it is the First Form, namely God. While united to the human mind, God prepares it to receive the impressions arising from the intentions in the material powers. God, as Agent Intellect,⁵⁴ illuminates the human mind so that it can look within itself and into the divine nature to which reason is connected as its natural origin and to anything truly knowable. Thus, the Agent Intellect acts on the material intellect by preparing and establishing it. This is because the impressions of the material powers are themselves material and, as such, they are not constituted either to produce something abstract or to act upon something abstract through their own power, even by means of a disposition or preparation effected in them by another finite power. Since no abstract form can immediately transmute matter or a material thing, such a transition requires an infinite power. Hence, FitzRalph concludes that natural changes, whether in the imagination, the particular sense, the common sense, or another power, can produce an indivisible and abstract species in the material intellect only because that intellect has first been illuminated and prepared by an infinite power. No finite power could accomplish this on its own.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Osbert Pickenham, O.Carm., commenting on the *Sentences* a decade later (early 1240s), also holds that God is the Agent Intellect. An examination of how this idea circulated at Oxford in the 1330s after FitzRalph's *Lectura* is very much needed. See Xiberta, 1931, p. 255.

⁵⁵ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, I, q. 9 (*PI*, f. 52ra–b): “Propter argumenta predicta, uidetur michi [f. 52rb] esse dicendum quod intellectus agens non est pars ymaginis mentis rationalis quia est forma prima scilicet Deus tempore quatenus sicut coniungitur menti hominis ut preparat ipsam ad recipiendum passionem ab intencionibus in uirtutibus materialibus hominis. Et in quatenus illuminat mentem hominis ut possit respicere intra se et in natura diuina cui naturali origine coniungitur rationem cuicunque rei uere scibilis et sic duo facit in intellectu materiali scilicet dupliciter eum preparat idem et ponitur propter intenciones materialium uirtutum que sunt materiales et ideo non sunt nate agere aliquod abstractum neque in aliquod abstractum uirtute propria nec eciam per disposicionem uel per preparacionem factam in eis ab alia uirtute finita cum nulla forma abstracta possit immediate transmutare materiam uel rem materialem sicut dicitur 2^o *Metaphisice*, commento 47, et 7 *Metaphisice*, commento 28 et 31 et multo minus econtrario. Vnde necessario oportet mutaciones naturales siue sunt in ymaginatiua siue sunt in sensu particulari uel communi sensu uel in alia uirtute ad hoc quod causant speciem indiuisibilem et abstractam in intellectu materiali illuminati et preparati per aliam uirtutem infinitam cum nulla uirtus finita ad hec sufficiat ut uidetur.”

7. Conclusion

Clear problems had already emerged by the mid-thirteenth century for theologians trying to preserve Augustine's triadic conception of mind in the face of the new Aristotelian/Averroistic understanding. Encouraged by the notion that *veritas consonat veritati*, there seems to have been a conviction that this reconciliation could indeed be effected. However, as will happen later with the various crises of medieval Aristotelian physics, for example regarding projectile motion, thinkers writing on the powers of the soul resorted to ad hoc devices, or "patches," to cover what was, in effect, a crisis: for if on the surface the puzzle looked solvable, the use of increasingly analytic methods seemed, unexpectedly, to make the problem worse. FitzRalph, as a bachelor of theology, "reading" the *Sentences*, is debating and offering his views on a range of topics together with his fellow socii at Oxford in the years 1328–1329, topics that had been drawn into the orbit of the "powers of the soul" debate, including species theory. His proposed solution was to return to a detailed analysis of Augustine and rereading Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus. He did not have the last word, of course, and probably did not expect to have it.⁵⁶

FitzRalph's text demonstrates the resilience of Augustine's thought in dialogue with Aristotle and that it was a tradition capable of renewal to respond to contemporary questions and debates. While the theological context is recognizable, the quality and methodology of these debates are more metaphysical than theological. If, up to the twelfth century, what is being considered is the theory of the human soul in particular, and its status as an image of the divine, by the fourteenth century the considerations are much broader than the human soul and its powers and due to the acceptance of hylomorphism, the focus is on souls and substantial forms and their powers in general. FitzRalph sought to make his own contribution to the debates, and his work turned out to be an influential presence in the decades which followed.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ As an example of how the debates evolved there is William Crathorn (fl. 1330s), who read the *Sentences* several years later and who treats FitzRalph's arguments with great respect but rejects nearly every one of his positions.

⁵⁷ Kitanov, 2017, p. 93, sums this up extremely well: "We can conclude that FitzRalph remained true to the spirit of St. Augustine by emphasizing the singularity and integrity

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of the human mind while at the same time preserving the mind's multi-dimensionality. We can also say that this very effort to balance Augustine's attention to the mind's cohesive unity against Augustine's concern with shielding the distinctiveness of each facet of the Trinitarian image in the human mind is what sets FitzRalph to some degree apart from his contemporaries and why he deserves to be studied."

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Citation

Dunne, M. W. (2026). Richard FitzRalph on mind: Reconciling Augustine and Aristotle. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 63–85. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-04.

ARTICLES

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Roger Roseth in Conversation with Richard FitzRalph on the Cause of Volitions*

Keywords: Cognition, Ethics, Free Will, Fourteenth-Century Ethics, Natural Philosophy, Oxford Calculators

Słowa kluczowe: Poznanie, Etyka, Wolna Wola, Czternastowieczna Etyka, Filozofia Przyrody, Kalkulatorzy Oxfordzcy

Abstract

The first half of the fourteenth century was the golden age of voluntarist debates at Oxford, which thrived as a remarkable shift occurred in both the methodology of ethical argumentation and its focal themes. Triggered by advancements in natural philosophy and propounded by the Oxford Calculators, the new approaches in ethics made it possible to craft novel and original arguments and argumentation tactics. This paper traces one aspect of the will debate, focusing on Roger Roseth's views on free will, which drew substantially on the voluntarist thought of Richard FitzRalph. Although FitzRalph was undoubtedly one of Roseth's most significant influences, Roseth did not blindly follow his fellow Oxonian's reasoning, but instead critically reassessed his arguments on the cause of volitions for safeguarding the freedom of the will.

* The research for this paper was funded in whole by the National Science Centre, Poland, Weave-UNISONO, under grant agreement UMO-2024/06/Y/HS1/00119.

1. Introduction

As has recently been argued,¹ Roger Roseth (d. after 1347) was one of the Oxford Calculators, a similarly minded circle of scholars who lectured and worked at Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century. Until very recently, Roseth was not traditionally listed among them, yet the scope of his interests, the style of his argumentation, and his employment of logical and physical tools, as well as other analytic techniques distinctive to the Calculators (such as the *secundum imaginationem* procedure, the calculus of compounding ratios, the quantification of qualities, etc.), justify classifying him as a Calculator.

As is the case with many medieval scholars, we know relatively little about Roseth's life and career. Marginal notes in some of the manuscripts containing his only extant work² indicate that he was of English origin and that he belonged to the Franciscan order. While there are two alternative names—Rugosus and Rosetus—by which he is called in the manuscripts, most of them refer to him by the latter, which has also been adopted by contemporary scholars.³ Roseth's sole preserved work

¹ Michałowska & Lukács, 2024.

² Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale, 1551, Fribourg, Couvent des Cordeliers, 26, Vatican Chigi, B.V. 66. For a detailed account, see Hallamaa, 2005, pp. 6–7.

³ For more information, see Hallamaa, 2005, pp. 6–7. As Hallamaa relates: “Modern scholars refer to the author by the name Roger Roseth, but the Latin form Rosetus has also been used. Both forms appear in manuscripts, although owing to an unnormalized orthography several variants appear. The form Rogerus Roseth appears only once, in the table of contents of the Vatican manuscript Chigi B.V. 66. In the same manuscript the name is also written as Rogerius Rogeth and Rogerii Roger. In the Vatican manuscript Vat. lat. 1108 the name is spelled Roseti, which would give Rosetus as the nominative. Assisi, Biblioteca comunale MS. 173 writes Rossetus; Brugge, Stadtsbibliotheek, MS. 192 ascribes the book to ‘magistri Rosete’; whereas in Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 1551 the work is said to be by ‘Rogerii Rugosi’. Thus on the basis of manuscript evidence there are two alternatives for the Latin name: Rugosus or Rosetus. The former is used in only one manuscript and it appears in modern literature only in Stegmüller's *Repertorium* in brackets as an alternative spelling for Rosetus. The majority of ascriptions seem to indicate that the correct Latin spelling is Rosetus, which is formed from the vernacular name Roseth. For reasons that will be treated later when I discuss the dating of manuscripts, it is probable that the copyist of the Chigi manuscript had first-hand information about the author. Roseth, the name used in the Chigi manuscript, is therefore most likely the one that our author himself used.”

is his theological commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*—*Lectura super Sententias*—and there is actually no evidence that he penned anything else. Judging from the sophisticated composition and the complexity of the *Lectura*, Olli Hallamaa argues that Roseth's question commentary in all probability did not result from actual teaching; rather, Hallamaa says, it can be reasonably assumed that the *Lectura* was composed without preceding lectures.⁴

Although the exact composition date of Roseth's *Lectura* remains unknown, passages from other authors included in this work invite an educated guess. As Hallamaa observes,⁵ the dating of Chigi B.V. 66 manuscript to 1337, which is confirmed by the scribe's note at the end of the codex, makes it the oldest witness preserving the text; consequently, we know that Roseth must have written his *Lectura* before 1337. The quotations from Roseth's contemporaries help us narrow the dating down even further. Roseth's extensive verbatim quotations from Richard FitzRalph's (1299–1360) *Lectura in Sententias* (1328–1329) suggest a later date than the end of the 1320s. Hallamaa proposes 1334–1335 as the most plausible date, given that Roseth references Adam Wodeham's (ca. 1295–1358) views on the finite capacity of the soul—in particular, his argument of the vessel⁶—from the *Ordinatio*, which stemmed from Wodeham's lectures on the *Sentences* in the academic year of 1331–1332.⁷ Roseth's analysis and criticism of one of the arguments for the freedom of the will advanced by Thomas Bradwardine (ca. 1290–1349)⁸

⁴ Hallamaa, 2005, pp. 17–18.

⁵ Hallamaa, 2005, p. 16.

⁶ Adam Wodeham, *Ordinatio Oxoniensis* (Sorbonne, 193, f. 5rb): “Aliter igitur mihi videtur dicendum quod et capacitas animae est finita, quia ista non est nisi ipsa substantia animae, et quod ipsa de quavis forma in ea receptibili de cuius specie non est dare maximam possibilem repleti potest proportionaliter in spiritualibus secundum intentionem, sicut vas corporale repleti potest secundum extensionem aqua vel alio liquore ita quod non potest simul sine speciali miraculo plus illius speciei recipi hic et ibi.” (Latin quotation after Kitanov & Slotemaker, 2023, p. 187, footnote 98). For a broader discussion of this notion in Wodeham, see Kitanov & Slotemaker, 2023. See also Courtenay, 1978, pp. 120–121, notes 9–11.

⁷ Schabel, 2020, pp. 66–72.

⁸ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 3 (in preparation): “Ex istis conclusionibus patet quod conclusio una quam ponit Bradwardin est falsa, nam ponit quod volitio quae nunc causatur libere causatur, et hoc, quia in illo instanti in quo causatur potest voluntas prius non causare illam volitionem quam causet illam.”

in his *Lectura in Sententias* (1332–1333) “indicate a firm terminus post quem of the fall of 1332,” as Severin Kitanov and Chris Schabel conclude.⁹ Their reasoning is corroborated by the fact that Roseth explicitly quotes from Robert Halifax’s (d. 1349) *Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum*,¹⁰

⁹ Kitanov & Schabel, 2025, p. 17.

¹⁰ Compare, for example:

Roger Roseth, <i>Lectura super Sententias</i> , q. 2, art. 2 (in preparation)	Robertus Halifax, <i>Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum</i> , q. 5, argumenta principalia (forthcoming)
1	2
(8) Praeterea, ponatur quod angelus bonus descendat de caelo ad terram continue movendo. Capió unum locum in linea descensus inter sphaeram ignis et aeris; et sit ille locus A. Haec tamen aliquando erit vera de angelo illo, volo esse in A et non antequam erit in A nec postquam erit in A, ergo praecise dum erit in A, sed non erit in A nisi tantum per illud instans, ergo non habebit illam volitionem qua velit esse in A nisi tantum per illud instans quo erit in A, et per consequens subito erit ille actus productus.	Praeterea, pono quod aliquis angelus beatus descendat de caelo ad terram continue movendo. Capió unum locum in linea descensus inter sphaeram ignis et aeris. Et sit ille locus A. Iste angelus vult aliquando se esse in A et non ante nec postquam fuerit in A, igitur tantum quando est in A, sed non est in A nisi tantum per unum instans, igitur non habet illam volitionem qua vult esse in A nisi tantum per instans unum. Et per consequens subito fuit iste actus voluntatis productus, quia si successive fuisset productus, prius habuisset actum quo voluisset fuisse in A antequam fuit in A vel non habuit actum quo voluit esse in A quando fuit in A, quorum utrumque est falsum.
(9) Praeterea, si actus voluntatis non possit subito produci a voluntate, ergo, eadem ratione, sequitur quod non possit subito corrumpi a voluntate. Et tunc sequitur illa conclusio quod aliquis peccator est qui non potest poenitere de peccato suo in tota vita sua, quod videtur falsum, quia in quacumque hora peccator conversus fuerit a peccato suo vita vivet et non morietur. Et consequentiam probó, quia capio peccatorem cum intenso actu peccandi. Suppono tunc ex hypothesi quod iste actus per potentiam naturalem voluntatis necessario	Praeterea, si actus voluntatis non posset subito produci a voluntate, eadem ratione, sequitur quod non posset subito corrumpi a voluntate etc., et tunc sequitur quod aliquis peccator non posset poenitere de peccato suo in tota vita sua. Consequens videtur falsum, quia in quacumque hora peccator conversus fuerit a peccato suo vita vivet et non morietur. Consequentiam probó, quia capio aliquem peccatorem cum intenso actu peccandi. Suppono ex hypothesi quod iste actus per potentiam naturalem voluntatis necessario

which was most probably composed concurrently with *Quaestiones super libros Sententiarum* (1332–1333) by Richard Kilvington (ca. 1302–1361),¹¹ to whom Roseth also refers on some occasions.¹² Elżbieta Jung and Monika Michałowska convincingly argue for Kilvington being Bradwardine’s *socius* when Kilvington lectured on the *Sentences*,¹³ and Schabel insists that “Bradwardine was a fellow *sententiarius* of both Robert Halifax and Richard Kilvington.”¹⁴ These findings additionally substantiate Kitanov and Schabel’s dating of Roseth’s *Lectura* to shortly after 1332–1333.¹⁵

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requirat aliquod certum tempus ad hoc ut corrumpatur. Et pono quod calor vel humor radicalis quae sunt principia vitae hominis, per Philosophum <i>De longitudine et brevitate vitae</i> , non possent durare nisi per medietatem huius temporis. Tunc arguo sic: iste peccator non potest poenitere de peccato suo antequam dimittat illum actum peccandi, et non potest eum dimittere per totam vitam, ergo talis peccator habita deliberatione de peccato suo non potest poenitere de peccato suo ante mortem suam, quod fuit probandum. Et, eodem modo, sequitur ex alia parte quod aliquis existens in caritate in aliquo tempore consimiliter non posset peccare ante mortem suam, quia non poterit dimittere actum suum ante finem vitae suae.	requirat aliquod certum tempus ad hoc quod corrumpatur. Et pono quod calor naturalis et humor radicalis quae sunt principia vitae hominis, secundum Philosophum <i>De longitudine et brevitate vitae</i> , non possunt durare nisi per medietatem illius temporis. Tunc arguitur sic: iste peccator non potest poenitere de peccato suo antequam dimittat illum actum peccandi. Ista statim patet, quia actus volendi peccare et actus quo displicet omnem peccatum numquam simul stant, igitur non potest poenitere de peccato suo durante illo actu quo vult peccare. Sed illum actum non potest voluntas dimittere per totam vitam illius hominis, igitur talis peccator habita tali deliberatione de peccato suo non potest poenitere de peccato suo ante mortem. Et, eodem modo, sequitur ex alia parte quod aliquis existens in caritate in aliquo tempore constitutus non potest ante mortem peccare, quia non potest dimittere actum bonum quem habet nisi in tanto tempore etc.

¹¹ Jung & Michałowska, 2023, p. 6.
¹² See, for example, Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 4, art. 2 (ed. Hallamaa, 2005, pp. 217–218); q. 5, art. 2 (ed. Hallamaa, 2005, p. 266).
¹³ Jung & Michałowska, 2023, pp. 1–86.
¹⁴ Schabel, 2024, p. 579. Schabel also gives 1332–1333, 1333–1334, and 1334–1335 as possible dates of Halifax’s year as a *sententiarius*; see Schabel, 2024, p. 573.
¹⁵ Kitanov & Schabel, 2025, p. 18.

Question 2 of Roseth's *Lectura*, the central focus of this paper, is still only available in manuscripts.¹⁶ Seeing that Roseth's notion of the will has been sorely understudied, this paper aims to offer the first account of his views on the freedom of the will. It examines Roseth's engagement in the debate on the freedom of the will and the arguments he borrowed from FitzRalph's question 10 of his *Lectura*. With these aims in mind, I begin by sketching the structure and the main content of question 2. Then, I look into the arguments Roseth crafted to defend the freedom of the will and compare them with those put forward by FitzRalph. Subsequently, I analyze to what extent Roseth follows FitzRalph's arguments, how he critically appraises their value for safeguarding the freedom of the will, and the way in which he contributes to advancing the debate on the will. Finally, I conclude by assessing Roseth's employment of FitzRalph's arguments and his engagement in the discussion.

2. The Structure and Content of Question 2 of Roseth's *Lectura*

Roseth's *Lectura* comprises five questions, which are:

Question 1: *Whether one can be obligated by a command to do something that is against one's conscience (Utrum aliquis in casu ex praecepto possit obligari ad aliquid quod est contra conscientiam suam).*

Question 2: *Whether the created will causes the act of enjoyment with respect to God freely or necessarily (Utrum voluntas creata libere vel necessario causet actum fruendi respectu Dei).*

Question 3: *Whether anything can be shown about the divine essence (Utrum de essentia divina possit aliquid ostendi).*

Question 4: *Whether charity can be increased (Utrum caritas possit augeri).*

Question 5: *Whether charity is increased by meritorious actions (Utrum caritas augeatur per opera meritoria).*¹⁷

All the questions exhibit characteristic features of the Calculators' approach and the issues they studied, bespeaking Roseth's interest in the thematic concerns debated at that time. Yet, question 2 is of special interest to this paper because Roseth frequently evokes and literally quotes his Oxonian colleagues, including FitzRalph, Bradwardine, Wodeham,

¹⁶ For the complete list, see below.

¹⁷ Questions 3–5 have been critically edited. See Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias: Quaestiones 3, 4 & 5* (ed. Hallamaa, 2005, pp. 63–288).

Kilvington, and Halifax. All of Roseth's *quaestiones*, including question 2, display all the standard characteristics of the question commentary genre as practiced at Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century. Firstly, Roseth's work does not follow the order (of books, distinctions, or questions) of Lombard's *Sentences*, but only includes three articles devoted to three selected problems, which Roseth examines in detail. Secondly, the problems Roseth analyzes do not correspond to the topics examined by Lombard, but concentrate on the issues that engrossed Roseth's fellow philosophers and theologians. Finally, Roseth's commentary does not reproduce the structure of the commented text. Instead, the *Lectura*'s internal division is rather complex and accurately mirrors the style of questions composed by the Oxonians. The structure of question 2 incorporates:

- Three *argumenta principalia quaestionis*, which are subsequently developed into three separate articles.
- One argument against the question.
- The order of the question.¹⁸
- Article 1: *Whether the will is the cause of its acts (Utrum voluntas sit causa sui actus)*.
 - Three main conclusions concerning article 1.
 - Arguments against the first main conclusion.
 - The author's opinion.
 - Replies to the arguments against the first main conclusion.
 - Arguments against the second main conclusion.
 - Replies to the arguments against the second main conclusion.
 - Arguments against the third main conclusion.
 - Replies to the arguments against the third main conclusion.
- Article 2: *Whether the will causes its acts instantly or successively (Utrum voluntas causet actus suos subito vel successive)*.
 - The order of the article.¹⁹

¹⁸ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2 (in preparation): "In ista quaestione erunt quattuor articuli; tres iuxta tria argumenta principalia. Primus articulus iuxta primum argumentum: utrum voluntas sit causa sui actus. Secundus articulus iuxta secundum argumentum: posito quod voluntas causet actum suum utrum causet actum suum subito vel successive. Tertius articulus erit videre si aliqua causa libere poterit causare umquam effectum suum, iuxta tertium argumentum. Et quartus articulus erit respondere ad quaestionem et ad argumenta principalia."

¹⁹ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 2 (in preparation): "Supposito quod voluntas aliquos actus suos causet quaeritur utrum causet illos subito vel successive."

- Four main conclusions concerning article 1.
- Arguments against the first main conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the first main conclusion.
- Arguments against the second main conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the second main conclusion.
- Arguments against the third main conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the third main conclusion.
- Arguments against the fourth main conclusion.
- Three additional conclusions.
- Arguments against the first conclusion.
- Arguments against the second conclusion.
- Arguments against the third conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the first conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the second conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the third conclusion.
- Replies to the arguments against the fourth main conclusion (continuation).
- Article 3: *When does the will freely cause its acts? (Quando voluntas libere causat actum suum?)*
The order of the article.²⁰
Six main conclusions.
Bradwardine's opinion.
Arguments against the first main conclusion.
Replies to the arguments against the first main conclusion.
Arguments against the second, third, and sixth main conclusions.
Replies to the arguments against the second, third, and sixth main conclusions.
- Replies to the principal arguments.
All three articles of question 2 explore the voluntarist problems that fall within the scope of the disputes that were rife in Roseth's milieu, which places him at the center of the debates unfolding at Oxford. The issues

Et circa istum articulum sic procedam: primo ponam aliquas conclusiones; secundo arguam contra illas; tertio solvam illa argumenta contra illas conclusiones.”

²⁰ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 3 (in preparation): “Tertius articulus est videre quando voluntas libere causat actum suum. Circa illum sic procedam: primo ponam aliquas conclusiones; secundo arguam contra eas et solvam argumenta; tertio respondebo ad argumenta principalia conclusionibus.”

inspected in question 2 concern the acts of the will (including definitional and classificational problems), the cause of the acts of the will, the question whether the will is the only and proper cause of its volitions and noli-tions, the question whether the will can be necessitated by something else or whether it acts entirely freely, instantaneous *versus* successive willing, arguments for and against the freedom of the will, and the relation between the will and cognition. Analyzing this varied array of issues, Roseth not only relies on the standard classical authorities, such as Augustine, Anselm, and Averroes, but also critically engages with the arguments fashioned by his contemporaries. Among these, FitzRalph's work is a fascinating case as Roseth frequently invokes FitzRalph's ideas, but does not mention him by name. Now, let us have a closer look at how he uses FitzRalph's reasoning.

3. Roseth's Embracement of FitzRalph's Arguments on the Will

Article 1, where Roseth inquires whether the will is the cause of its volitions, opens with a distinction between two kinds of the will's acts: those that follow deliberation and those that precede deliberation. Both kinds of acts are caused by the will, yet the former are produced freely, whereas the latter are produced necessarily. To clarify the nature of the acts necessarily produced in the will, Roseth explains that what we experience (e.g., seeing, desiring, and the first motions of the will) often lies beyond our willing.²¹ To examine which acts of the will are free and which are necessary, he poses and considers three conclusions in depth. Since the second conclusion is of the greatest importance to this paper, I will examine it in detail. It goes as follows: "The second conclusion is that something other than the will, being a prior cognition that naturally precedes such an act of the will, concurs with

²¹ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Primus articulus est: utrum voluntas sit causa sui actus. Et hic ponenda est primo una distinctio: quod quidam sunt actus voluntatis qui libere causantur a voluntate, cuiusmodi sunt actus sequentes deliberationem, et quidam sunt actus voluntatis qui causantur necessario in voluntate sicut actus praecedentes deliberationem qui accidunt in nobis frequenter nobis nolentibus. Non est autem in potestate nostra quin habeamus tales secundum illam vulgatam auctoritatem Augustini: *non est in potestate nostra quibus visus tangamur*. Similiter, quilibet experitur quod ipso volente ad apprehensionem alicuius habet actum volendi respectu talis obiecti delectabilis ita quod non est in potestate sua non habere talem actum. Patet hoc idem de motibus primis qui non sunt in potestate nostra."

the power to freely cause such an act of the will.”²² The conclusion clearly addresses the key issue of the dispute between voluntarists and intellectualists over the primacy of the will or the intellect in producing volitions. Furthering the conclusion, Roseth observes that if a thing is necessary for a volition to be produced by the will, then this thing is the cause of this volition. Consequently, for an object to be willed, some cognition of this object must be acquired. Thus, cognition, if prior to a volition, is the cause of this volition.²³ To argue in favor of prior cognition being the cause of volitions, Roseth marshals four arguments, all of which, including the references to authorities, are borrowed from FitzRalph’s question 10. They are to be found in the section in which FitzRalph presents nine arguments to prove that all desires and love for something proceed from knowledge. While literally quoting these arguments, Roseth slightly modifies and develops arguments 1 and 2.

Richard FitzRalph, <i>Lectura in Sententias</i> , pp. 123–126	Roger Roseth, <i>Lectura super Sententias</i> , q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation)
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Oppositum patet per Augustinum XV <i>De Trinitate</i> , capitulo 67 et 77. Utrobique enim dicit Augustinus quod amor procedit de scientia et de ipsa mente.	Primo sic: per Augustinum V <i>De Trinitate</i> , capitulo 67, qui dicit quod amor procedit de scientia, scilicet de cognitione, et ipsa mente, et per consequens scientia est causa amoris, et quilibet amor est quidam actus voluntatis, et, per consequens, omnis actus voluntatis est volitio vel nolitio; ergo si scientia est causa amoris, ipsa est causa volitionis. Unde intellegendum est hic quod per amorem nihil aliud voco nisi volitionem qua volo rem dilectam et per odium actum quo nolo rem oditam.

²² Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): “Secunda conclusio est quod aliud a voluntate concurrat cum potentia ad talem actum voluntatis libere causatum, scilicet cognitio praevia naturaliter talem actum voluntatis praecedens [...]”

²³ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): “[...] quia illa res quae est necessario requisita ad hoc quod talis volitio naturaliter producat ita quod non poterit naturaliter produci sine tali re, illa res est causa talis volitionis. Sed cognitio praevia de illo obiecto de quo debet habere talem volitionem liberam est necessario requisita ad hoc quod talis volitio naturaliter producat, ergo talis cognitio praevia est causa talis volitionis.”

1	2
Praeterea, Philosophus et Commentator III <i>De anima</i> , commento 50, declarantes motum secundum quem generatur in animali desiderium sive appetitus dicunt quod hoc sit ex hoc quod imaginatio imaginatur rem primo vel intellectus intellegit primo, et post res vel concupiscitur vel respuitur, ergo ipsi volunt quod amor sive desiderium, quod ipsi vocant ibi appetitum intellectivum, sicut ibi dicit Commentator, fiat ex actuali cogitatione.	Secundo sic: probatur eadem minor per Philosophum et Commentatorem III <i>De anima</i> , commento 5 determinantes quod potentia motiva per quam generatur in animali appetitus sive desiderium, dicunt quod hoc fit per hoc quod imaginatio imaginatur rem primo vel intellectus, et postea res concupiscitur vel respuitur, ergo volunt quod imaginatio quae est quaedam cognitio est causa talis appetitus sive desiderii in voluntate. Desiderium enim in homine sive appetitum vocant ipsi volitionem.
Praeterea, commento 54 dicit Commentator quod appetitus fit ab intellectu in actu.	Tertio sic: III <i>De anima</i> consimiliter concedendo hoc dicit Commentator quod appetitus fit ab intellectu.
Praeterea, commento 56 dicit Commentator quod omnis appetitus fit ex imaginatione et imaginatio ex quinque sensibus particularibus.	Quarto: commento 56 dicit etiam Commentator quod omnis appetitus fit ex imaginatione.

FitzRalph's general reply to the problem of knowledge being a cause of volitions relies on two distinctions. In one of them, he identifies the triple meaning of "knowledge" and of "desire," which can be understood as a potency to, as habits of, or as actions. The other distinction concerns the expression "something proceeds from something else," which can be construed either as one thing being an efficient cause of another thing or as something being prior according to our way of thinking and knowing things in terms of cause-and-effect sequences and relations. In FitzRalph's view, whether the claim that all desires proceed from knowledge is true or false depends on what combination of these meanings one adopts.²⁴ Since FitzRalph devotes an entire section of question 10 (article 3) to pondering whether the actual cognition of a desirable object necessarily causes love for or volition of that object, he does not provide detailed replies to the abovementioned arguments. For his part, Roseth develops a lengthy section to argue against the arguments of the second conclusion. Let us have a closer look at his stance on this issue.

²⁴ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, ad quaestionem (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, pp. 252–253).

4. Roseth on the Cause of Volitions

Arguing against the second conclusion, namely that volition cannot be produced without prior cognition, Roseth presents six arguments to which he responds later. I will examine those of direct relevance to this paper.

The first argument rests on FitzRalph's assumption,²⁵ saying that if cognition were the cause of a free volition, it would be an efficient cause of this volition. More than that, the argument claims that having assumed cognition, we have to assume volition (assumption 1), and consequently that there cannot be volition without cognition (assumption 2). In line with the Oxonians' standard argumentation style, Roseth analyzes these assumptions, availing himself of an analogy between the relation of willing and cognizing and the relations among natural phenomena.²⁶ He constructs two cases. One of them involves the sun and a ray and explicates that while a ray requires the presence of the sun in the physical realm, God may nevertheless be the sole cause of the ray, yet always with the sun present.²⁷ In this scenario, the sun is not the proper cause of the ray; God is this cause by acting miraculously.²⁸

The other case is also borrowed from natural philosophy and revolves around qualitative change. According to the succession theory, which some of the Calculators upheld as an explanation of change,²⁹ the form

²⁵ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, argumenta pro quaestione (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 123).

²⁶ For a discussion of the Calculators' tactic of employing analogies between ethical and natural realms, see Lukács, 2022, 2026 (forthcoming); Michałowska, 2024.

²⁷ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Sed istud non valet ad probandum aliquid esse causam alterius, nam ponatur quod Deus sic statueret quod ipsemet se solo causaret radium solis, sed semper quando sol praesens foret ita quod aliter non, tunc sol sic se haberet respectu radii quod sole posito poneretur radius, et non posito sole non poneretur radius. Et tamen, sicut patet, propter hoc non sequitur quod sol foret causa radii [...]."

²⁸ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Sed sic non foret de radio et sole. Si Deus se solo vellet causare radium nisi ad praesentiam solis, tunc sol non foret illud quo posito naturaliter poneretur radius, quia isto casu posito radius non naturaliter poneretur sed solum miraculose."

²⁹ For an account of the notions of change adopted by the Oxford Calculators and their milieu, see Lukács, 2026; Michałowska & Lukács, 2024; Michałowska, 2024; Pickavé, 2026; Sylla, 1973, 1991, 2017.

producing a lower degree of a quality is replaced by a form producing a higher degree of the same quality; thus, a quality, for example whiteness, increases by taking on ever higher degrees, which obviously means that a lower degree of whiteness naturally precedes a higher one. Yet, this lower degree cannot be called the final cause of the increase of whiteness because it neither suffices for nor leads to producing a more intense degree. However, it can be called a material cause if we accept that the lower degree together with a higher one compose a more intense form of whiteness.³⁰ This explanation stems from the so-called addition theory, which holds that accidental, corporeal, and spiritual forms are intensified by adding a new form to the subject. Although Roseth adopts this theory for physical qualities, he recognizes the problem it creates for ethical and theological qualities, since it would be an absurdity to argue that cognition is a material cause of volition. In this way, Roseth provides a theoretical grounding for FitzRalph's claim that "[although] cognition or knowledge in some way is the cause of love, it is certain that it is neither its material nor formal, nor final cause," an idea that is not quoted word by word but is apparently espoused by Roseth.³¹

In his analysis, Roseth formulates yet another argument, one taken from experience, to claim that for the will to be able to produce a free volition, it must be able to produce an act of either willing or nilling. Consequently, if volition were an effect of cognition, a choice between contradictories would not be possible. Roseth rejects this conclusion and asserts³²

³⁰ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Contra: ex ista responsione sequitur quod albedo sub gradu remisso sit causa effectiva respectu albedinis intensae, quia albedo remissa est illud quod naturaliter praesupponitur productionem albedinis sub gradu intenso, et non posita illa non ponitur albedo sub gradu intenso, quia prius est albedo sub gradu remisso quam intenso naturaliter, ergo albedo remissa est causa albedinis intensae, et non finalis nec materialis, quia non habet materiam, quia non recipit eam, ergo est causa efficiens. Ad istud potest dici quod albedo remissa est causa materialis respectu albedinis intensae, quia ipsa cum alia adveniente componit illam intensam, et possent dici partes materiales huius, quia sunt materia illius, vocando materiam alicuius ex quo fit aliquid sicut totum ex partibus."

³¹ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, argumenta pro quaestione (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 123): "[...] cognitio sive notitia aliquo modo est causa amoris, sed certum est quod non est causa materialis, nec formalis, nec finalis [...]."

³² Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Et cum arguitur contra: ergo idem agens naturale in passo uniformiter disposito posset effectus contrarios producere, concedo."

that even experience proves that it is in humans' power to produce contrary volitions of either willing or nilling something.³³ Advocated by John Duns Scotus, the possibility to choose freely between contradictories was one definition of free will vigorously discussed by fourteenth-century Oxonians.³⁴ While not explicitly articulated, it seems to be endorsed by Roseth, too, as he repeatedly underlines the will's ability to will and nill.³⁵

All the arguments mobilized by Roseth support the idea that there is no general rule for describing the cause-effect relationship in both the natural and the mental realms that would reasonably warrant claiming that cognition is the cause of free volitions.³⁶ While cognition can be a natural cause of volitions, since it naturally precedes any willing or nilling, it cannot be regarded as the proper or the only cause of the acts of the will.

Roseth once again employs analogies between natural phenomena and willing in his examination of the second conclusion. In argument 2, Roseth argues against the claim (resulting from assumption 1 above) that if the strength of the cause increases, the intensity of the effect must also increase. The consequence of this reasoning is that if cognition increases (becoming clearer), willing must also increase (becoming stronger). This view, as Roseth points out, is anchored in the notion that "nothing can be loved unless known."³⁷ If the wording of this idea stems from Thomas Aquinas

³³ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Contra: si cognitio foret causa volitionis liberae, ergo foret causa effectiva illius volitionis, quia ista posita naturaliter potest poni volitio, et ista non posita naturaliter non ponitur volitio, ergo cognitio est causa talis volitionis, et non alia quam effectiva, patet ergo quod cognitio est causa effectiva talis volitionis. Sed probo quod non, quia si foret causa effectiva volitionis liberis, ergo idem penitus agens naturale in eodem passo uniformiter disposito posset causare effectus contrarios, puta velle et nolle. Quia ex quo: libere causat talem volitionem mediante cognitione de tali obiecto, possem ego pro tunc vel alias causare volitiones, sicut expertum est, ergo etc."

³⁴ See, for example, Dunne, 2024; Michałowska, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b; Schierbaum, 2017.

³⁵ See, for example, Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 4, art. 2 (ed. Hallamaa, 2005, p. 218): "Et ita simul volet et nolet sibi subvenire. Et per consequens contraria sunt simul, scilicet volitio et nolitio respectu eiusdem."

³⁶ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Unde credo quod difficile sit dare artem generalem qua sciretur aliquid esse causam alterius. Pro nunc posito istam artem generalem nescio tamen si illa sit sufficiens [...]."

³⁷ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Et confirmatur, quia nihil amatur nisi cognitum, ergo cognitio est causa talis dilectionis."

(ca. 1225–1274),³⁸ it seems that FitzRalph's question 10 is Roseth's direct source again.³⁹ To challenge the intensity claim, Roseth does not simply embrace FitzRalph's arguments, but he also brings into play an analogy between light and willing to advance his statement. In drawing this analogy, he invites readers to imagine that there are a lighting object (A) and a shading object (B) which oppose each other and produce a shaded area. Then A, which is greater than B, starts to increase even more while B starts to diminish. As a result, the shaded area is simultaneously affected by two causes: the increase of A's intensity and the decrease in B's intensity, both of which must happen at the same time for the area to be less shaded. This leads Roseth to conclude that the increase of one cause (out of the many affecting a given object) does not suffice to make a change in the intensity of the affected object.⁴⁰ In Roseth's view, the same conclusion can be drawn for the relation between the increase of cognition (knowing a desired object better) and the increase of the intensity of volition (desiring it more), since there are other concurrent causes that can simply prevent the intensity of willing from increasing. Although Roseth does not explain what those other causes might be, they might be reasonably assumed to include another act of cognition, other senses blurring the clarity of cognition, or another volition impeding cognition. Because multiple causes act upon one volition, granting precedence to one over the others would mean recognizing it as the proper cause of willing, which would eventually result in accepting that the will is necessitated by something else than itself, a view that obviously jeopardizes the freedom of the will. To safeguard this freedom, Roseth states that although cognition may increase, this increase is not followed by the like increase of the volition. Rather, it is in the will's power to choose the degree of volition with which it wants to act, regardless of how much cognition increases.⁴¹ The notion that the will chooses

³⁸ Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae Ia-IIae*, q. 27, art. 2 (editio Leonina, 1891, p. 193): "Sic igitur cognitio est causa amoris, ea ratione qua et bonum, quod non potest amari nisi cognitum."

³⁹ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, argumenta pro quaestione (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 123): "Et III *De libero arbitrio* dicit hoc capitulo 42, quia nihil potest amari nisi cognitum [...]."

⁴⁰ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (Oxford, Oriel College, 15, f. 271va).

⁴¹ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): "Et sic est in proposito de voluntate et dilectione. Nam positus omnibus aliis causis requisitis

the degree of its act's intensity seems fundamental to Roseth, judging by the fact that he employs it time and again in question 2.⁴² Notably, it significantly refines FitzRalph's view on the freedom of the will and the voluntarist debate at fourteenth-century Oxford in general. While both FitzRalph and Roseth seek to defend the freedom of the will, the former falls back on rather standard argumentation. By explicitly articulating the opinion on the gradability of the will, Roseth presents himself as a close follower of his fellow Oxford Calculators Kilvington and Halifax, both of whom considered the will to be absolutely free with respect to the intensity of its acts. Roseth's view clearly echoes Kilvington's notion of the degrees of the intensity of the will,⁴³ which was promptly endorsed by Halifax.⁴⁴ In this framework, the will can be scaled and measured like any other quality, whether physical (coldness, whiteness, etc.) or ethical (generosity, justice, etc.). Moreover, the various degrees of the intensity of willing can be indicated on its latitude.

In his analysis of the cause of volitions, Roseth also examines the possibility of simultaneous contradictories as yet another facet of a free choice between contraries. In argument 6, he argues that if volition were produced by cognition and, at the same time, obviously by the will as well, it would be produced both freely (by the will as a freely acting cause) and necessarily (by cognition as a necessarily acting natural cause). Consequently, freely and necessarily, which are contradictories, could be true at the same time; thus, volition could be not produced (because of freedom) and could not be not produced (because of necessity).⁴⁵ Stephen Dumont has suggested that

ad causationem dilectionis, adhuc libere voluntas causabit dilectionem ita quod non oportet quod causet talem actum diligendi, et, sicut voluntas omnibus aliis causis positis necessario requisitis ad talem effectum, habet in potestate sua [...] ita habet in potestate sua ad ponendum actum suum diligendi in tali gradu vel in tali maiori vel minori sicut sibi placet quantumcumque cognitio illius quae augmentetur.”

⁴² Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): “[...] et hoc propter libertatem voluntatis, quae quidem voluntas ex libertate sua potest velle diligere in gradu minori et maiori, sicut sibi placet quantumcumque cognitio augmentetur cum omnibus causis uniformiter se habentibus [...].” Ibidem: “[...] sicut dictum est, libere ponet dilectionem in tali gradu vel tali.”

⁴³ Michałowska, 2022a, pp. 173–181; 2026.

⁴⁴ Lukács, 2026.

⁴⁵ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): “Praeterea, si cognitio foret causa volitionis, cum non sit causa necessario causans, quia naturaliter,

the dispute around willing contradictories was fueled by an incompatibility that arose when Stephen Tempier and his theological collaborators condemned article 129⁴⁶ as fallacious but endorsed Giles of Rome's (ca. 1243–1316) statement in the *Sentences* known as the *propositio magistralis*. This resulted in the confounding situation where, so to speak, “rectitude and malice can/cannot be present in the will at the same time.”⁴⁷ Thinkers were quick to acknowledge this perplexing development, a realization that prompted systematic efforts geared to finding a way out of this quandary. Early reconciling solutions were sought through different strategies and within various philosophical frameworks, as exemplified by Henry of Ghent's (ca. 1217–1293) staunch voluntarist approach⁴⁸ and John of Pouilly's (d. ca. 1328) intellectualist intervention in his *Quodlibeta*.⁴⁹ These prepared the ground for further debating in the fourteenth century.

Relying on the Aristotelian principle according to which “What is, necessarily is, when it is; and what is not, necessarily is not, when it is not,”⁵⁰ Roseth takes a clear stance in the debate to insist that simultaneous contradictories are not possible. In article 3 of question 2, he puts forth several arguments and conclusions concerning free will. To solve the conundrum noted in argument 6 of article 1, he bases his deliberations on whether the will acts are produced freely or necessarily on the Aristotelian principle and straightforwardly states in the third conclusion “that the will, whenever it wills, wills necessarily, since whenever it wills, it has a volition

ergo sequitur quod eadem volitio simul et semel foret effectus necessario productus et libere productus, quia qua ratione libere producebatur, quia producebatur a voluntate ita necessario producebatur, quia a cognitione necessario producebatur. Et ita sequitur quod eadem volitio potuit non produci, quia libere producebatur et non potuit non produci, quia necessario producebatur, et ita contradictoria simul vera.”

⁴⁶ Article 129 (169) (ed. Piché, 1999, p. 118): “Quod uoluntas, manente passione et scientia particulari in actu, non potest agere contra eam.” See also Dumont, 1992, p. 587.

⁴⁷ “*Propositio magistralis*: There is never malice in the will unless there is error or at least some ignorance in the intellect.” See Dumont, 1992, p. 587.

⁴⁸ On Henry of Ghent's account, see Dumont, 1992.

⁴⁹ On John of Pouilly's account, see Hoffmann, 2023.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *De interpretatione vel Peri hermeneias*, 9 (ed. Verbeke, revised by Minio-Paluello, 1965, p. 17; 19a23–24): “Igitur esse quod est quando est, et non esse quod non est quando non est, necesse est [...]” For an English translation, see Aristotle, *Categories and De interpretatione*, 9 (transl. Ackrill, 1963, p. 52).

which it cannot make not exist, since everything that is, when it is, must be necessarily.”⁵¹ Yet Roseth realizes that adopting the Aristotelian principle entails endorsing the notion that the will acts necessarily. Therefore, to protect the freedom of the will, he rejects the possibility of simultaneous contradictories, insisting that such a possibility refers to the future of either willing or nilling, yet not to the present.⁵²

Given that contradictories are not possible at the same time, volition cannot be produced necessarily and freely at once, as opposed to what argument 6 states. To crack the problem, Roseth comes up with yet another distinction. He affirms that cognition is a cause of volitions, but only a partial one. Thus, although several causes may have an impact on the production of volitions, only the will is their proper and principal cause.⁵³ This standard distinction resonates again with FitzRalph’s voluntarism and his own distinction between the proper and improper acts of the will. While, in FitzRalph’s view, volitions are the proper acts of the will and the will is their principal cause,⁵⁴ other acts, such as corporeal desires, are not caused by the will in a proper sense and, consequently, the will is not their principal cause.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 3 (in preparation): “Tertia conclusio est quod voluntas quandocumque vult necessario vult, quia quandocumque vult habet volitionem quam non potest facere pro tunc non esse, quia omne quod est quando est, necesse est esse.”

⁵² Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 3 (in preparation): “Ad primum dico quod contradictio sequitur quod si possem de illo quod est possibile pro nunc facere quod non sit, nam posito quod aliqua res nunc sit, ex quo omne quod est necesse est esse, sequitur quod haec res necessario est. Si ergo possem facere quod illud quod non est nunc non sit, esset contradictio. Sed talis contradictio non sequitur: si de illo quod erit possum facere quod illud non erit, quia omne quod erit, distinguendo quod erit necessario ab illo quod contingenter erit, et hoc: si illud quod erit sit in libera potestate voluntatis vel alicuius alterius causae libere causantis.”

⁵³ Roger Roseth, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 2, art. 1 (in preparation): “Sed sic non est in proposito, quia etsi necessario producatur a cognitione quae est una partialis causa et minus principalis, producitur tamen cum hoc libere a voluntate quae est causa principalis talis volitionis.”

⁵⁴ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, art. 1 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 123): “Ideo teneo in isto articulo quod voluntas est activa respectu cuiuscumque volitionis suae, quia quaelibet volitio est actio propria voluntatis.”

⁵⁵ Richard FitzRalph, *Lectura in Sententias*, q. 10, art. 1 (ed. Michałowska & Dunne, 2025, p. 163): “Ad decimum patet per idem. Cum allegatur ab Augustini X *Super Genesim ad litteram*, capitulo 12 quod appetitus carnalis est in voluntate et in ipsa anima

5. Conclusion

The 1320s and 1330s marked the golden age of the voluntarist debate. The arguments crafted at that time reached beyond the standard views on the will and the classic ethical methodology. Roseth's study of the will is testament to both aspects of this shift. He vigorously engages in discussions on free will, the cause of volitions, and kinds of the acts of the will by mustering the new arguments proposed in his day, applying the new methods propounded by the Calculators, and frequently weaving analogies between the ethical and the natural realms. Although Roseth often harnesses FitzRalph's reasoning to his agenda, these borrowings are not a mere imitative reiteration. He critically addresses his older Oxonian fellow's arguments by developing the reasoning for and against. Moreover, he enriches them with the new ideas of the gradability of the will and its ability to increase its intensity. Roseth's exploration of the causes of volitions shows that he was not only an insightful philosopher well-versed in the views on the will debated at Oxford at that time, but was also a skillful interlocutor and critic of his older and contemporary colleagues' arguments and opinions.

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invita voluntate, ergo non causatur a voluntate, dico quod quidquid sit de antecedente, consequentia non valet, sed solum sequitur quod voluntas non sit causa principalis libera illius, et hoc est verum quando illa causatur ab extrinseco, scilicet a carne concupiscente adversus spiritum.”

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Citation

Michałowska, M. (2026). Roger Roseth in conversation with Richard FitzRalph on the cause of volitions. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 87–109. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-05.

ARTICLES

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John Dumbleton's Anthropology: The Human Body, the Soul, and its Powers*

Keywords: John Dumbleton; Oxford Calculators; Soul; Body; Psychological Powers

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Dumbleton, Kalkulatorzy Oksfordzcy, Dusza, Ciało, Władze Duszy

Abstract

This article examines several key themes in the anthropology of John Dumbleton, one of the central figures among the so-called Oxford Calculators, who authored an extensive *Summa logicae et philosophiae naturalis*, much of which remains unexplored. It focuses on Dumbleton's main theses concerning the nature of the soul and its relation to the body, as well as the relations among the powers of the soul. The methodological premise of the article is that these theses should be analyzed in light of two overarching principles that characterize Dumbleton's thought: on the one hand, the application of the methods of the Oxford Calculators to anthropological, psychological, and physiological questions; on the other, reductionist claims that lead him to formulate original theories. After examining his conception of the soul and the body (Section 2), the article turns to his account of the relations among the psychological powers (Section 3). It then analyzes the way in which Dumbleton applies the methods of the Oxford Calculators to anthropological questions (Section 4), before considering the various aspects of his reductionist approach to psychology (Section 5).

* I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers, as well as Monika Michałowska and Stephen Read, all of whom helped me in improving this article.

1. Introduction

Little is known about the life of John Dumbleton. Probably born ca. 1310, he was a fellow of Merton College in 1338–1339, where he appears in the records alongside William Heytesbury and Thomas Buckingham. He was appointed to Queen’s College in 1340, and studied theology in Paris around the mid-1340s, before returning to Merton College in 1347–1348. He seems to have died shortly thereafter, leaving his major work, the *Summa logicae et philosophiae naturalis*, unfinished.

A central figure among the so-called Oxford Calculators, his thought nevertheless remains understudied. In fact, historians of ideas who have engaged with his work have focused primarily on the themes most characteristic of the physics of the Calculators, namely the mathematical analysis of motion and velocity (although a critical edition of the first part of the *Summa*, devoted to logic, is currently in preparation).¹ The greater part of the *Summa* remains unexplored, even though it addresses numerous topics treated by no other ‘Oxford Calculator,’ such as the functioning of the body, its organs, and their functions, or the perceptive faculties.

From an anthropological standpoint in particular, Dumbleton’s *Summa* offers a detailed analysis of the human faculties, contained in the last two parts (8 and 9), which in fact constitute half of the properly “natural philosophical” portion of the *Summa*. Here, Dumbleton examines the various faculties of the human soul, especially its vegetative, motor, and sensitive powers. An especially interesting feature of these analyses is the way they closely intertwine psychology and anthropology on the one hand—by studying human faculties in detail—and the physical study of their objects on the other (e.g., sounds, odors, and so forth).

While the content of the ‘natural philosophy’ parts of the *Summa* remains largely unexplored, the style of this work has also attracted relatively little attention from historians, perhaps because it differs considerably from the other writings left by the so-called Oxford Calculators. First, the *Summa* was quite evidently composed for a broader audience, possibly even including, beyond students of the Faculty of Arts, students of theology as well: it contains sections of relatively accessible exposition and occasionally

¹ See Sylla, 1991a; Weisheipl, 1957, 1959; Molland, 1995; Bartocci & Read, 2022; Read, 2022.

adopts pedagogical strategies, indicating that the work was not intended solely for natural philosophers versed in mathematical techniques. Moreover, the work further distinguishes itself from the production of other Calculators through its use of philosophical authorities, which is more extensive than in most of their writings. In his investigations, Dumbleton frequently invokes Aristotle's authority, often in the form of dicta or axioms characteristic of scholastic Aristotelianism (such as *omne agens agit sibi simile*), which he seeks to test—returning repeatedly to such principles across different parts of the work. But he also frequently cites other authorities, such as Averroes and Avicenna, as well as numerous ancient and medieval sources more occasionally, such as Democritus, Porphyry, Alhazen, the *Liber sex principiorum*, Robert Grosseteste, Thomas Aquinas, or Giles of Rome.

The aim of this paper is to examine certain themes in Dumbleton's anthropology in order to provide an overview of this dimension of the *Summa*, sketching his main theses concerning human nature—namely, the structure of the body, that of the soul, and the interactions among psychological faculties.² In doing so, it will be shown that the anthropological positions Dumbleton defends rest on a few guiding principles that characterize his thought as a whole. One of the few specialists to have attempted—albeit in a very incomplete manner—to provide an overview of the entire *Summa* and its style, James Weisheipl, described Dumbleton's thought as a combination of the major doctrines of two prominent English authors: Thomas Bradwardine (ca. 1290–1349) and William Ockham (ca. 1287–1349). In light of what we today know about Dumbleton and the intellectual context of his time, this characterization is not entirely mistaken, but is somewhat misleading and reductive. In fact, I shall argue that one can indeed account for certain aspects of his anthropology through the lens of methods characteristic of the Oxford Calculators more generally (rather than of Bradwardine in particular), as well as through a philosophical stance that I would describe not as 'Ockhamist,' but more precisely as reductionist—leading at times to positions that are, in fact, anti-Ockhamist.

The paper is structured as follows. The first part offers an overview of the structure of the human composite according to Dumbleton, i.e., the structure of the body and the soul (Section 2). I then turn to his account

² A few aspects of Dumbleton's anthropology are covered in Roudaut, 2021, pp. 263–277.

of the powers of the soul and, more specifically, to their distinction (Section 3). Subsequently, I will examine how Dumbleton employs quantifying techniques typical of the Oxford Calculators in order to investigate the relation between the psychological powers, particularly in operations involving several cognitive elements, such as perceptual judgments (Section 4). The next section sets out what I refer to here as Dumbleton's 'reductionist positions' in matters of anthropology, expressed in various ways and culminating in the assimilation of the operations of the soul to the soul itself (Section 5), before drawing some conclusions, the most important of which is that Dumbleton uses a calculatory framework in support of a fundamentally physical approach to the faculties of the mind (Section 6).

2. The Body and the Soul(s)

To understand Dumbleton's original positions regarding cognition and the powers of the soul, it is necessary first to grasp the principles underlying his anthropology, which determine the fundamental theses he advances concerning the soul and the body. Dumbleton conceives of the human body as a heterogeneous and composite structure. In line with a fairly standard view of his time, he holds that the body is composed of a set of organs, each possessing its own complexion or proportion of qualities.

Dumbleton holds that the elements or, more precisely, the substantial forms of the elements composing these organs remain within the mixture, albeit in an attenuated manner. It is thus not only the case that qualities admit variation in intensity—a general presupposition of the philosophy of the Oxford Calculators—but also that elementary substantial forms themselves, at least insofar as they exist concretely (considered *in concreto*) in matter, are likewise subject to such variation.³ This thesis—according

³ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars II, cap. 39–40, Worcester, Cathedral Library, F.6, ff. 18vb–19rb. Many manuscripts containing parts of Dumbleton's *Summa* do not preserve it in its entirety. Besides the aforementioned manuscript, it can be found in its complete or nearly complete form in the manuscripts Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, 499/268; Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 6750; Dubrovnik, Dominikanski Samostan, 32 (36-IV-8) (parts I–VIII); Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 954 (parts II–IX); Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, lat. VI. 79 (2552); or Paris, BnF, lat. 16146. The codex Worcester, Cathedral Library, F.6 used in this study was established as the most reliable

to which the form of the elements persist in corporeal mixtures, generally attributed in the Middle Ages to Averroes—is coupled, in Dumbleton's case, with a relatively original claim for the period: the primary qualities of the elements (heat, cold, dryness, moisture) as well as secondary qualities (colors, sounds, and so forth) inhere in prime matter, and not in the substance properly speaking (that is, not in the hylomorphic compound).⁴ For Dumbleton, matter therefore represents a positive entity that plays a direct role in nature, independently of form, by being the immediate substratum of qualities.

The thesis that forms having different intensities remain in the same mixtures enables him, as we shall see, to explain various properties of the sensitive powers; but more generally, it allows him to account for how different tendencies concerning the same type of action (e.g., moving) can coexist within a single being, whether animate or inanimate. Thus, for example, an object such as a magnet may attract iron while still retaining its fundamental tendency to fall downward as a heavy body. Similarly, an animal, while moved in one respect as a heavy body toward its natural place, may at the same time be inclined toward other objects due to its appetites.⁵ These diverse tendencies can coexist in a single being since a plurality of different elements, each of which possesses a certain degree of intensity, remains present in the mixtures (organs) composing the body.

Dumbleton thus emerges as a defender of the thesis of the plurality of forms regarding the body. As we shall now see, he endorses the same view regarding the soul.⁶ Although he admits the existence of different substantial forms in a being, Dumbleton is hesitant regarding the exact

manuscript of the *Summa* by Stephen Read and Barbara Bartocci, who have prepared the edition of its first part, devoted to logic. I am grateful to them both for this information and for having shared with me the stemma they produced. The division of the parts into chapters indicated here corresponds to that found in this manuscript. The readings were checked, where necessary, against Paris, BnF, lat. 16146.

⁴ This idea can already be found before Dumbleton, for instance in Peter Auriol, *Commentaria in libros Sententiarum*, lib. II, dist. 12, q. 1, art. 6 (see Friedman, 2021, pp. 138–140); Pasnau, 2011, pp. 108–114, 585–587. See *Summa*, III, cap. 16, f. 25ra–vb; cf. II, cap. 39, f. 19ra; IX, cap. 23, f. 146ra; cap. 38, f. 159rb.

⁵ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 17, f. 105ra–rb.

⁶ On this general problem, see Zavalloni, 1951. On the particular case of bodily structures, see Ward, 2014, pp. 76–93; Pasnau, 2011, pp. 630–632.

number of such forms within a complex being such as the human soul. When examining the manner in which the different faculties or powers of the soul are organized and gradually generated during the process of embryogenesis, Dumbleton appears to incline toward a model that admits three souls in the human being, corresponding to its principal functions (vegetative, sensitive, intellectual):

From these authors, three [propositions] become apparent. The first is that the seed is truly animated [...]. The second is that the nutritive soul is induced before the sensitive or the intellective soul in an individual in whom they are suited to inhere. The third is that the intellective soul comes from outside and is not educed from the potentiality of matter. Fourth, it is inferred from these that there are necessarily three souls in a human being, two in a brute animal, and one in a plant.⁷

However, later in Part 8 of the *Summa*, after analyzing the problem at greater length, Dumbleton formulates four suppositions that, in his view, are beyond dispute: (1) a natural composite is constituted of matter and form; (2) each composite is constituted of a homogeneous matter to which a form is united; (3) a material form perfects only the matter directly associated with it; and (4) a form cannot simultaneously inform two matters of different complexions directly in the same way. From this, he concludes that *only two souls* are sufficient to explain the diversity of operations observable in the human being, which contains only one supernatural form (the intellective), perfecting a composite constituted of corporeal matter and the sensitive soul:

It should therefore be said that a human being has only two souls, namely, one nutritive and another intellective. This [nutritive soul] in the first place forms a member to which the intellect is naturally conjoined. And other faculties are similarly produced and because the intellective soul has a relation to the matter disposed to it in its conjoining, this soul is not conjoined unless there are members by which a human cognition can be possible—and it has

⁷ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 11 (f. 106ra): “Ex hiis auctoritatibus patent tria. Primum quod semen verum est animatum [...]. Secundum est quod prius inducitur anima nutritiva quam sensitiva vel intellectiva in individuo in quo sunt natae illae tres animae inexistere. Tertium quod anima intellectiva ab extra venit et non educitur de potentia materiae et quartum infertur ex hiis quod tres sunt animae in homine necessario, et duae in bruto, et unica in planta.”

this relation because it cannot be educed from the potentiality of matter, as will be clear below, and it understands with those [members] with which it can operate in cognition of a thing. And therefore it can perfect the whole heterogeneous body, although primarily and principally it perfects some matter of a determinate complexion so that it may perfect an individual in order that a human results [...].⁸

Despite hesitating on the precise number of substantial forms within the soul, Dumbleton, like Ockham, ultimately concludes that only two forms constitute the human soul. Unlike Ockham, however, he describes the soul to which the intellect is added as “nutritive” (and not “sensitive”). This view goes together with an original conception of the body’s structure, as we have seen: Dumbleton postulates a complex organization composed of elements that are themselves ultimately constituted of qualities inhering in prime matter and capable of variation in intensity. It is on this basis that we can now present more precisely his conception of the soul’s powers.

3. The Powers of the Soul

Dumbleton frequently adopts a reductionist perspective on the problems he addresses. However, he maintains, as we have seen, that postulating multiple forms is necessary to account for the operations of the human being. While he accepts the idea that one and the same form or power can give rise to different operations, he nonetheless holds that a given type of physical complexion can produce only one type of form (i.e., an organ or a power)—an idea consistent with his view that the different organs of the body possess distinct complexions.

⁸ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 15 (f. 102rb): “Dicendum ergo quod homo duplicem habet animam solum, scilicet, unam nutritivam et aliam intellectivam. Haec nutritiva format primo membrum cui naturaliter copulatur intellectus, et similiter alia competentia producuntur, et quia intellectiva habet respectum ad materiam sibi dispositam in copulatione sua, non copulatur haec anima nisi sint membra quibus contingere potest cognitio hominis et hanc relationem habet quia non potest educi de potentia materiae ut infra patet et intelligit cum quibus potest operari in cognitionem rei. Et totum ideo corpus heterogeneum potest perficere licet primo et principaliter materiam certam in complexione ut individuum resultet humanum perficiat [...].”

He articulates this principle through the theory of proportions, the favored mathematical framework by which the Oxford Calculators analyzed motion and other natural phenomena,⁹ which he applies to the structure of the organs and their respective complexions. The sensitive powers of touch, taste, and vision, although they may be extended in common parts of the body, have different “subjects,” in the sense that, since it is impossible for two forms to result from the same proportion of qualities, they must have differently qualified matters as their respective subjects (different nerves, for instance). Dumbleton mentions an argument against his view and replies to it:

Furthermore, the form of touch and the visual power are extended in the same matter and through the same matter, as is clear because the nerve of touch is extended through the whole body of the animal and the sense of vision through some part of it. Likewise, taste is extended with touch in the tongue; therefore, the same proportion regarding diverse forms in species disposes the mixed matter—which is the principal thing sought. Here, it can be said that just as secondary forms have different matters, so primary forms have different subjects [...]. From this deduction what was deduced earlier follows, namely, that if each primary form required prime matter, then each superadded form would naturally require a single geometric or arithmetic proportion, and then the mixed form would only remain one single instant during the alteration of the mixture.¹⁰

From a terminological point of view, let us first note that by the term “form,” Dumbleton understands both the organ and the corresponding sensory power, which he tends to identify with one another—a point that will be emphasized below. Second, let us note that this text does not explicitly

⁹ On the importance of this mathematical theory in the Calculators tradition, see Sylla, 2008.

¹⁰ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 2 (f. 93va): “Item idem arguitur forma tactus et virtus visiva in materia eadem et per eandem materiam extenduntur ut patet quia per totum corpus animalis extenditur nervus tactus et per aliquam partem sensus visus. Item gustus cum tactus extenditur in lingua ergo eadem proportio respectu formarum diversarum in specie disponit materiam mixtam quod est quaesitum principale. Hic potest dici quod sicut formae secundae habent diversas materias, ita formae primae habent diversa subiecta [...]. Ex hac deductione sequitur illud quod prius deducitur, scilicet, quod si quaelibet forma prima primam materiam exigeret, ergo quaelibet forma superaddita unam proportionem geometricam sive arithmeticam exigeret naturaliter et tunc solum per instans maneret forma mixta in alteratione mixti.”

assert a strict *identity* between a form and its corresponding proportion of qualities. Nevertheless, the claim that two distinct forms cannot arise from the same proportion introduces a strong uniqueness constraint that goes beyond mere dependence and is more akin to a relation of constitution. Here, by a relation of constitution, is meant a relation according to which the form is metaphysically grounded in and determined by it, such that its identity is fixed by that material structure.¹¹ Because the proportion of qualities fixes which form can be present, the diversity of forms or powers can be reduced to differences in material basis, with the explanatory priority for this diversity lying with the structure of the material substrate (composed of prime matter and a proportion of elementary qualities) rather than with irreducible psychological powers.

The same principle, establishing the uniqueness of a form corresponding to a given proportion of quality, is mobilized on several occasions by Dumbleton—for instance, in his account of how a substance is assimilated by the organism during the process of digestion, or in his discussion of the distinction between a sensitive element and the will within the same soul.¹² The insistence that each substantial form or power corresponds to a distinct proportion of qualities—and that differences in high-order powers track differences within such proportional ranges—suggests a bottom-up model of metaphysical constitution. The same elemental constituents underlie all natural transformations, yet it is the variation in their proportion that accounts for the resulting diversity of forms (whether bread, blood, fly, or stone).

Despite offering highly detailed analyses of the various nutritive and sensitive faculties of the soul and of their objects, Dumbleton does not explicitly address the broader problem of the precise nature of the relation

¹¹ On the relations between dependence, grounding and reduction, see Rosen, 2010.

¹² See Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 2 (f. 93vb): “Unde ponendum est quod una est latitudo proportionum respectu unius agentis tanquam materiam et alia est latitudo respectu alterius ut respectu panis est latitudo una et respectu sanguinis alia, et eadem sunt elementa in quibus illa transmutatio fit ex qua resultant illae latitudines diversae. Unde licet sexquialtera proportio [i.e., 3 : 2] differat a dupla [i.e., 2 : 1] in specie et sexquitercia [i.e., 4 : 3] magis tamen differt una illarum a dupla quam reliqua sic tota latitudo certa proportionum inter formas primas aliter se habet ad agens quando producit muscam quam se habet quando producit lapidem.” On the sensible and the will, see *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 12, f. 106vb.

between the soul and its powers—a classic issue in medieval psychology.¹³ He does, however, provide some information in Parts 8 and 9 of the *Summa* concerning the organization of the powers within the soul. While he holds that there are two souls in the human being, he nonetheless distinguishes three principal types of operation—nourishing itself, sensing, and cognizing.¹⁴ This tripartition grounds the distinction between three main parts of the soul: vegetative, sensitive, and intellective.

Although the *Summa* as it has come down to us lacks more developed discussions of intellectual operations, Dumbleton does provide at this point a detailed account of the structure of the sensitive part of the soul, which he divides, in quite traditional fashion, into the five external senses on the one hand, and the internal powers on the other. A noteworthy aspect of his presentation is that, while Dumbleton acknowledges the possibility of subdividing the internal senses further, taking into account the estimative faculty postulated by Avicenna, he restricts them to just three: the common sense, imagination, and memory.¹⁵

This division of powers should not be understood as a distinction between wholly separate faculties. Indeed, many psychological acts involve the cooperation of several powers, raising different questions concerning how these powers are articulated in relation to one another. As we shall now see, these problems are analyzed by Dumbleton through the lens of his quantifying approach to psychological phenomena, on the one hand, and of his reductionist theses, on the other.

4. A Quantifying Approach to Psychological Powers

Dumbleton's *Summa* contains numerous analyses that examine the functioning of the faculties and their interactions, employing the vocabulary of the intensity of degrees, which allows him to quantify and sometimes “calculate” such phenomena. Let us begin this section—devoted to giving a few significant examples of such analyses—by examining a problem which arises at the very junction of soul and body and concerns

¹³ For an overview, see Löwe, 2025, and the bibliography therein.

¹⁴ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 16, f. 102va.

¹⁵ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 1, f. 118ra.

the intensification of perceptual acts. While it seems that we can perceive certain objects with greater or lesser intensity, like a color appearing more or less bright, it is far from clear whether such intensification belongs to the sensory act as such. In other words, it is not clear whether such an experience stems from (a) the sensible impression itself—that is, from the physical dimension of sensation—or rather from (b) the sensitive act itself, belonging to the soul, by which this impression is made present to it.

Discussing this problem, Dumbleton first puts forward an argument claiming that perception cannot vary in intensity. According to this argument, the act of sensing or the act of judging that an object is present (which Dumbleton seems to equate), like the earth's natural motion, is fixed and unchangeable, which entails that the intensification depends only on the strength of the sensible impression, while the act of judging itself always remains the same. However, an analogy with another psychological power offers a counter-argument: just as the will can act with greater or lesser intensity, so too should the sense be capable of having a more or less intense act.

To analyze this problem, Dumbleton introduces an example. He supposes that one person ("Socrates") perceives an object *A*, having a certain degree of intensity, through a sensible intention *B*, and another (less intense) object *C* through a weaker sensible intention *D*. If the only difference between these two acts of perception lies in the intentions (*B* being stronger than *D*) and not in the sensory acts themselves, then the perceptual act as such cannot be said to be more or less intense—for judging is an act of the sensitive soul which, by hypothesis, would not admit of degrees of intensity or remission.¹⁶ Still, even if there exists a difference of intensity in the sensible impressions, Socrates does not *necessarily* produce a more intense perceptual judgment about them, since an impression can occur without judgment, as in sleep.

¹⁶ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21 (f. 143vb): "Item si actus non potest intendi ergo sensus non potest iudicare intensius unum oppositum quam aliud. Consequentia sic arguitur. Habeat Sortem de A subiecto B intentionem et comprehendat Sortem A per B sub certo gradu ut videtur satis possibile et iudicet illud Sortem C obiectum remissius A per D intentionem remissiorem B. Si solum est iudicium Sortis dissimile inter C et A propter intentiones dissimiles solum et non propter actus in se cum iudicare sit actus animae sensitivae qui per positionem est indivisibilis quantum ad intensionem vel remissionem, ergo iudicium illud non intenditur nec remittitur quare non iudicat Sor A intensius quam B [...]."

In the end, while Dumbleton acknowledges that the acts of psychological faculties (such as those of the will) are intrinsically subject to intensification or remission, he nevertheless opts for the solution that locates the ultimate cause of perceptual intensification in the sensible impression itself. As we shall see, this thesis is consistent with Dumbleton's broader claim that perception is essentially a passive act, one that does not involve any proper activity on the part of the soul:

[...] Here it should be said that this act is intensified through the intensification of the passion produced in the sense, as the arguments rather seem to conclude for that side. And regarding foundation of the argument, it should be said that since the appetite inheres in the earth from its generation and is not acquired by it from something external, just as the sense acquires its own act, therefore that appetite of the earth is not intensified but the act of the sense is a single effect following upon the passion produced in the sense [...]. For since the act in itself, insofar as it is comprehension, does not take on intensification or remission except from an intensification of a passion, their latitudes—that is the latitude of acquired intensification and the latitude of the act—therefore begin together and are intensified and remitted equally, just as the latitude of proportion of greater inequality and the latitude of motion depending on it.¹⁷

The foregoing example involving two objects *A* and *C* represented through two intentions *B* and *D* is noteworthy in that it illustrates one of the characteristic methods of the Oxford Calculators. Stylistically, the argument proceeds by means of a thought-experiment involving arbitrarily chosen quantitative values, denoted by letters. Such a manner of exposition, distinct from a strictly syllogistic mode of reasoning, more closely resembles a mathematical demonstration in which a particular case serves, by virtue

¹⁷ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21 (f. 144ra): “Hic dicatur quod actus ille intenditur per intensionem passionis factae in sensum sicut argumenta videntur illam partem magis concludere. Et ad fundamentum dicatur quod cum appetitus inest terrae a generatione sua et non acquiritur ei ab extrinseco ut sensus acquirit sibi actum suum, ideo non intenditur ille appetitus terrae sed actus sentiendi est unus effectus sequens passionem factam in sensum [...]. Nam cum actus secundum se prout est comprehensio non capit intensionem nec remissionem nisi ex intensione passionis, ergo latitudines eorum, scilicet latitudo intensionis acquisita et latitudo actus, simul incipiunt et intenduntur et remittuntur aequaliter sicut latitudo proportionis maioris inaequalitatis et latitudo motus ex ea dependens.”

of its arbitrariness, as a general instance. Perhaps even more than demonstrations featuring numerical values, the use of arbitrary objects (denoted by letters) together with the terminology of degree, latitude and proportion is typical of the Calculator tradition.¹⁸ Here, the demonstration aims to establish that the variation in intensity (or “latitude”) of the sensory act or perceptual judgment cannot occur without a parallel variation in the intensity of the sensible impression. One could certainly relate this approach to the analyses conducted in a theological context, within the circle of the so-called Oxford Calculators or by authors close to that circle, such as Richard Kilvington, Robert Halifax, or Roger Roseth, concerning the rational faculties (intellect or will); however, this application to the sensory faculties and their object is what makes Dumbleton stand out.¹⁹

A related problem appears elsewhere in Dumbleton's *Summa* through the notion of certainty, also analyzed through the quantitative framework of degrees of intensity. In a brief overview of his work, Edith Sylla has shown how Dumbleton employed the theory of the intensification of qualities to explain the way in which certainty in knowledge is established, as opposed to doubt or hesitation.²⁰ She noted that Dumbleton applies concepts inspired by the ‘new rule of motion’ (attributed to Bradwardine) to the psychology of belief. In this context, he uses the terms *intensio* and *extensio*—which normally designate, respectively, the degree of intensity of a quality and its extension—to refer instead to the number of pieces of evidence generating firmness in belief (extension) and the associated degree of certainty or hesitation (intensity). This conceptual transfer makes it possible, at least in principle, to calculate how quickly one will change one's mind upon receiving a new belief contrary to those previously held as true. The new proposition functions as a “force” acting on the set of contrary beliefs already acquired, which themselves provide the ‘resistance’ opposed to the acceptance of this new belief.²¹

Dumbleton returns repeatedly to the problem of the causes and modalities of the intensification of different phenomena. With regard to sensible appetite or desire, for instance, he examines the manner in which a desire

¹⁸ For discussion on this point, see Thakkar, 2002, esp. pp. 197–202.

¹⁹ For examples, see the studies compiled in Lukács & Michałowska, 2024.

²⁰ Sylla, 1991b, pp. 133–137.

²¹ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars I, cap. 18, ff. 7va–8rb.

may intensify over time in relation to a representation (or “intention,” in the technical vocabulary of the period) through which the desire is directed toward an object. The desire, however, does not in itself suffice to account for the process of intensification; when it comes to purely natural appetites, the causality of the object is required for the desire to intensify.²²

We have seen how Dumbleton interrogates the nature of the connection between judgment and sensible impression by comparing the way their respective “latitudes” (i.e., the variations of their intensity) evolve. In the case of a sensible impression and a perceptual judgment, these two latitudes evolve equally. Yet Dumbleton also highlights other cases in which the different latitudes involved in a single cognitive act are neither proportional nor commensurable. This point is important because, in Dumbleton’s view, where a relation of constitution or even causal dependence between two things must be manifested through a relation of proportion between them (for example, between forces and motion, or between qualities and a form), the absence of comparability means that the two phenomena under consideration are independent. For instance, when asking whether the sensible impression of an object on the sense is identical to the intention generated within the soul (as, for example, in visual perception), Dumbleton rejects this claim and states that the latitudes of a psychic intention and of a sensible impression are not *comparable*:

[...] It is clear, from the Commentator’s intended meaning, that the intention is of a diverse species from the material sensible, the latitudes of this [sensible] and of that intention are not properly comparable [...].²³

This, he explains, is because the intention is not of a physical nature but rather “spiritual,” unlike the sensible impression, making their mathematical comparison impossible, since two things, in order to be compared, must belong to the same genus or at least share a certain common nature.²⁴ Here, the heterogeneous character of two cognitive elements (one physical, the other spiritual) has the implication that their respective latitudes are not

²² Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 1, ff. 92vb–93ra.

²³ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21 (f. 144ra): “[...] Apparet ex intentione Commentatoris quod intentio est diversae speciei a sensibili materiali, latitudines illius et intentionis non sunt proprie comparabiles [...]”

²⁴ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21, f. 144ra; cf. cap. 22, ff. 144vb–145va.

comparable—this essential difference in nature between the two being thus expressed in terms of a mathematical relation.

Taken together, these analyses show how features generally assumed to be typical of the Oxford Calculators' methodology—i.e., the application of the mathematical theory of proportions to different objects and the appeal to thought-experiments involving numerical variables—are brought to bear on the investigation of the faculties and their operations. More precisely, while the demonstrative procedures typical of the Calculators are frequently employed, it is above all the conceptual framework of degrees of intensity that enables Dumbleton to address a number of the problems under consideration. Examining the conditions of intensive variation in the objects under study allows him to assess the respective roles of the faculties in human cognition.

5. Reductionist Stances

Let us now turn to the ways in which Dumbleton's generally reductionist positions (but not specifically "Ockhamist," *pace* Weisheipl) lead to original theses regarding the functioning and interrelation of the powers of the soul. These positions are reductionist in several respects.²⁵ First, in the sense that Dumbleton believes that some phenomena can be explained in terms of lower-level material entities and processes that constitute them. Dumbleton's *Summa* indeed reveals a clear interest in atomistic and, more generally, corpuscularian positions.²⁶ It contains, for example, a detailed exposition of Robert Grosseteste's atomistic cosmology,²⁷ atomistic hypotheses in psychology intended to explain perception, and discussion of various atomistic theories of the soul. One aspect that has gone unnoticed by the few readers who have ventured into Dumbleton's *Summa* is that, alongside Democritus and Epicurus, he also mentions atomists, one of whom—most remarkably—seems to have been his contemporary. Among them appears indeed a certain "Nicholas," who most

²⁵ Here, the focus will be on ontological reductionism (designating relations between entities), according to which one entity is constituted by another or, more radically, is identical to it, rather than on an epistemological relation (between theories or concepts). On this notion, see Sarkar, 1992; Gillett, 2016.

²⁶ On atomism in the Latin Middle Ages, see the studies compiled in Grellard & Robert, 2009.

²⁷ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 34, ff. 155rb–vb.

likely refers to Nicholas of Autrecourt, making this one of the rare surviving testimonies from the period concerning Autrecourt's thought.²⁸

Without adopting them systematically, he regularly mentions corpuscularian hypotheses as possible explanations for certain phenomena, such as the mechanism of nutrition, the perception of flavors, or that of odors.²⁹ While he rejects atomism strictly speaking (as this theory implies the existence of the void, which he denies), he relies on such corpuscularian theses to explain particular phenomena. This is especially the case with physical phenomena of reaction, which are difficult to account for satisfactorily within an Aristotelian framework. In instances that he regards as otherwise inexplicable, he interprets them as sensory illusions arising from the exchange of small particles between the organs of touch and the sensible objects.³⁰ A very similar explanation is adopted around the same time by Richard Swineshead in his own treatment of the problem.³¹

Somewhat opportunistically, Dumbleton also places Democritus alongside Aristotle (and himself) in affirming the exclusively passive character of perception, in contrast with other psychological operations. He rejects the theory of vision advanced by those he calls the "Moderns," explicitly naming Grosseteste and Bacon, and more generally by proponents of extramission theories, according to which an activity of the soul is involved in the act of vision.³² He likewise rejects the notion of an "agent sense," defended by John of Jandun and, closer to his own time and in a different version, by John Buridan.³³ Dumbleton thus maintains that no active power of the soul is involved in perception.³⁴

²⁸ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 1, f. 118vb.

²⁹ On nourishing, see *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 19, f. 111ra; cap. 21, f. 114rb; on the perception of flavors, see pars IX, cap. 15–16, ff. 136rb–va; on smells, pars IX, cap. 16, f. 137vb.

³⁰ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IV, cap. 4, f. 44va; see Caroti, 1995, esp. pp. 357–368.

³¹ Richard Swineshead 1520, tract. VII, f. 29ra.

³² Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 40 (ff. 159vb–160ra): "Alii fuerunt qui non solum per exitum radiorum ab oculo dicunt animal videre sed duplicem causam ponunt, scilicet, radiorum exitum et interceptionem, id est, per passionem factam a visibili et huius sententiae sunt platonici et alii moderni Lincolniensis et unus qui Bacon cognominatur."

³³ On the history of this notion, see Pattin, 1988. On Buridan's interpretation of it, see Biard, 2005.

³⁴ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 4, f. 121vb.

A second noteworthy aspect of Dumbleton's reductionism lies in the consequences he draws from his conception of quantity. For him, quantity is not something really distinct from substance and quality, since he admits only these two categories as 'real' in his ontology. While this idea is in line with Ockham's views, the conclusions he derives from it are his own. Dumbleton argues that all the senses perceive quantity, although not all perceive shape or figure, the perception of which depends on the configuration of a given organ:

Regarding that objection, let it be noted that every sense necessarily perceives quantity, but not shape properly. One must make the distinction that certain senses are said to comprehend shape and quantity because they perceive the differences of shapes—as sight distinguishes between a square and a triangle, like touch does, but not so distinctly, and other senses perceive quantity but not figure [...]. Likewise, when a thing is touched by a hand, the intention is not caused by the whole tactile power, but by the firm application of the hand on certain part of the sense, the object is felt—because of this: that a figure is judged external shape, as other senses do, namely taste, smell, and hearing, since they receive the intention through their totality, therefore they receive quantity, but not the figure.³⁵

The idea that quantity is perceived by all the senses has, of course, the immediate consequence of reducing the role for which the common sense as a power was posited, one of its principal functions in Aristotle being precisely the perception of quantity, which is not the proper object of any particular sense. Dumbleton indeed maintains that quantity is perceived *per se* (and not merely accidentally) by all the senses, and not only by sight and touch. According to him, common sensibles are not really distinct from

³⁵ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21 (f. 142vb): “Pro illa instantia notetur quod omnis sensus necessario percipit quantitatem sed non figuram proprie. Propterea distinguendum est quod quidam sensus dicuntur comprehendere figuram et quantitatem quia differentias figurarum percipit ut visus distinguit inter quadratum et triangulum similiter et tactus sed non ita distincte et alteri sensus precipiunt quantitatem et non figuram. [...] Item cum per manum unam res tangitur non per totam virtutem tactivam causatur intentio sed ad duram applicationem manus per certam partem sensus sentitur propter quod iudicatur figura ad extra sicut alii sensus, scilicet, gustus, olfactus et auditus quia per totum recipiunt intentionem et ideo licet quantitatem recipiunt non tamen figuram.”

proper sensibles; rather, they are “dispositions” of the latter that can be perceived *per se* by different senses. This is why he concludes that many common sensibles—such as quantity—are perceived *per se* by all the senses.³⁶

Insofar as properties of quantity such as rarity or density are reducible to quantity, and since, as we have seen, primary qualities inhere directly in matter, Dumbleton maintains that touch directly perceives the affections of matter—the sense of hearing being another sense capable of experiencing material compression, though indirectly.³⁷ The sense of touch possesses a somewhat special status in comparison with the other senses. Unlike the latter, which primarily receive a “spiritual” intention, touch can be “really” (i.e., in its materiality) affected by its object and thus directly perceive intrinsic properties of matter such as contraction or dilation. According to Dumbleton, due to its capacity to perceive quantity and material qualities directly, the sense of touch thus perceives not only primary qualities but also (1) density and rarity, (2) contraction and dilation; (3) pleasure and pain, and (4) discontinuity within the body (e.g., lesion of the flesh or nerves) as well as distance.³⁸ It is interesting to note that Dumbleton here brings together properties that concern material substances in general, such as density and its variations, and psychological affections such as pleasure and pain. Whereas in the Aristotelian commentary tradition these properties tend to be studied separately—one belonging strictly to the physical domain and the other to the psychological—Dumbleton adopts a more psychophysiological approach, closer to that of physicians, who tend to study the two together. From his perspective, sensations such as pleasure and pain depend directly on the material properties of the animal body capable of perception—all these properties ultimately reducing to the relations between the material parts of the substance.

As we can see, Dumbleton’s ontology leads him to restrict the role of the internal senses by allowing a single power to perceive diverse properties, especially when these properties are reducible to the same underlying reality. Yet, the principles he adopts sometimes compel him to distinguish between different functions. For example, by maintaining that qualities

³⁶ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 21, f. 143ra.

³⁷ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 28, f. 150vb.

³⁸ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 19, f. 139rb; cf. pars IX, cap. 24, f. 147ra–b.

and substances are distinct, and that only one power can result from a particular proportion of qualities in matter, he concludes that two nerves are required for the sense of touch, which should therefore be subdivided into two distinct species:

First, that there are several touch-senses in species, that is, just as the common nerve necessarily, according to the Philosopher, has two nerves specifically diverse by which it receives color and taste, so too an animal necessarily has two tactile organs, and by one of them it only grasps the primary qualities and softnesses and hardnesses and other things of this kind, and by the other nerve the animal grasps heaviness and lightness, which are in the genus of substance [...].³⁹

We may thus observe here, once again, the idea that there exists a bottom-up constitutive relation between a qualitative proportion and a form or psychological power. The distinct perceptual powers (in this case, species of touch) corresponding to the different categories perceived (substance or quality) necessarily imply a difference in the material conditions that realize them (that is, distinct nerves). It is particularly noteworthy that Dumbleton distinguishes here between two senses of touch, rather than merely two tactile organs, and that in this passage he identifies the sense (or psychological power) properly speaking to the bodily organ that realizes it.

Let us now turn to a third and final aspect of what might be called Dumbleton's reductionist stance, which concerns his conception of powers and operations. As has just been noted, when dealing with non-rational powers that do not involve the intellective soul—whose immaterial status makes it an exception in nature—Dumbleton tends to make no distinction between the notions of organ and power. He holds indifferently that a power or organ necessarily results from a given qualitative complexion, instead of defining a power as a quality inhering or located 'in' an organ. In other words, while there exists a strong constitutive relation between the qualitative proportion in matter and the organ it constitutes—without, however, implying a strict

³⁹ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 17 (f. 138ra): "Primum quod plures sunt tactus in specie, id est, sicut nervus communis habet necessario apud Philosophum duos nervos diversos in specie quibus comprehendit colorem et saporem, ita habet animal duo organa tactiva et uno illorum comprehenduntur qualitates primae et molities et durities et cetera huiusmodi solum et alio nervo animal percipit gravitatem et levitatem quae sunt in genere substantiae [...]. Cf. pars IX, cap. 17, f. 138rb.

identity between them—Dumbleton appears to admit such an identity between the organ and the psychological power it enables. The psychological power thus reduces to the bodily organ in a robust sense (being identical with it, ontologically speaking).

Even more strikingly, Dumbleton draws radical conclusions from a central thesis of his ontology, namely that motion is not a reality distinct from the thing in motion.⁴⁰ This thesis in itself is not new and does not seem to entail any particular anthropological or psychological consequences. Yet Dumbleton draws from it remarkable implications. On the basis of it, Dumbleton identifies a “passion” in the case of touch—which normally designates a physical motion through which the body is moved—with the body (or flesh) as touched. Putting forward a hypothesis about how a passion affecting touch is transmitted through a nerve to the common sense by setting in motion the “subtle” and “fluid” parts contained within that nerve, he writes:

[...] Now since it could be said that this passion is not a thing distinct from that compressed [*condensata*] flesh, and since that passion [i.e., the one occurring in the nerve] is a thing distinct from that flesh, the passion is not another new intention caused as a passion received in the flesh. Hence, if such motion were a new quality induced, by the same reasoning, local motion would be a passion distinct from the moving thing, and the motion of alteration would be a thing distinct from what is altered [...].⁴¹

Dumbleton will then mention another explanatory hypothesis about how affections related to touch are transmitted to the common sense, but he will retain the idea that the passion as such (i.e., the affection of touch) is nothing other than the compressed flesh. Here, Dumbleton’s position on the nature of passion is reductionist in the same sense in which it was with respect to the relation between organs and psychological powers: Dumbleton posits a relation of identity between the passion and the flesh qua compressed.

⁴⁰ For an overview of this problem, see Maier, 1958, pp. 59–143.

⁴¹ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars IX, cap. 19 (f. 140ra): “[...] Cum enim posset dici quod illa passio non est res distincta ab illa carne condensata, et quia illa passio est res distincta ab illa carne, passio non est alia nova intentio causata ut illa passio in carne comprehendatur. Unde si talis motus esset qualitas nova inducta pari ratione esset motus localis passio distincta a mobili et motus alterationis esset res distincta ab alterato [...].”

But the most intriguing application of this reductionist conception of motion lies in the relation of identity that Dumbleton seems to posit between a faculty and its operations. In the Middle Ages, while the thesis of the identity of the soul and its powers found some supporters, it was rarer to encounter the claim that the soul is identical with its *operations*, since the latter were generally regarded as distinct from the soul itself. Dumbleton, however, seems to identify not only a psychological power with that which possesses it (i.e., the soul) but also a power with its operations. This constitutes a remarkably strong claim—one defended, the secondary literature suggests, only by William Crathorn (fl. ca. 1330) at that time.⁴² Although Dumbleton does not develop this point in detail, he upholds it in his discussion of the will and its volitions:

To the other [argument], when it is said that volitions would arise in us in some order, according to this position, and that then one would precede the other by necessity in one having two volitions at different times—to this it can be said that volition is not a thing diverse from the will, because if it were, [it would be] an accidental or substantial form, it would be produced naturally and would necessarily have a cause, from which its coming into being would stem—just as it happens in the generation of other natural forms. And because appetite and what has appetite are not distinct in the thing, nor volition and will, therefore with respect to no undergoing passive thing is there such a [natural] order so that it comes to be; but with respect to generated intentions by the mediating of which there is pleasure or sadness on account of which this or that volition happens, it is to be said that there is a natural order, just as in other generable forms—because volition does not follow after pleasure as though from an efficient cause and by necessity just as from the application of fire to wood the form of fire is produced; but this topic will be treated elsewhere.⁴³

⁴² Pasnau, 2002, pp. 245–301.

⁴³ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 4 (f. 95ra–b): “Ad aliud cum dicitur quod volitiones in nobis fierent per ordinem iuxta positionem et tunc de necessitate una praecederet aliam in habente duas diversis temporibus. Ad illud potest dici quod volitio non est res diversa a voluntate, nam si esset forma accidentalis sive substantialis, illa naturaliter produceretur et haberet causam necessario ex qua sequitur productio sua in esse ut accidit in generatione aliarum formarum naturalium et quia non distinguuntur re appetitus et appetens nec volitio et voluntas, ideo respectu nullius passi est ordo talis ut ipsa fiant sed respectu intentionum genitarum mediantibus quibus est delectatio vel tristitia propter que accidit volitio vel volitio dicendus est ordo naturalis ut in aliis formis generandis

Dumbleton's argument implicitly relies here also on the thesis that there is no real distinction between a thing and its motion. Since actions such as volitions are themselves motions, it follows that there can be no real distinction between the power of willing and its operations and, more generally, between an agent and its action.⁴⁴ We thus see that Dumbleton's reductionist positions concerning the nature of psychological powers are articulated to varying degrees depending on the level under consideration. Whereas his conception of the powers of the soul in relation to the body resembles a moderate reductionism—postulating a relation of constitution without strict identity—his account of the relation between powers and operations, in light of this last text, more closely approximates a strong reductionism taking the form of a relation of identity. As we have seen, such a relation of identity is not confined to the relations between powers and operations within the soul; it also obtains at the interface between soul and body in the case of certain affections of the sensitive soul, such as the passions associated with the sense of touch.

6. Conclusion

Dumbleton's treatment of psychological questions reflects a natural philosophical approach to the activities of sensing, willing, and thinking, based on a rigorous analysis of how material qualities—which ultimately account for the structure and dynamics of bodily functions—behave in the physical world. His analysis of psychological questions draws on a hybrid methodology. Indeed, while his analyses incorporate the new methods of mathematical physics typical of the Oxonian tradition, Dumbleton attaches considerable importance to the Aristotelian tradition of applied natural philosophy—that of Aristotle's *De anima*, *De generatione et corruptione*, and *Parva naturalia*, together with their Latin commentaries—and, to some extent, contemporary medical theory.

quia non sequitur volitio post delectationem sicut tanquam ex causa agente et necessitate ut ex applicatione ignis ad terram sequitur formam ignis produci sed de hac materia alibi tractabitur.”

⁴⁴ Dumbleton, *Summa*, pars VIII, cap. 4, f. 95rb.

Rather than engaging in metaphysical debates about the essence of the soul and its powers, Dumbleton concentrates on concrete problems concerning the mechanisms of cognition, and it is from a generally reductionist standpoint that he often arrives at very original positions. Although the *Summa* did not circulate widely, it occupies a significant position at the crossroads of the emerging application of mathematical techniques to natural philosophy and the gradual progress of physiological inquiry at the dawn of the modern period, whose influence is particularly perceptible in the Italian context in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance.

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Citation

Roudaut, S. (2026). John Dumbleton's anthropology: The human body, the soul, and its powers. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 111–135. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-06.



„Analiza i Egzystencja” 75 (2026), 137–168

ISSN (print): 1734-9923

ISSN (online): 2300-7621

DOI: 10.18276/aie.2026.75-07

ARTICLES

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Richard Brinkley on the Limits of the Sensitive Power: A First Look at His Epistemology*

Keywords: Epistemology, Faith and Reason, Fourteenth-century Oxford, Franciscan Theology, Richard Brinkley, Sense Perception

Słowa kluczowe: Epistemologia; Wiara i Rozum; Oksfordzka Filozofia XIV Wieku; Teologia Franciszkańska; Richard Brinkley; Percepcja Zmysłowa

* Earlier versions of this article were presented at the conference *At the Intersection of Willing, Thinking, and Sensing: Late Medieval Concepts of the Human*, Bologna, 19–20 May 2025, organized by Costantino Marmo and Monika Michałowska, and at the conference *Theories of Sense Perception: External and Internal Senses in the Later Middle Ages*, Łódź, 16–17 October 2025, organized by Marek Gensler, Monika Mansfeld, and Monika Michałowska. I would like to thank the organizers and participants of these conferences for the discussions that contributed to the improvement of this research. I am especially grateful to Andrea Nannini for his help and further discussions, to Jenny Pelletier for reading the text and offering her suggestions, and to the anonymous reviewers for their comments. I would also like to thank Patrycja Poniałowska for proofreading the English of a previous version. The responsibility for any remaining errors and shortcomings is mine alone. This research was partially funded by the project *Books and Readers in Florence from the 13th to the 15th Century: The Library of Santa Croce* (Prot. 2017WB4SZW; PI: Giorgio Inglese; unit coordinator: Costantino Marmo).

Abstract

This paper examines the role of and limits to the sensitive power in the epistemology of Richard Brinkley, drawing on the recent discovery of his complete *Lectura super Sententias*. Preserved in Florence (BNCF, Conv. Soppr. G.III.367, ff. 47rA–137rA), the commentary substantially expands Brinkley's available theological corpus and makes it possible to examine the intersection of theories of sense perception, epistemology, and theology in his work. Focusing on *quaestio* 1 of the Prologue, the article shows that Brinkley considers sense cognition to be unreliable as, in his view, even the proper sensibles and optimal conditions do not preclude error. Brinkley grounds assent to Christian doctrine in intellectual evidence, which is understood as propositional *apparentia*, and distinguishes natural reason, which is limited to a partial knowledge of appearances, from human reason as illuminated by the divine light. Thus, Brinkley's model indicates a theologically motivated limitation of natural reason and a possible use of skeptical argumentation in service of a theory of illumination.

1. Introduction

In this article, I discuss the role and limits of the sensitive power as described in Richard Brinkley's *Lectura super Sententias*, his question commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. An English Franciscan of the mid-fourteenth century, Brinkley was long known essentially for his *Summa logicae*. The recent discovery of a substantial part of his theological work, which was previously preserved only in an abridgement by the Parisian master Étienne Gaudet, has enabled a first look at his epistemology, particularly his discussion of sense perception and its limits. In his *Lectura*, Brinkley devotes a lengthy passage to this issue, which Gaudet considered a digression and which remains difficult to situate.

To better understand Brinkley's account and the role that the investigation of sensation and perceptual errors plays in his argumentation, I will first sketch some context for understanding fourteenth-century debates that touch on issues relating to skepticism. Then, I will examine selected relevant passages of Brinkley's text and conclude by assessing the role of sensory errors in his epistemology and considering the kind of knowledge he seems to advocate.

2. The Rediscovery of Brinkley's *Sentences* Commentary

Brinkley's text came to light during the study of the manuscript collection in the Santa Croce medieval library, which was originally housed in the Franciscan convent in Florence and functioned as a *studium generale*.¹ Brinkley's text is preserved in a manuscript that was part of the collection and is now held at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze,² under the shelf mark Conv. Soppr. G.III.367.³ The manuscript is a large parchment codex containing a set of texts by various authors: theological works by Walter Burley (ff. 1rA–30vA), an anonymous fragment of a commentary on the *Sentences* (ff. 35rA–46vB), and an anonymous commentary on the *Sentences* which close investigation suggests was written by Brinkley (ff. 47rA–137rA).⁴

Although the available biographical information is incomplete and not always reliable, we know that Brinkley was a Franciscan friar who taught at the University of Oxford in the mid-fourteenth century.⁵ The earliest sources record him as the author of an imposing work *Super quatuor Sententiarum libros*.⁶ However, modern and contemporary scholars know him above all

¹ I carried out this research under the PRIN project *Books and Readers in Florence from the 13th to the 15th Century: The Library of Santa Croce*, coordinated for the Bologna unit by Costantino Marmo. The overall aim of the project was to catalogue a considerable quantity of previously unregistered manuscripts and to investigate their use in the Franciscan *studium* of Santa Croce in Dante's time, while our specific research focused on logical and theological texts. For selected outcomes of the project, see Pegoretti, 2022, 2024. Two partial catalogues of the manuscripts from the library's ancient collection have already been published; see Bertelli & Gatti, 2025; Albanese et al., 2021. The catalogue of the *Plutei destri*, compiled and edited by Roberta Iannetti, is forthcoming, and work on the catalogue of the manuscripts held at the National Library of Florence (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze) is nearing completion.

² Bertelli, 2025.

³ Lanza & Speranzi, 2021.

⁴ The first section of this article contains an abridged outline of the essential background, which I develop in full in an article submitted to the *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*; see Appolloni, forthcoming.

⁵ Cesalli, 2020; Gál & Wood, 1980, pp. 73–77. See also Van der Heijden & Roest, 2025.

⁶ Gál & Wood, 1980, p. 73.

for an anti-nominalist *Summa logicae*, of which two complete attributed manuscripts are extant and a critical edition is in preparation.⁷

In philosophical terms, Brinkley's *Summa logicae* conveys an immanent or moderate realist stance on universals, which he considers to be "metaphysical parts of individuals."⁸ Moreover, the text endorses a realist account of propositional meaning; specifically, Brinkley criticizes the *modus rei* theory, according to which an intermediate entity called a "mode" is the significate of a proposition.⁹ Instead, his account draws on the tradition of the discussion on *complexe significabile*, which was developed among others by Adam Wodeham and, in particular, by Gregory of Rimini. In this sense, he argues that the propositional significate is a whole that corresponds to a complex order of things in the world—to a state of affairs.¹⁰ As is evident from both his logical and theological works, he is often critical of John Duns Scotus and William Ockham although he shares certain views with the latter, such as the subordination of spoken and written language to mental language.¹¹

Until recently, only one excerpt and a shortened version (*abbreviatio*) of Brinkley's theological work were known to have survived. The *abbreviatio* is an abridgement of another manuscript, which was made by Étienne Gaudet, a Parisian master of the 1380s.¹² The authorship of the excerpt and the *abbreviatio* was discovered and the texts were published by Zenon Kałuza in 1989.¹³ Thanks to Kałuza's efforts, we possess Gaudet's abridgement of Brinkley's commentary on the *Sentences*, including a fragment of a question (1), and abbreviations of two other series of theological questions (2 and 3).

⁷ Brinkley's *Summa logicae* is preserved in full in two manuscripts: Prague, Státní knihovna ČSR, Ms 396 8 (III.A.11), ff. 31rA–140rA, and Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Nr. 1360, ff. 1rA–105vB. It is partially preserved in one manuscript (London, British Library, Harley 3243, ff. 47rA–56rB). Laurent Cesalli is preparing a complete critical edition of the text. For partial critical editions, see Cesalli, 2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2013; Spade & Wilson, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1987; Gál & Wood, 1980; Spade, 1969.

⁸ Cesalli, 2013, p. 293.

⁹ Richard Brinkley, *Summa Nova de Logica, V* (ed. Fitzgerald, 1987, pp. 46–65).

¹⁰ Cesalli, 2020, p. 1669; 2007, pp. 279–309, esp. 283.

¹¹ Cesalli, 2020, p. 1666; Kałuza, 1989, p. 213.

¹² On Gaudet, see Baneu, 2025.

¹³ Kałuza, 1989. The Polish medievalist Zenon Kałuza published many French works as Zénon Kaluza, and appears as such in the references.

1. *Lectura / Quaestiones super Sententias* (LS / QS), qq. 1–11¹⁴ [Gaudet's *abbreviatio* + fragment of q. 3 in Florence, BNCF, Conv. Soppr. B.VI.910, ff. 46rB–48vB]
2. *Quaestiones breves* (QB), qq. 12–21 [Gaudet's *abbreviatio*]
3. *Quaestiones magnae* (QM), qq. I–III [Gaudet's *abbreviatio*]

Kaluža, who was the first to attribute these works to Brinkley, edited the excerpt and the abridged version that we have at our disposal today. The abridged version is preserved in six folios of a manuscript in Paris, BNF, lat. 16535, ff. 123r–129r. By comparison, Brinkley's newly discovered commentary is far more substantial, given that the text preserved in manuscript Conv. Soppr. G.III.367 is in fact the complete *Commentarium* or *Lectura super Sententias* and takes up one hundred folios. It is Brinkley's first theological text to be available to us in extenso, and it will likely remain the largest even if the *Quaestiones breves* and the *Quaestiones magnae* are discovered in the future.¹⁵

The eleven questions of the commentary were already listed by Kaluža.¹⁶ They refer to the Prologue and Book I of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

¹⁴ The questions are numbered as in Kaluža, 1989. Brinkley's *Lectura super Sententias* (here LS/QS) will be cited as the *Lectura*.

¹⁵ Although we do not have the texts of the *Quaestiones breves* or the *Quaestiones magnae*, we know their proportions from Gaudet's abridged version: they occupied, respectively, one quire and three quires, as opposed to the eight quires of the LS/QS. Contrary to Kaluža's hypothesis, I do not regard the *Quaestiones breves* as part of the commentary on the *Sentences*, both because their themes are heterogeneous, as already noted by Kaluža himself (Kaluža, 1989, p. 177), and because the *Sentences* commentary preserved in Conv. Soppr. G.III.367, which transmits the final question (q. 11) in full, does not refer to them.

¹⁶ The list below presents the eleven questions already identified by Kaluža on the basis of Gaudet's abridged version; they are given here in the form found in the Florentine manuscript, complete with the corresponding folio references. The substantial identity between the text of Conv. Soppr. G.III.367 and the text attributed to Brinkley by Kaluža is further corroborated by a comparison of Conv. Soppr. G.III.367, ff. 71rB–73vA (q. 3) and the fragment of the same question as preserved in Conv. Soppr. B.VI.910, ff. 46rB–48vB, which was published by Kaluža (Kaluža, 1989, pp. 214–222).

q. 1: Utrum secta Christi principalius dependet a fide vel ratione (ff. 47rA–61rA);

q. 2: Utrum regule secte Christi et eius propria principia per se sufficientia ad aliquam conclusionem theologicam scientificè demonstrandam (ff. 61rA–71rB);

q. 3: Utrum potentia volitiva eodem actu quo libere utitur creatura libere fruatur Trinitate benedicta (ff. 71rB–78vB);

Each question is extensive and conceptually dense. Although the text is essentially theological, it deeply engages with epistemological and metaphysical issues, making extensive use of logical tools.¹⁷ As shall be seen, the first question, which concerns the relation between faith and reason, addresses epistemological matters, while the second dwells on the ontological status of the *complexe significabile*, or the propositional significate. Before examining some passages of question 1, let me make two important observations permitted by the availability of the complete text. First, there is an explicit reference to *De obligationibus*, the seventh part of the *Summa logicae*, which supports dating Brinkley's *Sentences* to between 1355 and 1360.¹⁸ Second, Kałuža, and not Gaudet himself, was the first to attribute the theological work to Brinkley. This tentative attribution was primarily based on indirect citations by later authors. Yet, as Kałuža himself acknowledged, the brevity of Gaudet's abridged version tended to preclude any close comparison, an obstacle that can now be overcome. Indeed, comparisons of the text available today with Brinkley quotations in by Peter of Candia, Henry Totting de Oyta, John Hiltalingen, and Denys de Montina provide decisive evidence for Kałuža's attribution hypothesis.¹⁹

q. 4: *Utrum aliquem Deum esse sit evidenter demonstrabile* (ff. 78vB–87vB);

q. 5: *Utrum aliquem Deum esse ex rationibus philosophie evidenter sit demonstrabile* (ff. 87vB–92rB);

q. 6: *Utrum sola passio demonstrabilis sit de suo subiecto* (ff. 92rB–97vA);

q. 7: *Utrum omnis passio sit demonstrabilis de subiecto suo* (ff. 97vA–101rA);

q. 8: [U]numquid aliqua demonstratio <una sit demonstratio> propter quid (add. mg. dex.) (ff. 101rA–107vA);

q. 9: *Utrum Deus Pater sic principiat ad intra quod tantum hec dualitas personarum sit producta* (ff. 107vA–113rA);

q. 10: *Utrum ad creatum et increatum sit aliquid communicabile univocum* (ff. 113rA–120vB);

q. 11: *Utrum preter prioritatem originis sit alia prioritas in divinis* (ff. 120vB–137rA).

¹⁷ For a more detailed account of the content of the questions, see Kałuža, 1989.

¹⁸ This confirms Kałuža's hypothesis (see Kałuža, 1989, p. 169) and diverges from the account proposed by Gedeon Gál and Rega Wood (1980, pp. 77–78).

¹⁹ For an extended discussion of the following points, see Appolloni, forthcoming.

3. Sense Perception and Error in the Fourteenth Century: Some Context for Brinkley's Discussion

The problem of error in perception is a recurring theme in the history of medieval epistemology.²⁰ As Christoph Grellard has shown, the epistemological question of the fallibility and error of the senses primarily derives from the tradition of medieval skepticism as mediated by Augustine.²¹ According to Grellard, the skeptical question that challenges the reliability of knowledge derived from uncertain sources—namely, sensory cognition, uncertainty of which is caused by errors of the senses—sometimes serves as a methodological step toward a theory of illumination.²² While the responses offered throughout the Middle Ages are relevant, Brinkley's context is best understood in juxtaposition with some of the most notable positions on sensory error propounded in the fourteenth century.

One starting point for fourteenth-century discussions on this issue is provided by Ockham's view of divine absolute power in his thought experiment concerning God's deceit. Ockham states that under normal conditions, when God does not intervene, intuitive cognition, which is produced by an external object, generates evident knowledge of the existence of that object. However, theoretically speaking, God might decide to destroy the object of perception and cause in us a cognition of a non-existing object, spawning an erroneous judgment in us.²³

According to the scholarly consensus, Ockham himself did not push his view to a skeptical conclusion, a step that was instead taken by his confrere Wodeham and his critic Chatton in Oxford in the 1320s.²⁴

²⁰ Grellard, 2004, 2005a, 2018, 2020; Lagerlund, 2010, Silva, 2025; Silva & Toivanen, 2020; Tachau, 1988.

²¹ Grellard, 2018, p. 60.

²² Grellard, 2018, pp. 60–65.

²³ Ockham, *Ordinatio*, q. 1 (ed. Gál & Brown, 1967, p. 39:11–16): “Patet etiam quod res non existens potest cognosci intuitive, quantumcumque primum obiectum illius actus non existat, – contra opinionem aliquorum, – quia visio coloris sensitiva potest conservari a Deo ipso colore non existente.” Ockham, *Quodlibet VI*, q. 5 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 498:72): “Tamen Deus potest causare actum creditivum per quem credo rem esse praesentem quae est absens.” The literature on this issue is extensive; see also Amerini, 2019; Karger, 1999, 2004.

²⁴ Grellard, 2016, 2018; Karger, 1999, 2004. Karger claims that, in Ockham's view, God can give us an erroneous judgement, but one that is not supported by intuitive

Specifically, Wodeham holds that God could maintain an act of perception while destroying the object.²⁵ While he recognizes the grave dangers that this assumption bears for certainty and knowledge (*et ita periret certitudo omnis philosophica*), he accepts the consequences and acknowledges divine deception as a possibility inherent in intuitive cognition, though not in the regular course of things. Therefore, with no supernatural interference to the contrary, intuitive cognition produces an evident judgment.²⁶ This notwithstanding, errors of perception and in judgment are still possible in the natural sphere, but they tend to occur with the common sensibles, that is, those shared by several senses such as figure; this explains why we perceive a burning stick moved in a circular motion as a fiery circle.²⁷ By contrast, drawing on Aristotle's *De anima*,²⁸ the proper sensibles—those perceived by one sense

evidence, or in other words, he can cause in us a cognition that is abstractive rather than intuitive (Karger, 1999, p. 213). This is why she argues that “the possibility of divine deception Ockham concedes is, therefore, devoid of skeptical import”—even if, ultimately, according to Karger, he does not succeed (Karger, 2004, pp. 231–236).

²⁵ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 4 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 47:93–98). See also Karger, 2004, p. 228. By “act of perception” I follow Karger in meaning “intuitive cognitions of external things obtained through the senses.” Unlike Ockham, who distinguishes between an intellective soul and a sensitive one, Wodeham posits only an intellective soul, so that perceptions play a direct role in belief formation (without the need to be replicated in intellective intuitive cognition). On this, see Karger, 2004, pp. 225–228.

²⁶ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 2 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, pp. 44–49); Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol. q. 6 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 170:47–59). See also Karger, 2004, p. 229, footnote 12.

²⁷ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 4 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 105): “Sed tenendo istam responsionem, dicerem consequenter quod quia oculus prosequitur attente extremitatem istam ignitam circulariter motam, intellectus statim ex visione eadem continuata ipsius ignis circulariter moti momentanee – vel alia et alia aequivalentibus – componit propositionem, ponendo visionem ignis pro subiecto, ita quod per illam apprehendatur ipse ignis in alio situ et alio continue, et esse circuli pro predicato. Qua propositione formata, apparet ignis ille esse circulus, quae propositio, propter hoc quod componitur ex cognitione intuitiva quae multum est evidens cognitio, est propositio multum evidens – licet falsa – in tantum ut ipsa sit, vel ex ea, inferri possit discursu quasi imperceptibili ibi existere circulum. Et propositio hoc significans est ipsa apparitio qua apparet ibi esse circulus.”

²⁸ See *infra*, §4.

only, such as color for sight—are generally not associated with perception errors and are never naturally perceived unless they indeed exist.²⁹

Chatton makes a similar argument. He admits the skeptical consequences of vision occurring or persisting in the absence of an object, but he insists that this is precluded in the natural sphere since our sensory certainty is grounded precisely in the certainty of the presence of the things perceived.³⁰ However, he qualifies his statement by accepting that vision can briefly continue in the absence of its object, in phenomena such as the fiery circle or after-images, that is, the shapes of bright bodies we continue to perceive after closing our eyes. Chatton explains that this brief persistence stems from the remaining of light or the species in the eye after the visible object is gone, rather than from the existence of the image as an intentional being, on the model of Peter Auriol's *esse apparens*.³¹

²⁹ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 4 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 105): “Hic autem notandum est [quod] aliter est in huiusmodi iudiciis et apparitionibus de sensibilibus propriis, cuiusmodi sunt color, sapor, odor; et aliter de communibus cuiusmodi sunt figura, motus, quies, numerus, magnitudo. Prima enim numquam naturaliter apparent esse nisi existant. Quia hoc est comparare illa ad sensibilia communia, circa quae frequentissime erratur secundum Philosophum, pluries II De anima. Licet igitur naturaliter non possit apparere color ille igneus nisi existat, potest tamen naturaliter apparere figura qualis non figuratur.”

³⁰ Walter Chatton, *Lectura in Sententias*, Prol., q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Wey, 1989, p. 89): “Secundo, contra secundam conclusionem opinionis, probro quod visio rei non potest naturaliter causari re absente, nec etiam naturaliter diu conservari ipsa recedente. Probro primo, quia aliter periret omnis nostra certitudo, quia maxima certitudo nostra de sensibilibus convenit nobis per hoc quod experimur nostras sensationes per quas sensibilia nobis apparent praesentia; si igitur sensatio causatur naturaliter re absente, et etiam diu conservetur sine ea, igitur illa via non est certa.”

³¹ Walter Chatton, *Lectura in Sententias*, Prol., q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Wey, 1989, pp. 93–95): “Aliter dico quod species, licet non possit primo causare visionem sine re ipsa nec etiam diu conservare, tamen cum est intensa, sic quod ipsa species manet per aliquod tempus recedente visibili, tunc illa species sufficit ad conservandum visionem per tantum tempus, quod visio ignis in tali situ remanet in oculo quousque ignis guerit in alio situ, et forte usque ad completionem illius parvi circuli. [...] Ideo dico quod istud experimentum de visione intensi visibilis, et etiam illud aliud experimentum supra positum de circulo igneo, bene probant quod visio prius causata per praesentiam rei in esse reali, potest per aliquod tempus conservari recedente visibili, quia species vel lumen eius remanet; sic igitur similiter potest illa visio, quia quantum experimur, apparet nobis quod etiam lumen dependet a corpore lucido.” See also Wood, 1982, p. 227. For Auriol, see Friedman & Fornasieri, 2026.

For his part, Wodeham considers even this residual and limited phenomenon to cause a serious epistemological problem concerning the certainty of the existence of objects.³² Therefore, to keep human knowledge intact, he rejects any brief continuation of vision after the disappearance of the thing perceived, as well as any medium or species that might substitute that thing as the cause of vision.³³ In his view, such misperceptions are caused by imagination rather than by species.³⁴

The two authors above represent the Oxford Franciscan thought of the 1320s; yet the question of the fallibility and error of the senses, as well as its skeptical consequences, continued to be discussed widely both in Oxford and Paris. Among the authors of the time, Gregory of Rimini is chronologically closer to Brinkley³⁵ and is also a key contributor to the debate on the *complexe significabile*.³⁶ As such, his views are a valid

³² Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 3 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 71): “Sed absque dubio ista via tollit omnem certitudinem de existentia cuiuscumque visibilis, licet sit cauta evasio.” See also Wood, 1982, pp. 227–231.

³³ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 3 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 73): “Ad illud videtur posse responderi ex positione sua quod ideo ‘visio prius causata potest per aliquod tempus manere re visa recedente, eo quod species intensa per quam visio immediate causatur remanet per aliquod tempus recedente visibili.’ Contra istud: si visio immediate causatur a specie, aut igitur sic immediate quod obiectum non causet nec concauset immediate actum in suo genere et ordine, sed tantum causat speciem et conservat a qua immediate causatur visio; vel non sic, sed obiectum etiam est partialis causa immediata visionis. Si secundum, tunc stat argumentum plene, sicut patet de se. Si primum, tunc non esset verum quod dicit quod ‘nunquam visio aliqua nata est naturaliter causari sine praesentia rei visae.’ Quia species potest manere, per te et secundum veritatem, saltem per aliquod tempus sine praesentia causae; et Deus posset impedire speciem illam ab effectu suo in primo instanti, vel forte aliunde posset impediri tunc, et amoto impedimento causari visio. Igitur.” See also Wood, 1982, pp. 227–231.

³⁴ Adam Wodeham, *Lectura secunda*, Prol., q. 3 (ed. Wood & Gál, 1990, p. 78). See also Wood, 1982, p. 228.

³⁵ John of Ripa (fl. 1357–1368, Paris) is another important author whose notions might be instructively examined in this context by way of comparison. However, I have not been able to find an analogous discussion of sensory error in Ripa, although he does address the question of intuitive cognition and briefly develops the notion of the error of *apparentia*. John of Ripa, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, Prol., q. 6, art. 1, pp. 364–365; q. 7, art. 1, pp. 441–442. See Nannini, forthcoming.

³⁶ The question of the *complexe significabile* is not only ontological but also epistemological, as it addresses the question of what the object of knowledge and belief is. See also Tachau, 1987, p. 161.

point of comparison. In question 1 of the Prologue to his commentary on the *Sentences*, which was composed in the mid-1340s in Paris,³⁷ Gregory of Rimini addresses an epistemological question reminiscent of the opening of Brinkley's *Lectura*. Having asked whether knowledge can be acquired through theological discourse,³⁸ he answers in the negative since faith is assent without evidence,³⁹ and theological discourse does not produce assent in the mind,⁴⁰ at least not assent of the same kind of knowledge.⁴¹ Gregory's reasoning is that theological discourse cannot yield knowledge because knowledge proceeds from evident propositions or from those derived from them, whereas theological discourse proceeds from believed premises. It is not a demonstration, for if it were, even an unbeliever with proper natural dispositions would have to assent to theological conclusions.⁴² Unlike Brinkley, Gregory of Rimini does not pursue the distinctly epistemological problems in this question, leaving them instead for consideration further on. In general, he holds that the mind only forms knowledge in the form of universals after the apprehension of singular things. For this reason, he attributes sense perception a key role in intellectual knowledge⁴³ and generally places a degree of trust in this cognitive process. Admittedly, he does not rule out errors in judgment by the senses, but believes that the intellect can correct them through its apprehension of the singular, as is the case with the judgment

³⁷ Schabel & Girard, 2022.

³⁸ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, Prol., q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 1): "Utrum de obiecto theologico per theologicum discursum notitia proprie scientifica acquirantur." Brinkley's question is similar in that it discusses the role of reason in assenting to Christian truths; see *infra* §3.

³⁹ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, Prol., q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 55): "Quarta conclusio faciliter probatur, quia omnis assensus absque evidentia et formidine est fides."

⁴⁰ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, Prol., q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 54): "Quoad aliam partem patet conclusio, quia constat quod discursus theologicus non causat adhaesionem in animo alicuius pagani vel alterius non recipientis sacram scripturam ad fidem, esto quod ita ille noverit conclusionem sequi ex praemissis, sicut fidelis theologus."

⁴¹ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, Prol., q. 2 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 67): "Consequentia probatur, quoniam assensus scientialis est proprius actus scientiae, et assensus opinativus opinionis, et assensus creditivus seu credere est actus fidei... potest quis habere assensum evidentem per medium demonstrativum, et alius assensum certum sed inevidentem per medium theologicum, et alius assensum formidolosum per medium probabile."

⁴² Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, Prol., q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 53: 21–23).

⁴³ Schabel & Girard, 2022, §4; Tachau, 1982, pp. 357–366.

on the sun being the size of one foot: this is an erroneous judgement which cannot be corrected by the senses, because the distance of the sun prevents a reliable sensory apprehension, but can be corrected by reasoning.⁴⁴ The possibility of error is also limited by the directness of our perception, which does not make use of species, as in the case of color for sight.⁴⁵ By contrast, our memory operates on species, which are mental representations of remembered perceptions.⁴⁶ Gregory of Rimini contests Auriol's reading, according to which we have no direct access to things but only to their species.⁴⁷ Instead, first he argues that if it were the case, an external thing would not be an efficient cause of sensation, as it in fact is,⁴⁸ and then marshals various arguments to show that sensation,

⁴⁴ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, pp. 312–313): “Secundo sic: Per intellectum cognoscimus sensum errare in iudicando de aliquo sensibili singulari et demonstrato, ergo per intellectum cognoscimus singulare sensibile demonstratum. Consequentia patet. Nisi enim per intellectum cognosceremus hoc sensibile demonstratum et verum iudicium haberemus de ipso, non cognosceremus per intellectum quod sensus false iudicaret de illo. Antecedens probro; nam constat quod cognoscimus iudicium sensus de aliquo singulari sensibili, verbi gratia de hoc sole qui nunc est super hemisphaerium nostrum et in tali puncto coeli, quo iudicat ipsum esse pedalis quantitatis, esse falsum. Et constat quod illud iudicium esse falsum per nullam virtutem sensitivam possumus cognoscere, cum non nisi quodam discursu et argumentatione ex eius distantia a visu nostro hoc comprehendamus; quod proprium est rationis. Ergo per rationem hoc cognoscimus.”

⁴⁵ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 306): “Secunda conclusio, videlicet quod de sensibilibus habemus sensualem notitiam simplicem qua res sensibilis immediate secundum se sentitur et aliquam qua mediante aliquo, patet quantum ad primam partem in sensibus exterioribus, per quos immediate sensibilia ipsa sentimus, verbi gratia colorem in pariete, nec aliquid experimur nos intueri per visum, quo viso tamquam medio intueamur colorem in pariete. Si enim aliquid aliud per visum intueremur medium inter ipsum et colorem, ita experiremur et cognosceremus nos illud videre, sicut experimur et cognoscimus nos videre colorem; quod non contingit.”

⁴⁶ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 306): “Consequentia probatur, quia talis cogitatio vel recordatio non terminatur immediate obiective ad res ipsas sensibiles extra, sed ad earum species in memoria existentes.”

⁴⁷ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, pp. 320–321).

⁴⁸ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 322): “Primam conclusionem probro primo sic: Si esset possibile fieri sensualem notitiam exteriorem etc, sequitur quod obiectum sensibile, quando actu est praesens et actu sentitur, nullo modo esset per se causa efficiens totalis vel partialis ipsius sensationis, qua sentitur, aut alicuius ad sensationem illam necessario requisiti. Consequens est falsum secundum omnem

unlike imagination, always occurs in the presence of sensible things.⁴⁹ Consequently, he rejects the notion that vision might remain once the sensible object is destroyed, noting that if it were true, we should continue to see all objects even when hidden from sight.⁵⁰ What he is in fact most concerned about is that this assumption produces skeptical effects; indeed, it rules out deriving any natural certainty of the existence or contingent condition of any sensible thing from the senses and, consequently, from the intellect.⁵¹ Gregory of Rimini repudiates such skepticism on pragmatic and moral grounds, insisting that to doubt that the fire burning one's hand exists is absurd⁵² and that such doubt would have disastrous practical implications for human life and society,⁵³ including for the recognition of anyone's actions.⁵⁴

opinionem. Quaelibet enim opinio ponit obiectum esse aliquo modo causam effectivam exterioris sensationis [...]."

⁴⁹ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Item Commentator 2 De anima commento 156: 'Sensus, inquit, semper est cum praesentia sensibilis, imaginatio autem non'."

⁵⁰ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Secundam conclusionem probo primo sic: Si destructo sensibili posset visio remanere sic quod per eam ipsum destructum videretur, pari ratione vel potiori possibile esset ipsum quantumcumque occultum existens videri per illam. Consequens repugnat experientiae. Experimur enim quod simul dum occultatur nobis visibile, cessat videri; et si successive, successive, et si subito occultaretur, non est dubium quod subito cessaret videri."

⁵¹ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Additio 11: Secundo, quia secundum hoc sequitur quod naturaliter non posset haberi aliqua certitudo de existentia vel aliqua condicione contingenti alicuius rei sensibilis per viam sensus nec per consequens per viam intellectus. Quod videtur absurdum." The additions are materials which, according to the editors, are authentic but were sometimes omitted or added in the final redaction. See Trapp, 1979, xxxiv–xxxv.

⁵² Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Absurdum enim est quod non habeam naturaliter certitudinem, utrum ignis qui comburit manum meam, posito quod ita sit, sit vere in rerum natura vel solum appareat, immo quod plus est, quod non sim certus quod ipse me calefaciat et comburat."

⁵³ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Et huiusmodi alia, quibus positus perit omnis scientia, cuius principia sumuntur a sensu, cum scientia sit certa et evidens notitia. Et quod plus est, sequitur quod tota vita et convictus inter homines non plus procedat ex certa evidetia quam opera eorum qui dormientes ex quibusdam visis in somniis corporaliter loquuntur et alia exterius operantur, quae omnia penitus sunt absurda."

⁵⁴ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 325): "Consequentia statim patet, quia, ex quo sensatio huiusmodi haberi potest non praesente et pari ratione

That said, Gregory does admit that vision may occur in the absence of a thing, but only by virtue of supernatural causation.⁵⁵ However, this would amount to potential—and not actual—intuitive cognition or vision.⁵⁶

4. Brinkley on Sense Perception and Its Errors

Such is the intellectual and theological context in which Brinkley addresses the limits and errors of the sensitive power. He discusses the issue in the first question of his *Lectura* on Lombard's *Sentences*, which concerns the Prologue. The question asks whether Christian doctrine—Christian truth—depends more on faith or on reason (question 1: *Utrum secta Christi principaliter dependet a fide vel ratione*, ff. 47rA–61rA).

non existente obiecto, non est possibile quod per illam notitiam sim certus quod ipsum existat et sit praesens quando est, potius quam quando non est, et per consequens quod ipsum agat vel non, aut aliquid eiusmodi.”

⁵⁵ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 332): “Tertia conclusio principalis quantum ad istud dubium est quod talis sensatio potest a deo immediate absque praesentia sensibilis obiecti causari, et causata partialiter a sensibili potest a solo deo immediate conservari absente vel etiam non existente illo sensibili. Haec probatur facilius, quoniam omnem entitatem, quam potest deus concurrente causa secunda causare vel causatam conservare, potest immediate se solo causare vel conservare.” See also Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 340): “Nam concedendum est quod per potentiam dei potest esse sine obiecto existente, non autem est hoc possibile virtute naturali tantum, qualis nunc est ipsa.” See also Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 346): “Hoc cognoscitur mediate cum est absens, ergo potest cognosci absens immediate, sicut nec sequitur: Res absens, vel quod non est, potest esse praesens per suam speciem, igitur et per se ipsum immediate. Et loquor ista de potentia naturali et communi lege naturae, non autem de speciali actione dei aut alterius virtutis supra naturam nostram, si qua est quae causare possit in nobis notitiam absentium aut praeteritorum vel futurorum, qua immediate illa noscantur, de quo ad praesens non curo.” See Tachau, 1982, p. 362.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Rimini, *In 1 Sent.*, dist. 3, q. 1 (ed. Trapp, 1981, p. 340): “Additio 13: Rem illam quae est notitia intuitiva, utique sine obiecto potest conservare, sed non potest conservare illam sine obiecto sic quod sit tunc notitia. Unde quamvis patrem deus facere possit sine filio et conservare, non tamen potest conservare patrem sine filio et quod pater sit pater non habens filium, sic in proposito. Similiter deus potest causare sine obiecto aliquam qualitatem eiusdem rationis cum visione intuitiva, sed illa tunc non erit actualis visio sed potentialiter tantum. Unde posito obiecto suo, a quo naturaliter ipsa potuisset causari, ipsa erit visio eius.”

To answer this question, Brinkley develops a complex argumentative structure, which is also reflected in Gaudet's extensive synthesis.⁵⁷ Having set out arguments in favor of the greater importance, first, of reason and, then, of faith in adhering or assenting to Christian doctrine (ff. 47rA–49vB), Brinkley presents his own position. He begins by investigating what faith and reason are (ff. 49vB–52vA), goes on to define their respective domains (literally, what each extends over and what it concerns) (ff. 52vA–58vA), and depicts the relationship of faith and reason with respect to the act of adherence, that is, assent to Christian doctrine (ff. 58vA–59rA), concluding that it is reason that directs the intellect toward assent to Christian doctrine.⁵⁸ Finally, the question is answered based on evidence from reason and from authority (ff. 59rA–61rA).

Brinkley gives an overview of the debate on the role of reason and the will in determining the intellect's assent to Christian truths. He identifies three positions he rejects. One of them, which is commonly associated with Ockham, gives pre-eminence to the will; another grounds assent in the Revelation; and the third holds that faith itself provides the intellect with evidence of Christian truths.⁵⁹ Besides these concerns, Brinkley's discussion also weighs in on the question of the epistemic value of miracles and testimony.⁶⁰ According to Ockham, while testimonies and miracles may reinforce the habit of faith and assent to Christian doctrine, faith ultimately rests on an act of the will, which causes the intellect's assent.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Kaluza, 1989, pp. 226–227.

⁵⁸ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (Florence, BNCF, Conv. Soppr. G.III.367 (=F), f. 60vA): “Sit ergo quod intellectiva mediante fide et ratione potest hic in via percipere veritatem sue secte, sed quia ratio secundum omnem statum requiritur et coexistit ad talem cognitionem habendam et fides tantum secundum statum istum, ut patet ex prius dictis, ideo fides solum per accidens requiritur, et ratio per se. Ex quo sequitur quod secta Christi principaliter dependet a ratione quam a fide.”

⁵⁹ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 47rB): “Sed huiusmodi rationis conclusionem doctores communiter non tenent, ideo iuxta eos huic argumento triplex responsio dari potest, dici enim potest: primo quod volitiva creata determinat intellectivam creatam ad assentiendum vero apparenti sibi neutro sed volitiva divina determinat intellectivam divinam ad assentiendum contingenti complexo. Secundo dici potest quod intellectiva assentit tali vero [...] ex revelante illam legem. [...] Tertio dicitur quod hic in via intellectiva primo et principaliter assentit legi Christi ex fide [...]”

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the epistemic value of miracles, see Houston, 1994.

⁶¹ William of Ockham, *Quaestiones variae*, q. 5 (ed. Etzkorn et al., 1984, pp. 187–188): “[...] quaero tunc: a quo causabitur actus credendi huic complexo? [...] Respondeo

By hearing preaching and witnessing miracles, one can only acquire faith, but cannot acquire any evident knowledge of the articles of faith.⁶² As a result, in this way one cannot be brought to assent to Christian doctrine or, for that matter, to the doctrine of any other religion.⁶³

Brinkley is familiar with this Ockhamist background and takes the argumentation on the respective extents of reason and faith as a context for his own examination of the limits and errors of the sensitive power.⁶⁴ In the demonstration of the first conclusion of the question, according to which miracles and, more generally, sensible signs neither produce evident knowledge nor move the intellect to assent,⁶⁵ Brinkley expresses a strong and thorough distrust of sensitive perception. Indeed, Gaudet calls this demonstration a “note on the possible errors in the sensitive powers.”⁶⁶

It makes sense to see whether this discussion is just an isolated digression or whether, and if so, how, it ties in with Brinkley’s broader epistemological concerns. Notably, as shall be seen, most of the reasons that Brinkley adduces in support of his position are drawn not from the supernatural

quod a notitia incomplexa terminorum et apprehensione complexi et ex actu volendi quo aliquis vult assentire tali complexo; quantumcumque nullam evidentiam habeat. [...] Et sic patet quod activitas intellectus nihil facit ad causandum istum actum assentiendi. Quia positus praedictis notitiis cum actu voluntatis efficaci, sive intellectus agat sive non, necessario causabitur assensus respectu illius complexi, et posita activitate intellectus sine actu voluntatis numquam causabitur.” See also William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta* IV, q. 6 (ed. Wey, 1980). See Grellard, 2014, pp. 64–86; Perini-Santos, 2006, pp. 75–93.

⁶² William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta* IV, q. 6 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 323): “Ad istam quaestionem dico quod audiens praedicationem et videns miracula fieri, non acquirit per hoc notitiam evidentem de illis articulis, sed solum acquirit fidem.”

⁶³ William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta* IV, q. 6 (ed. Wey, 1980, p. 324): “Praeterea si unus praedicaret legem christianam et alius legem Mahometi alicui pagano totaliter indifferenti, et aequaliter quantum ad apparentiam facerent miracula, ille non teneretur assentire legi christianae plus quam legi Saracenorum, ex quo vera praedicatio et vera miracula non faciunt maiorem evidentiam quam falsa miracula.”

⁶⁴ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): “Uterius ergo videndum <est> [add. in mg. sup.] ad quid fides se extendit et ad quid ratio respectu secte Christi, pro quo pono aliquas conclusiones.”

⁶⁵ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): “Nulla signa sensitiva vel mirabilia per se et immediate aliquam sectam evidenter probabilem sufficiunt generare.”

⁶⁶ Kaluza, 1989, p. 226: “Nota de errorum possibili<tate> in sensitivis potentiis.”

domain of miracles, but from the sphere of natural phenomena.⁶⁷ Brinkley advances a series of arguments to show that the sensitive power is subject to error. He begins by pointing out a general discordance between judgments and reality when different sensations are involved.

Brinkley contends that the possibility of error is intrinsic to the sensitive power because while it should judge the same object in the same way regardless of which sensation is involved, it sometimes judges things differently from how they actually are. This implies that the source of error must lie within the sensitive power itself since the sensible object affects it in a uniform way.⁶⁸ To illustrate this, Brinkley cites diplopia, a classic visual illusion drawn from physiology and optics.⁶⁹ Specifically, he explains that the species of a visible object, carried by the two eyes, sometimes do not converge at the same point in the common nerve,⁷⁰ but oscillate between right and left. This is caused by the oscillation of the vitreous humor and the visual spirit, which flow from the common sense into the common nerve and the eye. As a result, the sensitive power judges one thing as being two.⁷¹ Brinkley's account eludes any further analysis because he explicitly cuts his discussion short, simply noting that a complete demonstration is a matter of *perspectiva*.⁷²

⁶⁷ Brinkley likely considers miracles to be "experiences that strike the senses and engender sensations" (Kaluza, 1989, p. 199). They serve as a traditional starting point for the discussion, but Brinkley sets them aside in favour of natural phenomena.

⁶⁸ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): "Primo sic: qualiter potentia sensitiva iudicat de re sensata mediante sensatione aliqua, taliter stat quod iudicet mediante qualibet. Sed media<n>te aliqua sensatione potentia sensitiva aliter iudicat de re quam res est et erronee, ergo stat quod potentia sensitiva mediante qualibet sensatione erronee iudicat de re. Patet consequentia, et pars prima assumpti cum <stat> [add. mg. sn.] quod quodlibet sensatum semper uniformiter se habeat respectu potentie sensitive tam particularis quam communis et <quod> [add. interl.] qualiter aliquod sensibile movet potentiam respectu iudicii veri et erronei, quod taliter quodlibet sensibile actu movens potentiam moveat ipsam."

⁶⁹ See Smith, 2001, p. lxxviii.

⁷⁰ This probably means the optic chiasma; see Smith, 2001, p. lxxviii.

⁷¹ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): "Et alia pars arguitur sic: quandocumque species visibilis unius rei delate a duobus oculis non quiescunt in eodem loco in communi nervo, sed vacillant secundum dextrum et sinistrum, potentia sensitiva illam unam rem iudicavit duas."

⁷² Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): "[...] totum antecedens est demonstrabile demonstratione propria perspective, quam causa brevitatis dimitto."

Even if briefly discussed, the example of diplopia, explained through a physiological malfunction within the sensitive power, shows that the possibility of error is internal to it.

Brinkley's most extensive, and perhaps most interesting, argument for the intrinsic limits of the sensitive power involves sight and sensible objects, and is inspired by Aristotle's *De anima* II.6. Brinkley cites it regarding the threefold distinction of the objects of the sensitive faculty: the proper and *per se* sensibles, such as color for sight, which cannot be perceived by another sense; the common sensibles shared by several senses, such as motion, which can be perceived both by touch and by sight; and the accidental sensibles, as in "the white is the son of Diares" (*album sit Diarris*), that is, the white patch we see, which happens to be the son of Diares and is therefore only accidentally an object of sense.⁷³ In Aristotle, this distinction comes with different degrees of susceptibility to error. Indeed, Aristotle claims that the senses cannot be deceived with respect to the proper sensibles although he himself qualifies this claim later.⁷⁴ Conversely, error is frequent with the accidental sensibles and even more so with the common sensibles.⁷⁵ In fact, Brinkley radicalizes the standard Aristotelian interpretation as he denies that there is any sphere in which error is impossible or at least minimal⁷⁶; even if the proper sensibles are involved, there is no exemption from error.

⁷³ Aristotle, *De anima*, Iacobus Veneticus (translator), Guillelmus de Moerbeka (retractor), II.6 (418 a7–418 a24) (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 118). See also Shields, 2016, pp. 223 ff.

⁷⁴ Aristotle, *De anima*, Iacobus Veneticus (translator), Guillelmus de Moerbeka (retractor), II.6 (418 a6) (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 118): "Dico autem proprium quidem quod non contingit altero sensu sentiri, et circa quod non contingit errare, ut uisus coloris et auditus soni et gustus humoris, tactus autem habet plures differencias. Set unusquisque iudicat de hiis et non decipitur quoniam color neque quoniam sonus, set quid coloratum aut ubi aut quid sonans." Aristotle, *De anima*, Iacobus Veneticus (translator), Guillelmus de Moerbeka (retractor), III.3 (428 b17) (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 197): "Hoc autem accidit propter hoc: sensus propriorum quidem est uerus aut quam paucissimum habens falsum."

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *De anima*, Iacobus Veneticus (translator), Guillelmus de Moerbeka (retractor), III.3 (428 b20–26) (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 197): "Secundo autem de accidere hec, et hic iam contingit mentiri: quod quidem enim album, non mentitur, si autem hoc album aut aliud, mentitur. Tercio autem communium et consequencium accidentia quibus insunt propria (dico autem ut motus et magnitudo accidunt sensibilibus), circa que est maxime iam decipi secundum sensum."

⁷⁶ See also Shields, 2016, p. 226.

The examples examined below constitute the minor premise of Brinkley's argument. Specifically, he argues that because the intellective power cannot ground certainty in the judgments of a fallible and erroneous power, the intellect cannot rely on the sensitive power since the latter is subject to error. Brinkley's example of certainty regarding the founder of a religion has Ockhamist echoes. That the sensitive power is subject to error is demonstrated through the misperceptions and illusions related to the accidental, common, and proper sensibles.

Likewise, the intellective power cannot be made certain about an external object through any power that is fallible in every judgment concerning such objects. But any sensitive power is fallible in every judgment concerning an external object; therefore, the intellective power cannot be made certain of any external object whatsoever through any sensitive power. And furthermore, therefore, the intellective power cannot be immediately and evidently made certain about the founder of any religious doctrine through any sensible signs or miracles. [...] Therefore, the consequent is true, and the other part of the assumption is argued as follows: every external object of the sensitive power is either a proper and essential (*per se*) object, or a common object, or an accidental object, according to Aristotle II *De anima*, comment 63 and 64.⁷⁷ But with respect to each of these, an erroneous judgment is possible; therefore, with respect to any external object whatsoever, the sensitive power is fallible in each of its judgments, which is to be proved.⁷⁸

Brinkley aims to show that even the noblest sense of sight at its highest degree of perfection is not sufficient to give rise to a true judgment. He begins with an example of an accidental sensible. Let us submit Aristotle's example

⁷⁷ Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis de Anima libros* (ed. Crawford, 1953, pp. 63–64).

⁷⁸ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vA): "Item sic per nullam potentiam in omni iudicio errabilem respectu obiecti extrinseci potest intellectiva de illo obiecto certificari. <Sed> quolibet potentia sensitiva in omni iudicio respectu obiecti extrinseci est errabilis, ergo per nullam potentiam sensitivam de aliquo obiecto extrinseco potest intellectiva certificari. Et ultra, ergo, per nulla signa vel mirabilia sensitiva potest intellectiva immediate de alicuius secte legislatore evidenter certificari. [...] Ergo stat quod consequens sit verum, et alia pars assumpti arguitur sic: omne obiectum extrinsecum potentie sensitive est obiectum proprium et per se vel obiectum commune vel obiectum per accidens per Aristotelem II *De anima*, textu commenti 63ti et 64ti. Sed respectu cuiuslibet istorum stat quod sit iudicium erroneum, ergo respectu cuiuscumque obiecti extrinseci in quolibet iudicio suo est errabilis potentia sensitiva, quod est probanda."

to Brinkley's treatment, where *a* is an object—say, Diares's son—and *b* is the color white, further supposing that the sensitive power, the medium, and *a* are arranged in the most favorable way for vision in what we would call optimal conditions today.⁷⁹ At this point, Brinkley proposes a thought experiment: if God decided to annihilate *a* (Diares's son in our example), while *b*—the white—remained the same, every medium that immediately caused judgment and assent would remain unchanged, including the visible species, which he calls the visual spirit, the light, and so on.

If God were to annihilate *a*, with no other change having been made, with *b* remaining in the form and position in which it now is, and with the vision remaining, then in whatever way a certain sensitive power judged about *a* before its annihilation, it would judge <about *a*> after its annihilation. But before the annihilation of <*a*, the sensitive power> judged *a* to be under *b*, <therefore after the annihilation it would judge *a* to be under *b*>. The consequence looks valid, the minor premise follows from the hypothesis, and the major is argued as follows: all the media that immediately cause judgment and assent behave in the same way after the annihilation of *a* as before since no change has occurred in anything other than *a*. But before the annihilation of *a*, the sensitive power judged that there was a substance through vision(?), and any sensitive power with respect to extrinsic and accidental objects would have an adequate act (of perception) if, that act remaining, all the accidental objects were annihilated, with no other change having occurred; all the interior and exterior powers would then judge the objects to be where they were before, and the objects to be such as they were before, and yet they would not be so; therefore, the power would be deceived.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 52vB): "Arguo primo quod respectu cuiuslibet obiecti per accidens stat error in potentia sensitiva. Nam signato aliquo colorato quod sit *a*, cuius totus color sit *b*, tunc sic arguitur: si potentia visiva, medium et *a* essent ad invicem proportionata gradu summo dispositionis naturalis, si visionem causatam ab illis causis sic concurrentibus sequeretur naturaliter iudicium erroneum, quamlibet aliam visionem (cod. vlosionem) naturaliter <sequi> [add. mg dx.] posset erroneum iudicium."

⁸⁰ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, ff. 52vB–53rA): "Si Deus adnihilaret *a*, nulla alia mutatione precise facta, stante *b* in forma et situ in quo nunc est, et stante visione, tunc qualitercumque potentia aliqua sensitiva iudicaret de *a* ante eius adnihilationem, iudicaret <de *a*> post eius adnihilationem. Sed ante adnihilationem <*a*, potentia sensitiva> [add. mg. dx.] iudicabit *a* esse sub *b*, <ergo post anihichilationem iudicabit *a* esse sub *b*> [add. mg. dx.]. Consequentia videtur et minor ex hypotesi et maior arguitur: omnia media que immediate causant iudicium et assensum, consimiliter

Before the annihilation of *a*, the sensitive power judged through vision that substance *a* was present and that color *b* was an accident of *a*. In terms of the example from Aristotle, before God's annihilation of Diares's son, the sensitive power judged through vision that there was a substance and that the white it saw was Diares's son; the same act of judgment will be retained even after Diares's son's destruction precisely because all the *media*, that is, the *species* that cause the judgment, remain operative in vision.

Such an act of the visual power would still be adequate and would express the visual power at its highest degree. Yet, despite being in the perfect disposition, this vision would be erroneous and misleading.⁸¹ In the context of the medieval debate, Brinkley's position marks an important departure from Aristotle. Namely, whereas for Aristotle, errors related to accidental objects lie in the identification of the object (one is not mistaken that there is white; "but if one says that this or that other thing is what is white, one is mistaken"⁸²), in Brinkley's case, the error concerns the very existence of the perceived object.

Having dealt with this example, Brinkley states that error can also arise with respect to the common sensibles. He explains that an object may be too excellent, too distant, or too close to be properly perceived. All these aspects fall under quantity, which is a common object of the sensitive power.⁸³

se habent post adnihilationem *a* sicut ante, cum in nullo nisi in *a* sit facta mutatio aliqua. Sed ante adnihilationem *a*, potentia sensitiva iudicavit esse substantiam visiva (*cod.*, corr. ex visivam), et quelibet potentia sensitiva respectu obiecti sibi extrinseci et per accidens haberet actum adequatum si, stante illo actu, omnia obiecta per accidens essent adnihilata nulla alia mutatione facta; omnes potentie interiores et exteriores [f. 53rA] ibi iudicaret esse obiecta ubi prius, et talia esse obiecta sicut prius et taliter non essent, ergo tunc potentia esset decepta."

⁸¹ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 53rA): "Ergo simul arguo: sic potentia visiva, medium et obiectum per accidens sunt ad invicem proportionata summo gradu possibili dispositionis naturalis, et tamen visio sic causata (*cod.* visionem sic causatam) sit error et iudicium erroneum (*cod.* erroneum), ergo nulla visio immediate et per se respectu obiecti per accidens aliquam sectam evidenter probabilem sufficit generare. Consequentia arguitur ex hoc quod quicquid immediate fundatur super errorem, error est."

⁸² Aristotle, *De anima*, III.3 (428 b21–23), transl. Shields, 2016, p. 58.

⁸³ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 53rA): "Secundo arguo quod respectu obiecti communis stat error, et ex hoc quod sensatio habita de obiecto communi non sufficit per se aliquam sectam infallibilem generare, nam arguitur sic: si obiectum commune fuerit nimis excellens, nimis distans aut nimis prope non percipitur res ipsa

Finally, Brinkley also addresses fallibility bound up with the proper sensibles. To be counted as a proper sensible, an object must meet two conditions: it must be knowable by a specific power, and that power must not be deceived about it in *the majority of cases*. Brinkley argues, however, that the latter condition is not in fact fulfilled as the sensitive power can be deceived in various acts of perception: it may be deceived in one out of three acts of perception, but also in all three, and therefore potentially in the majority of cases.⁸⁴ In this sense, the defining criteria of the proper objects of sensation are not appropriately met and cannot be met. Given this, the sensitive power again proves to be unreliable, and consequently assent to truth cannot be grounded either in this power or in its objects.

Brinkley offers further minor reasons why the sensitive power is fallible, but even without considering those, some important insights can already be made. When compared with the views of some of his Oxonian predecessors, Brinkley's discussion may appear radical. Whether one thinks of Wodeham, Chatton, or authors chronologically closer to Brinkley, such as Gregory of Rimini, one is struck by Brinkley's relative unconcern

prout est per potentiam sensitivam. Sed distantia, propinquitas, magnitudo et parvitas continentur sub quantitate que est obiectum commune potentie sensitive, secundo De anima textu commenti 63, ergo respectu obiecti communis stat error. Et sicut <stat error> [add. mg. sn.] respectu obiecti communis, sic respectu cuiuslibet, et sicut aliquando, sic semper; ergo nulla talis sensatio respectu obiecti communis potest per se et immediate aliquam fidem infallibilem generare."

⁸⁴ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 53rB): "Ultimo arguo quod obiectum proprium alicuius potentie sensitive non sufficit aliquam fidem infallibilem etiam de se generare. Arguo sic: cum omnibus illis ex quibus integratur proprium obiectum alicuius potentie stat error et deceptio in potentia sensitiva respectu eiusdem obiecti, ergo ex omnibus vel non immediate et per se aliqua secta infallibilis poterit generari. Consequentia videtur evidens et assumptum arguitur. Nam iste due propositiones integrant alicuius potentie obiectum proprium: prima quod idem obiectum sit precise cognoscibile ab illa potentia; et alia, quod ista potentia non errat circa illud sensibile in maiori parte, unde secundo De anima commento 62: 'sensibilia que inveniuntur alicui soli sensui qui non errat in eis in maiori parte dicuntur propria.' Ex quo evidenter sequitur antecedens probandum. Nam cum isto stat quod potentia quandoque errat contra obiectum proprium, sed hoc eque potest esse in prima sensatione sicut in secunda vel tertia, sicut in prima vel secunda, ergo cum omnibus illis que integrant obiectum proprium alicuius potentie stat error et deceptio quod est probandum." Even if Brinkley is somewhat obscure on this point, I propose interpreting "first, second, and third sensations" as referring to different acts of perception.

with securing certitude in human beings' natural knowledge of the sensible world. Indeed, Brinkley displays a far stronger mistrust of sensory cognition than his predecessors did. His position may be better understood if examined in the broader context of question 1 of his Prologue.

5. *Apparentia*, Evidence, and the Limits of Natural Reason

Having outlined Brinkley's critical framework, we can now explore the constructive dimension of his epistemology to see what kinds of knowledge are reliable, what causes reason to assent to the truths of Christian doctrine, and how, if at all, the skeptical consequences of his position are addressed.

As noted by Kaluza, after rejecting knowledge through signs and sensibles, as well as faith itself, as causes of the intellect's assent, Brinkley claims that assent to Christian truths is grounded in intellectual evidence.⁸⁵ This evidence, as Kaluza observes, takes the form of intellectual reasoning (*discursus applicatus*), that is, of a proposition.⁸⁶ According to Brinkley, such evidence ultimately derives from or simply is the very intellectual *apparentia*, which is understood as the content expressed by a proposition.⁸⁷ In reply to those

⁸⁵ Kaluza, 1989, p. 200.

⁸⁶ Kaluza based his interpretation on Gaudet's version and on indirect sources (Kaluza, 1989, p. 200, footnote 68). The following passage is quoted directly from Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 55rA): "Sexta conclusio est hec: quod fides per se et immediate assensum respectu alicuius articuli fidei non sufficit causare, pro qua arguitur primo sic: respectu nullius propositionis habet vel habere potest intellectiva assensum abstractivum que de se non est evidens sine (super, *cod.*) discursu aliquo applicato ad ipsam. <Sed> respectu nullius propositionis inclinatur fides nisi respectu propositionis de se non evidentis, ergo respectu nullius propositionis respectu cuius inclinatur fides, fides immediate causatur assensum."

⁸⁷ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 56rA): "Ad hoc ergo quod intellectiva credatur alicui (aliquam, *cod.*) propositioni requiritur previe illius propositionis aliqualis *apparentia*, que est conclusio [...] Ex istis sequitur alia, quod ad intellectualem adherentiam precedentem se habet intellectualis evidentia. Hec sequitur immediate ex priori coassumpto isto vero: quod omnem intellectualem *apparentiam* immediate tanquam propria passio sequitur intellectualis evidentia vel est ipsamet intellectualis *apparentia*." For the notion of *apparentia* in the fourteenth-century epistemological debate, see Grellard, 2005b, pp. 39–65; Salvestrini, 2022; Robert, 2023; Tachau, 1988, p. 345. Nannini is preparing work on possible connections between Brinkley and Ripa, including with respect to this concept. On Ripa, see Nannini, 2024, and the critical editions cited here.

who believe that resorting to *apparentia* cannot explain how the intellect assents to falsehood in the present life—because “the false cannot *appear* as true”⁸⁸—Brinkley crucially distinguishes two senses of *apparentia*. In one sense, it denotes manifestation (*ostendere*), pertains to simple apprehension, and is non-propositional, and in the other, it denotes judgment (*iudicare*) and is expressed propositionally. In the former sense, the thing appears immediately as it is, whereas, in the latter—in judgment—the appearance can be true or false and is therefore subject to error. Such an error can occur for a variety of reasons, such as defects of the power, of the medium, of the object, or of the application.⁸⁹

Providing a complete account of Brinkley’s *pars construens* lies beyond the scope of this article. It includes not only question 1 but also question 2, which ponders the significance of propositions and, as suggested by Kałuža,

⁸⁸ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 56rB): “Tertio sic intellectiva hic in via potest assentire falso credens ipsum esse verum. Sed falsum non potest apparere verum; ergo intellectiva potest alicui hic in via assentire sine apparentia, quod est obiectum utriusque conclusionis.”

⁸⁹ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, ff. 56vB–57rA): “Item est ibi fallacia equivocationis de isto termino apparentia: est enim equivocum ad ostendere et iudicare [...] Sciendum quod apparere uno modo convertitur cum hoc verbo ostendere et alio modo cum hoc verbo iudicare. Sicut ergo nulla res potest ostendere se aliud vel ali<qua>liter quam est, <eo quod> [add. mg. sn.] tunc naturaliter causaret signum falsum sui ipsius, quod est contra intentionem nature, sic nulla res potest <apparere> [add. mg. sn.] aliud vel ali<qua>liter quam est, cum quo bene stat quod potentia tam sensitiva quam intellectiva quandoque iudicet de re aliter quam res est ex causa multiplici: vel propter defectum potentie, medii vel obiecti, applicationis vel alicuius alterius cause accidentalis. Sumendo ergo “apparere” ad diversum modum et loquendo proprie stant ista: simul “A apparet esse intensius album quam B” et tamen “nullum A apparet intensius album quam B”; “apparet hoc esse hominem”, et tamen “nullus homo apparet hoc”; “nulla res apparet alia vel aliter quam est”, et tamen “aliqua res apparet esse aliter vel alia [57rA] quam est” et sic de multis aliis. Primum est verum posito quod A et B sint essentialiter albi et tamen quod quis, sensu errante, iudicet A esse magis album quam B et sic de aliis. Apparere primo modo est respectu incomplexi, secundo modo respectu complexi, ut patet in compositis propositionibus. Et per hoc eius diversitas faciliter poterit deprehendi quomodo iste propositiones non convertuntur “album apparet esse nigrum,” “album apparet nigrum.” Prima est vera [[est vera]] et secunda (*cod.*, secundum) impossibilis.” Nicholas of Autrecourt also employs a twofold sense of *apparentia*—as full and partial, certain and deceptive—but in a different sense, one that does not involve the complex or non-complex form of cognition: unlike Brinkley’s, Autrecourt’s is a distinction of degree rather than of form. On Autrecourt’s distinction, see Salvestrini, 2022, pp. 956–957.

may be considered a continuation of the preceding discussion.⁹⁰ Fundamentally, this inquiry unfolds in an explicitly theological context, which is Brinkley's primary concern. Yet, taken together, these folios contain the most developed extant account of Brinkley's epistemology and undoubtedly merit a comprehensive study.

One point of this account is, I believe, particularly relevant to this first look at Brinkley's epistemology. Building on Kaluza's thesis,⁹¹ let me note that toward the end of question 1, Brinkley gives his answer to it, stating that the act of assent to the truths of faith primarily depends on reason and only *per accidens* on faith. While faith is necessary for acts of assent pertaining to moral life, reason is always and in every case involved in all cognitive acts of assent to such truths.⁹²

Yet reason, Brinkley insists, also has its limits; specifically, natural reason is incapable of grasping the truths of Christian doctrine.⁹³ This makes one wonder in what sense reason can actually assent to Christian truths or, more precisely, how human reason itself should be understood. Brinkley explains that two senses of human reason must be distinguished. In one sense, reason operates according to its natural capacity and enables humans to know things within the limits of nature; in the other sense, human reason is understood insofar as it is illuminated by the supernatural divine light:

To the remaining three authorities I reply by distinguishing the notion of human reason: for sometimes it is said that this human reason is cognitively attained strictly by natural power, so that nothing is required for

⁹⁰ Kaluza, 1989, p. 200. For the folios in which *quaestio* 2 is developed, see footnote 16.

⁹¹ See Kaluza, 1989, p. 201. Kaluza insists on "the certain impotence of the intellect" in Brinkley's account and claims that natural reason makes nothing known, but only makes one believe.

⁹² Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 60vA): "Sit ergo quod intellectiva mediante fide et ratione potest hic in via percipere veritatem sue secte, sed quia ratio secundum omnem statum requiritur et coexigitur ad talem cognitionem habendam, et fides tantum secundum statum istum, ut patet ex prius dictis, ideo fides solum per accidens requiritur, et ratio per se. Ex quo sequitur quod secta Christi principaliter dependet a ratione quam a fide. Nam omnis effectus principaliter dependet a causa a qua dependet essentialiter et per se quam ab aliqua causa a qua dependet solum accidentaliter."

⁹³ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 58vA): "Ad propositum ergo redeundo qualiter ratio dirigit intellectivam in secta aliquam pono aliquas propositiones: prima sit hec: precise ratione percepta lumine naturali nulla secta rationabiliter creditur esse vera. Nam deduco omnem habitum infusum et arguo sic [...]."

an appearance to be known as an appearance except what lies within the limits of nature. In another sense, human reason is said to be that which can be cognitively attained by human power when it is illuminated by supernatural light.

In the former sense, by means of human reason, the liberal arts are acquired here in this life; in the latter sense, by means of human reason, habits and the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ are acquired in this life, and the first truth and the other truths are known contemplatively in eternal life. The authorities proceed in the former sense, not in the latter; and in the latter sense, reason is only properly said to be reason if it infers theological conclusions.⁹⁴

In this way, Brinkley elucidates that human reason in the proper sense—that is, the reason that assents to the doctrine of Christ—is an illuminated and divinely assisted reason. By contrast, purely natural reason is confined to a knowledge of things (*apparentia*, that which appears to the intellect and the senses and is expressed propositionally) that only encompasses the sphere of nature and offers no absolute certainty against error.

6. Conclusion

By necessity, any conclusion on Brinkley's epistemology in this article can be partial at best. To grasp the complexity of his model and its embeddedness in the broader framework of fourteenth-century epistemological thought would take a more sustained and comprehensive study of Brinkley's text, ideally accompanied by a critical edition.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Richard Brinkley, *Lectura super Sententias*, q. 1 (F, f. 60vB): “Ad tres auctoritates residuas respondeo distinguendo de ratione humana: quandoque enim dicitur <quod> ista ratio humana cognitive precise virtute naturali attingitur ita quod nihil ad talem apparentiam requiratur ut sit cognita esse apparentia nisi solum que infra limites nature continentur. Alio modo dicitur ratio humana ad quam virtute humana lumine supernaturali illustrata potest cognitive attingi. Primo modo ratione humana artes liberales adquiruntur hic in via; secundo modo ratione humana adquiruntur habitus et notitia secte Christi hic in via, et contemplabiliter veritas prima et alie veritates in patria. Primo modo procedunt auctoritates, non secundo modo; et secundo modo solum ratio inferens conclusionem theologicam percipitur esse ratio [...]”

⁹⁵ I am preparing a critical edition of Brinkley's *Lectura*.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I believe that these further passages and texts work toward corroborating Kałuża's thesis: Brinkley is not uninterested in securing any certainty, but recognizes the limits of human powers and human knowledge. The errors of the senses, inherent in the fallibility of the sensitive power and of human cognitive faculties in general, can render the *apparentia*—expressed propositionally in a judgment—partially or wholly false. For this reason, human knowledge can be subject to error and cannot grasp the truths of faith. This notwithstanding, Brinkley's claim that human reason requires illumination in order to assent to the doctrine of Christ may suggest not so much that he embraces a skeptical position as that his skeptical arguments are a methodological tool. Further research is needed to confirm or disprove this hypothesis.

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Citation

Appolloni, C. (2026). Richard Brinkley on the limits of the sensitive power: A first look at his epistemology. *Analiza i Egzystencja* 75 (3), 137–168. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-07.

ARTICLES

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Radulphus Brito on the Knowledge of Substances Through Their Accidents

Keywords: Accident; Distinctive Property; Internal Senses; Radulphus Brito; Substance
Słowa kluczowe: Przypadłość, Własność Swoista, Zmysły Wewnętrzne, Radulphus Brito, Substancja

Abstract

In this article, I explore two questions by Radulphus Brito—one from his commentary on Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and the other from his questions on Aristotle’s *De anima*—to present Brito’s stance on the possibility of knowing the substance (or essence) through its accidents. In my argument, I focus on the role that Brito ascribes to the internal senses in his explanation of this knowledge. My second aim is to show the links between this discussion and the questions on the accident and the distinctive property (*accidens et proprium*) as predicables in Brito’s commentary on Porphyry. In conclusion, I offer insights into the semiotic relevance of the discussion.

1. From the *Questions on Porphyry* to the *Questions on De anima I*

Radulphus Brito (d. 1320/1321) investigates the possibility of knowing substances (or substantial essences: *quod quid est*) from their accidents in two works. Specifically, he deals with this issue in one question in version B

of his *Questions on Porphyry* (before 1296),¹ and he also tackles it in a question on Book I of Aristotle's *De anima* (I.8) (ca. 1295).² In this paper, I do not provide a detailed account of the links between Brito's discussions and the preceding authors' ideas, though I reference the earlier *De anima* commentaries whenever relevant.

Brito's commentary on the *De anima*, as well as some of his other writings,³ exists in different versions. On comparing the lists of questions in the two manuscripts that Sander W. de Boer used for his working edition with at least three other manuscripts preserving Brito's work,⁴ one can easily see that the number of questions on Books I and II differs in them. Namely, while *F* and *V₁* contain 10 questions on Book I and 46 questions on Book II,⁵ *P₁*, *P₂* and *V₃* each have 14 questions on Book I and 47 questions on Book II, with one question added between 44 and 45. The question is devoted to the number of the internal senses, and I will rely on it in discussing the role that the internal senses play in the knowledge of substances (Section 3). Chronologically, there is no doubt that the question on Porphyry (version B) predates the one on *De anima* I. Importantly, the latter refers to the former as offering a solution that Brito once held but has

¹ Contrary to what Heinrich Roos and Jan Pinborg proposed many years ago, version B precedes version A; for more details, see the extensive discussion in Marmo, 2025. The question under discussion here is preserved in only one ms. (*N* = Nürnberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cent. V.21, ff. 73va–b) and was edited as q. 44 of version B in Roos, 1978, pp. 61–64.

² Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, pp. 299–306). De Boer edited all the questions on Book I and selected questions on Book II, using only two witnesses (*F* = Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr., E.I.252, and *V₁* = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Pal. lat. 1059), sometimes consulting a third one (*P₁* = Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 14705), thereby realizing that there are probably different redactions of this commentary (de Boer, 2012, p. 266).

³ There are also different versions of Brito's questions on the so-called *Ars Vetus*, the *Liber sex principiorum*, Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, *Physics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Boethius's *De divisione*. On the different redactions of Brito's questions on the *De anima* III, see Fauser, 1974.

⁴ They are *P₁*, *P₂* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 12971) and *V₃* (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3061), which also contain other works by Brito.

⁵ See de Boer, 2012, p. 12.

apparently abandoned.⁶ Brito's change of position on this matter probably explains the omission of the question from the subsequent version (i.e., version A) of his *Questions on Porphyry*.⁷

2. The Two Questions Compared

When comparing these two questions by Brito, one notes, firstly, that the issue is worded differently. In the commentary on Porphyry (version B), the title of the question reads “whether from one apparent feature in reality the intellect can rise to the essential understanding of a genus,”⁸ while question 8 on Book I of the *De anima* is titled “whether accidents lead us to the knowledge of the substance.”⁹ Noticeably, the focus of the discussion shifts from the genus and its understanding, a regular preoccupation in commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, to the substance (or its essence) and its knowledge through accidents, a usual thematic concern in commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*.¹⁰

At the beginning, the question on Porphyry lists four counterarguments, only two of which are taken up in the question on Book I of the *De anima*, both of them being fairly traditional arguments also to be found, for instance, in the commentaries of Simon of Faversham (d. 1304) and Magister Simon

⁶ On this reference, see Marmo, 2018, pp. 200–201.

⁷ As suggested in Marmo, 2025, p. 39.

⁸ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 61): *utrum ex uno apparenti in re intellectus possit consurgere in intellectum essentialem generis*.

⁹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 299): *utrum accidentia ducant in cognitionem substantie*.

¹⁰ The question was inspired by the following passage in *De anima* (I.1): “Set e converso accidentia conferunt magnam partem ad cognoscendum quod quid est” (402b21–22; quoted from the edition in Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*, ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 3b). The same question was discussed in at least two previous Parisian commentaries: *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I, q. 13, by Simon of Faversham and *Dicta super librum De anima* by Magister Simon. The latter is a literal exposition with questions and *dubitationes*. The two authors were probably not the same person (see Christensen, 2018; Bernardini, 2023). Interestingly, neither Albert the Great (ca. 1260) nor Aquinas (1267–1268) proposed any question or *dubitatio* on this issue in their commentaries; see Albert the Great, *De anima*, I.1.5 (ed. Stroick, 1968, p. 10b; Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*, cap. I (ed. Gauthier, 1984, p. 7b).

(end of 13th century–beginning of 14th century). The first argument says that the substance cannot be possibly known from its accidents because nothing acts outside its own species (*nichil agit ultra suam speciem*). Since accidents and substances in fact belong to different genera, accidents cannot make any substance known. Furthermore, the argument in the commentary on Porphyry traces the major premise back to Averroes¹¹ and the minor back to Plato, as well as to Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* (I.7 324a1–14, 323b31–33) and Book II of *De anima* (5 418a4–6).¹² The second argument relies on the correspondence between cognitive and ontological principles (*eadem sunt principia cognoscendi et essendi*) to state that accidents are not ontological principles of substances (i.e., they are not their causes), so they are not principles of their knowledge either.¹³ The difference between the two replies to the latter argument in the two commentaries is quite interesting. In the question on Porphyry, the response emphasizes that the minor premise (accidents are not the causes of a substance) only holds *a priori* (because a substance is the cause of accidents), but not *a posteriori*, that is, in the cognitive

¹¹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 62; this is the first argument *contra*). See Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.13 (*V*₂ = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2170, f. 70rb): “Nichil agit ultra suam speciem etc.; maior scribitur in libro *De generatione*; minor patet, quia (quod V) accidentia sunt alterius predica<men>ti quam substantia.” Magister Simon, *Dicta super librum De anima* (L = Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 1359, f. 46rb): “Quia nichil agit ultra speciem, secundum Philosophum et Platonem, septimo *Metaphysice*; sed <si> hoc contingeret quod ex accidentium cognitione possimus cognoscere substantias essentialiter, sequeretur accidens aliquid agere extra suam speciem; quare etc. Accidens enim et substantia non solum specie differunt, <sed> numero <et> etiam genere.”

¹² Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, pp. 299–300; this is the first argument *contra*). Brito combines here the references to Plato and to Aristotle's *De generatione*, which were used, respectively, by Magister Simon and Simon of Faversham.

¹³ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 62; this is the fourth argument *contra*). Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 300; this is the third argument *contra*). See Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.13 (*V*₂, f. 70rb); *add. in mg.*: “Item, illud quod non est causa essendi alicui<us> non est causa cognoscendi illud, quia eadem sunt principia essendi et cognoscendi, ut scribitur secundo *Metaphysice*; sed accidentia non sunt causa essendi <substantie> etc.” Magister Simon, *Dicta super librum De anima* (L, f. 46vb), quotes the same principle in a *dubitatio* (about the kind of cognition of the accidents that is required to obtain the knowledge of the substance) which follows the question in the same *lectio*.

process of searching for the cause (*inventio*).¹⁴ In the question on Book I of *De anima*, the reply points out that the major premise (*eadem sunt principia ecc.*) is true (if something is the ontological principle of something else, then it is also its cognitive principle), but its converse does not hold (*if something is the cognitive principle of something else, then it is its ontological principle), so by saying that accidents do not lead to the knowledge of the substance, one commits a fallacy of the consequent (by denying the antecedent).¹⁵

Another fairly common counterargument, which is only present in Brito's questions on *De anima* I, relies on the circularity between knowing accidents from the substance (a commonly accepted notion) and knowing the substance from accidents; this circularity is regarded as problematic because it results in a *petitio principii*.¹⁶ Brito's response is not particularly original, in fact rehearsing the reply that Simon of Faversham and Magister Simon gave to the same argument.¹⁷ Namely knowing accidents from the substance differs from knowing the substance from accidents, with the former knowledge being complete and perfect, whereas the latter is defective.¹⁸

¹⁴ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 64).

¹⁵ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 305). On *fallacia consequentis*, see Marmo, 2023.

¹⁶ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 300). See Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.13 (V, f. 70rb): "Item, non est dubium quin ex cognitione \substantie/ deveniamus in cognitionem accidentium; si ex cognitione accidentium econverso deveniremus in cognitionem substantie, circulus esset in cognitionibus, quod reprobatur primo *Posteriorum*." Magister Simon, *Dicta super librum De anima* (L, f. 46rb): "Preterea, planum est quod substantie cognitio ducit in cognitionem accidentis, quia secundum Philosophum, septimo *Metaphysice*, substantia est prius omni accidente secundum esse <et> cognitionem; si igitur accedens econverso duceret in cognitionem substantie, iam fieret circularis <demonstratio> que reprobata est primo *Posteriorum*."

¹⁷ Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.13 (V₂, f. 70va): "Et per hoc patet solutio tertie rationis, quia hoc non est circulus eo quod cum alius modus cognoscendi per quem devenitur ab accidentibus in cognitionem quod quid est, et econverso; sic ergo apparet conclusio." Magister Simon, *Dicta super librum De anima* (L, f. 46va): "Ad aliud dicendum quod differenter cognoscitur accedens ex substantia, quia intellectu completo et cognitione a priori; <sed> cognitione quasi posteriori et incompleta et ab effectu cognitio substantie communibus(?) ex accidentibus; modo si idem esset modus cognoscendi hic et ibi, tunc bene esset circulus, quare [quia L] <e>tc.; et ex isto patet sententia."

¹⁸ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 305).

Just like the previous commentators, albeit less explicitly, Brito suggests that accepting the main thesis—that the substance can be known from its accidents—is actually not a problem as such; the real difficulty lies in *how* such knowledge might be derived from the accidents.¹⁹ In his commentary on Book I of *De anima*, Brito examines six possible solutions, while in the previous question on Porphyry, he briefly mentions just one opinion (introduced by the vague “some say”: *dicunt quidam*) and immediately rejects it because it contradicts the principle that the substance is the primary object of the intellect’s knowledge.²⁰ In his *De anima* commentary, Brito uses the same argument to counter the second, third, and sixth positions. As the first and fourth positions are most relevant to this paper, I will examine them in detail.

The first approach (or explanation) is Brito’s favorite. His general premise in all the explanations is that there is a distinction, first, between common accidents and proper accidents and, second, between substances possessing sensible qualities and those disjoined from them. Brito then argues that what acts on the imagination (through the senses) in the case of sensible substances is the compound and not either the form or the matter alone. This compound (which exists *sub esse materiali*), combined with the illumination by the agent intellect, modifies the possible intellect’s knowledge of the substance. This does not imply that accidents are first known by the possible intellect since the intellect depends on what is perceived by the senses and then reworked by the imagination. For their part, substances separated from sensible qualities are only known through their effects, which are common or proper accidents. I will discuss the distinction between common and proper accidents below (Section 4), when dealing with Brito’s *Questions on Porphyry*.²¹

¹⁹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 301). See Simon of Faversham, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.13 (*V*, f. 70rb): “Intelligendum quod de conclusione questionis non est difficultas, sed de modo, scilicet quis sit modus deveniendi a cognitione accidentium ad cognitionem substantie difficultas est.” Magister Simon, *Dicta super librum De anima* (*L*, f. 46rb): “Tertio breviter notandum est secundum quem modum ex cognitione accidentium devenimus in cognitionem quiditativam rerum, que [qua *L*] quidam dicunt hoc modo fieri [...]”

²⁰ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 63).

²¹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, pp. 301–302).

The fourth position corresponds to the stance Brito himself adopts in the *Questions on Porphyry* (version B), and, indeed, he admits to having held this view elsewhere (*istam viam alias tenui*).²² It assumes that when faculties (or cognitive capacities) are hierarchically connected, such as touch relative to sight or sight relative to the estimative power, whenever the lower faculty operates, the higher faculty can know not only what the lower faculty knows, but also what the lower faculty does not know. This notion is conveyed in Avicenna's famous example of a lamb, which, on seeing a wolf for the first time ever, immediately knows through its estimative power the creature's hostility (which is a *species insensata*, that is, imperceptible to the senses). The same relationship obtains between the intellect and the imagination, which means that when the imagination knows a sensible object (from its accidents), the intellect immediately knows not only these accidents (abstractly), but also the substance in which they inhere. The same example was also cited in the *Questions on Porphyry*,²³ further evincing the effectiveness of the estimative faculty proposed by Avicenna in the *Liber Sextus de Naturalibus* and consequently recognizing a form of "animal intelligence"²⁴ (to which Brito does not attribute any inferential ability).

Bruto refutes the fourth solution by raising a doubt. Specifically, he observes that if this were the case, the substance would not be understood through its own species (*species*), but rather through that of the accidents. The point is that, according to this position, the imagined species would only refer to the accidents, but not to the substance or essence, whereas Aristotle insists that the passage through the imagination is necessary for human knowledge.²⁵

²² Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, p. 303). See Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 63).

²³ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 44 (ed. Roos, 1978, p. 63).

²⁴ Avicenna, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus*, IV.1 (ed. van Riet, vol. 2, 1–11). See Black, 1993; 2000; Oelze, 2019; Marmo, 2020.

²⁵ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, I.8 (ed. de Boer, 2012, pp. 305–306).

3. The Role of the *Aestimativa/Cogitativa*

Brito's position changes between his commentary on Porphyry and his questions on *De anima*.²⁶ He seems to eschew the model of the internal senses including the estimative faculty, which extracts the *species insensatae* from the sensible species that are perceived and stored by the imaginative faculty, and then composed by the fantasy. Instead, he apparently espouses the idea of combined causality, in which the imagined accidents and the active intellect contribute to producing the knowledge of the substance.²⁷ However, Brito does not really abandon the former model and in fact lists the estimative faculty among the internal senses. He recognizes five internal senses: the common sense, the imaginative faculty, the fantasy, the estimative faculty (in brute animals and, following Averroes, the *cogitativa* in humans), and the memory. In the question on the internal senses added in *P*₁, *P*₂ (in an incomplete form), and *V*₃, Brito explains the (functional) relationships of succession between these senses in terms borrowed from Avicenna and al-Ghazālī. Accordingly, the common sense knows the differences between the various sensible objects of the different senses. Then, the imaginative faculty takes its turn and preserves the species (or images) received by the common sense. Afterwards, the fantasy pieces together various imagined objects, composing new ones, for example combining an imagined mountain and imagined gold into the image (*phantasma*) of a golden mountain. Subsequently, the estimative faculty extracts the (unperceived) species of utility or harm from the perceived ones, so as to know something in terms of friendship or hostility, like a sheep that *judges* a wolf it sees to be an enemy by its color and *judges* a lamb it hears to be a friend by its voice. Finally, the memory preserves the species known by the estimative and the other faculties.²⁸

²⁶ A similar change concerns a range of other issues, including the meaning of general terms such as “animal,” the unicity/unity of substantial forms, and the meaning of concrete accidental terms, to name a few notable cases. See Marmo, 2025, pp. 28–31, 36–37, 38.

²⁷ This corresponds to the theory of abstraction also expounded in Brito's *Questions on Porphyry*, version A, qq. 5–8 (ed. Pinborg, 1980).

²⁸ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, II.44bis (*P*₁, f. 113ra; *P*₂, f. 23ra–b; *V*₃, f. 21vb): “Avicenna et Algazel [...] primo ponunt sensum communem cuius actus est cognoscere differentiam diversorum sensibilibus diversorum sensuum [...] Postea est virtus ymaginativa que conservat species receptas in sensu communi [...]”.

The verb “judge” (*iudicare*) that Brito uses for animals in conjunction with the function of the estimative/cogitative faculty is an interesting detail. While Brito seems to attribute a compositional ability to animals (if not an inferential one, which Roger Bacon (1214/20–1292) explicitly did), one should interpret the value of this verb with caution. First, in discussing the fantasy and its act of composing images of sensible objects, Brito states that what the fantasy produces when it puts together the imagined objects are not propositions, but rather complex images,²⁹ which are made up of different and possibly incompatible features (such as the *fantasma montis aurei* above). Furthermore, he says that, in extracting unperceived species from the perceived ones, the estimative faculty is passive rather than active. He then restates the notions linked to his previous position on knowing the substance from its accidents: among ordered faculties, when the lower one operates, the higher one is modified by the same object as well. Since the unperceived species is contained in the perceived one, the change in the estimative faculty, Brito posits, is immediate and does not imply any activity on the part of the faculty itself. The sheep’s “judging” the wolf to be an enemy or the lamb to be a friend has thus nothing of the capacity to connect or infer (*virtus collativa*) that characterizes the cogitative faculty in humans, which Brito also calls “the syllogistic handling of particular (propositions or terms)” or “the ability to (inferentially) connect particular intentions,”³⁰

Postea est fantasia cuius actus est componere diversa fantasiata ad invicem, sicut montis et auri fantasiati, e sic de aliis, et apprehendere et conservare unum aggregatum fantasma montis aurei; [...] Postea est virtus estimativa que cognoscit species non sensatas ex sensatis, sive elicit species convenientis et disconvenientis, et cognoscit aliquid sub ratione amici et inimici, que non sunt sensata, sed eliciuntur a sensatis, sicut <ovis> ex colore lupi apprehenso iudicat eum inimicum, et ex voce agni iudicat eum amicum; [...] Postea est virtus memorativa que habet conservare species apprehensas ab estimativa et etiam ab aliis.” Also in his *Quaestiones super librum De memoria et reminiscencia*, q. 5, §3.1.3 (ed. Ebbesen, 2016, p. 36), Brito adopts Avicenna’s system of five internal senses.

²⁹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, II.44bis (*P*₁, f. 113rb; *V*₃, f. 22ra; *P*₂ omits the final part of the question): “diverse sunt virtutes iste sensitive, quarum una apprehendit fantasiata secundum se et alia componit diversa fantasiata sine compositione affirmationis et negationis, sed sicut est compositio totius ex partibus.”

³⁰ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, II.44bis (*P*₁, f. 113ra; *V*₃, f. 21vb): “Item, notandum est quod estimativa in brutis in hominibus dicitur ‘cogitativa’ que etiam dicitur ‘syllogistica part<icular>ium’ vel ‘virtus collativa plurium part<icular>ium intentionum’, quia ista estimativa in homine est perfectior quam sit estimativa in brutis propter connexionem eius et communicationem cum intellectu.”

and which enables us to draw conclusions about particular objects.³¹ Certainly, Brito considers sensible knowledge in brute animals to be of simple nature, that is, to be associated with or only serving simple knowledge (*apprehensio simplex*).

4. Common and Proper Accidents

4.1. The Various Types of Accidents and Their Common Essential Feature

Brito devotes the final three questions of his commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* to the accident.³² The last of them offers a philosophical discussion of the essential feature of accidents, dismissing theologians' opinions which involve the miracle of transubstantiation.³³ Philosophically speaking, what is essential to accidents is that they inhere in a subject, which means that they cannot actually exist without a subject, at least not in the natural course of things.³⁴ Furthermore, in questions 28B and A, which examine the distinction between accidents and distinctive properties as predicables, Brito proposes the same distinction between *accidentia communia* and

³¹ On the ability of the *cogitativa* to infer the unknown from the known, see Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super librum De memoria et reminiscencia*, q. 5, §3.3 (ed. Ebbesen, 2016, p. 37).

³² Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, qq. 31–33, in both A and B versions. I will quote, for version B, from the mss. *N* (ff. 76va–77rb) and *Le* (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 1427, f. 16ra–b; on its recent discovery, Ebbesen, Marmo, 2024, pp. 45–46); for version A, I will quote from a collation of three mss. (*M* = Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C.161.Inf., ff. 146rb–va; *O* = Osimo, Biblioteca dell'Istituto Campana, 18.L.38 (39), f. 10va–b; *V*₄ = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3044, ff. 39v–41v).

³³ On the discussions among theologians on the possibility of knowing substance through its accidents, see Robert, 2006.

³⁴ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 33A (*M*, f. 146rb; *O*, f. 11va; *V*₄, f. 41r): “secundum Philosophum, ista (scil. que dicta sunt: i.e., the opinion of the theologians) non sunt vera: bene verum est quod secundum fidem nostram accidens potest esse sine subiecto, sicut in corpore Christi; sed hoc non est per naturam, immo hoc est miraculose et supra naturam.” See also ed. Ebbesen, 1986, p. 85. See Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 33B (*Le*, f. 16ra; *N*, f. 77ra): “Obmissis omnibus opinionibus, et theologorum et aliorum, dico quod inherere est de essentia accidentis non solum aptitudinaliter, sed etiam actualiter.”

propria that he uses in his question 8 on Book I of *De anima*, adding some interesting examples. The term “accident,” he says, can be understood in two ways. Either it is regarded as being opposed to the substance, and then it includes the distinctive property (*proprium*); or it is considered to be a feature that does not determine its subject or its cause in the subject, and thus it only includes the *accidentia communia* as defined by Porphyry. Only in the latter sense is an *accidens* a predicable opposed to the *proprium*.³⁵ In his question 28B, Brito goes on to explain in what sense an accident does not determine its own subject or its cause in the subject; namely, a common accident might be caused either by something external to its subject (such as the dark color of the human skin caused by the sun), or by something internal but anyway accidental to its subject (for instance, an apple tasting bitter because of indigestion), or by the nature of the subject’s complexion (such as the blackness of a crow).³⁶ In his question 28A, Brito suggests an easier way to distinguish between common accidents and distinctive properties (*accidentia propria*). As he explains, a common accident, even if inseparable (like the blackness of a crow), cannot pick out one type of subject because it can exist in several different ones, whereas a distinctive property picks out precisely the individuals of the species of which it is distinctive.

³⁵ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 28A (*M*, f. 145vb; *O*, f. 10ra; *V*, f. 37r): “notandum quod ‘accidens’ potest dupliciter sumi: uno modo potest sumi ‘accidens’ pro omni eo quod est distinctum contra substantiam, et sic non est unum de quinque predicabilibus et isto modo proprium continetur sub accidente, quia isto modo est inferius ad ipsum accidens; alio modo potest sumi pro omni eo quod sibi tale subiectum non determinat, et sic accidens est accidens commune quod distinguitur contra proprium.” See Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 28B (*N*, f. 75va): “accidens dupliciter potest considerari: vel ut distinguitur contra substantiam, ita quod accipitur pro omni eo quod non est substantia, et sic non est predicabile, et ut sic proprium et accidens non distinguuntur; vel pro eo quod non determinat sibi subiectum, nec causam in subiecto, cuiusmodi sunt accidentia communia, et sic accidens est predicabile distinctum a proprio et e converso.”

³⁶ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 28B (*N*, f. 75va): “Accidens autem commune vel causatur ab aliquo extrinseco, ut nigredo in homine causatur a sole; vel aliquando aliquod accidens causatur ab aliquo intrinseco accidentali, ut dulcedo in pomo ab aliqua digestionem et amaritudo ab aliqua indigestione; vel aliquando accidens causatur ex natura complexionis, ut nigredo in corvo causatur ex natura complexionis corvi.” The last case is the classic example of an inseparable accident, one that can be separated from its subject only by our thought; see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, ed. Busse, 1887, pp. 12: 26–13: 3.

The crow's blackness is an interesting case because it might seem to resemble the distinctive property as the color of the crow's plumage depends on its complexion, which is an intrinsic cause and, as such, it overlaps with the *proprium*. Yet Brito suggests that the complexion of an animal is a mixture of primary qualities that is an accident of its matter, and not of its form. By contrast, distinctive properties derive from the essence of the subject itself, that is, from its substantial form.³⁷ As a consequence, the distinctive property is predicable only of one species and is convertible with it, while a common accident can be predicated of more than one species and therefore is not convertible with them. I will revisit this point in the conclusion.

4.2. The Various Types of Proprium

As Brito makes clear in questions 30B and A,³⁸ the distinctive property of a thing is a feature (*passio*) caused by the essential principles of that thing, and as such it differs both from common accidents that depend on an internal cause and from properties in a broader sense, which depend on external causes. As explained above, the crow's blackness and the swan's whiteness derive from the principles of their subjects (their complexions), but since these colors can exist in other subject, they are just common accidents.³⁹ At the same time, the eclipse of the moon is a property (*proprium*) of the moon, but it is just an accidental feature to which the moon is predisposed by its circular motion around the earth. It cannot exist without the interposition of the earth between the moon and the sun.

³⁷ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 28A (M, f. 145vb; O, f. 10ra–b; V₄, f. 37v): “proprium causatur ex principiis essentialibus subiecti [propriis principiis speciei, O], quia proprie passionem consequuntur formas substantiales subiectorum, sed accidens commune non causatur ex principiis pertinentibus ad formam, sicut nigredo in corvo non causatur ex aliquo pertinente ad formam corvi, ymmo causatur ex aliquo quod consequitur corvum ratione materie, quia in corvo est talis commixtio qualitatum primarum ad quam consequitur color; modo complexio est accidens materie et non forme.”

³⁸ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30B (N, f. 76ra): *Utrum proprium causetur ex propriis principiis speciei cuius est proprium*; q. 30A (M, f. 145vb; O, f. 10rb; V₄, f. 38v): *Utrum proprium causetur ex principiis propriis subiecti*.

³⁹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30A (M, f. 145vb; O, f. 10va; V₄, f. 38v): “accidentia communia causantur ex principiis subiecti, sicut albedo in cigno causatur ex principiis cigni, quia ex complexione sua; eodem modo nigredo in corvo.”

Since the interposition is an extrinsic cause, the eclipse is a property in the broad sense, but not, strictly speaking, a distinctive property of the moon.⁴⁰ Distinctive properties of the human species, in the narrow sense, include understanding (*intelligere*) and being able to learn (*esse perceptibile disciplinae*) since these are operations directly stemming from the human essence. The ability to laugh (*esse risibile*), a classical example of human *proprium*, is instead a characteristic that follows from human beings' typical operations (such as understanding and being able to learn), but it relies on external factors for being actualized and perfected, since one laughs at something delightful that is understood and moves the appetitive part of the human soul. Laughter may be typically human, but the ability to understand and to learn are its essential prerequisites.⁴¹

The examples of distinctive properties provided by Brito partially correspond to those he usually mentions to illustrate the notion of *apparens*: the ability to reason (*intelligere* or *ratiocinari*), perceive (*sentire*), and move autonomously (*moveri*). These operations correspond to the distinctive properties of each species, intermediate species and genus of the category

⁴⁰ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30A (*M*, f. 146ra; *O*, f. 10va; *V*, f. 38v): “secundum declaratur, scilicet quod in passionibus propriis que sunt ab extrinseco subiectum non sit causa efficiens istarum, sed ad istas tamen cooperatur, quia eclipsari est propria passio lune; modo eclipsari non causatur effective et sufficienter ab ipsa luna, ymmo causatur ex interpositione terre inter solem et lunam: quando enim terra est interposita inter solem et lunam, ita quod sol sit in capite vel cauda draconis et luna est ex opposita parte, tunc causatur eclipsis lune. Et sic apparet quod ista passio que est ipsius lune non causatur ex propriis principiis ipsius lune, ymmo ab extrinseco, quia ab interpositione terre inter solem et lunam; tamen cooperatur ad hoc subiectum, quia ad eclipsim lune cooperatur motus lune, quia si luna semper quiesceret extra caput vel caudam draconis, tunc non esset eclipsis lune.” See Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30B (*N*, f. 76ra); and q. 28B (*N*, f. 75va).

⁴¹ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30B (*N*, f. 76rb): “notandum est quod species quandoque producit suum proprium in esse completo, sicut ignis complete ducit in esse suam propriam passionem que est caliditas nullo alio extrinseco adveniente; aliquando species est causa secundum habilitatem solum, ita quod suum proprium ex aliquo extrinseco perficitur et completur, sicut aer et aqua et alia diaphana sunt cause diaphanitatis secundum habilitatem; sed diaphanitas perficitur et completur ab aliquo extrinseco ut a corpore luminoso, puta a sole. Et eodem modo homo est causa risibilitatis secundum habilitatem et aptitudinem, ita quod talis passio reducitur ad actum et completur <per> aliquod extrinsecum, sicut per aliquod delectabile excitans et movens appetitum, quia homo non ridet nisi secundum appetitum ipsum moventem ad ridendum.”

of substance and enable us to understand general names such as *animal* or *homo*.⁴² Using a terminology reminiscent of the Neoplatonist lexicon, Brito says that these properties derive from the essence of each category “through simple emanation” (*per simplicem emanationem*), rather than by physical causation, which occurs through movement and alteration.⁴³

5. Conclusion

Radulphus Brito changed his views, from the *Questions on Porphyry* to the *Questions on the De anima*, on whether substances (or essences) can be known through their accidents, ascribing anyhow a central role to the internal senses and to proper accidents as opposed to common ones. This distinction helps to highlight the epistemological and semiotic implications of this discussion. The examples (in particular, the lunar eclipse) combined with the term *passio* and the reference to the cause-effect relationship between the mutually convertible essence of a thing and its distinctive properties bring to mind discussions on the different types of demonstration (*propter quid* and *quia*) in commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics*. As shown in a recent study,⁴⁴ the *demonstratio quia* is connected in Neoplatonic commentaries with the inference that uses signs as premises, while this connection is often obscured or removed in Latin commentators. Rather than talking of “signs,” the latter prefer talking of “effects” from which one can demonstratively (albeit in a weaker sense) infer the corresponding causes (but they certainly know that an effect can be regarded as a sign of its cause).

This is precisely the case with the lunar eclipse, which, as noted in Section 4.2, is a property derived not only from the moon’s motion around the earth (which is essential to it in a Ptolemaic cosmos), but also from extrinsic causes (such as the interposition). It is no coincidence that

⁴² It was a commonplace among Parisian masters of arts at the end of the 13th century to hold that general names (even the names of categories) derived from proper modes of being, also called *apparentia*. On the *apparens*, see Roos, 1974; Donati, 2013.

⁴³ Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 30A (*M*, f. 146ra; *O*, f. 10va; *V*, f. 39r); q. 30B (*N*, f. 76rb).

⁴⁴ See Marmo & Bellucci, 2023.

the Pseudo-Kilwardby takes the lunar eclipse as an example of a natural sign convertible with its own meaning, the foundation of a syllogism based on the sign.⁴⁵

If this holds for the lunar eclipse, it is all the more applicable to the *proprium* in its broad sense (for one infers *homo* from *risibile*), to the modes of being typical of a subordinate genus (one infers *animal* from *sentire et moveri*) or of a species (one infers *homo* again from *rationari*), to the *proprium* in the strict sense (one again infers *homo* from *esse perceptibile disciplinae*), and finally to the *accidentia propria* that make it possible to know the essence or the substance.

Although Brito does not link our capacity to know the substance through accidents to the *demonstratio quia* in any way, all the premises are already in place: one need only admit that even brute animals make inferences from sensible species, and that the knowledge of the substance through accidents is discursive, that is, associated with the second and third operations of the soul, rather than with *simplex apprehensio*.

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⁴⁵ Marmo & Bellucci, 2023, pp. 361–363. The Pseudo-Kilwardby is a grammarian who wrote an extensive commentary on the first 16 books of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* (the so-called *Priscianus maior*), probably during the 1250s.

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Citation

Marmo, C. (2026). Radulphus Brito on the knowledge of substances through their accidents. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 75 (3), 169–186. DOI: 10.18276/aie2026.75-08.

