

William of Ockham and Adam of Wodeham on the Role of the Will in Attention, Visual Effort and the Intensification of a Vision

Guillermo de Ockham y Adán de Wodeham sobre el papel de la voluntad en la atención, el esfuerzo visual y la intensificación de una visión

LYDIA DENI GAMBOA *

Sumario:

1. Introduction
2. The role of the will in cognition
3. Can the will want what the intellect ignores?
4. Conclusion

Abstract: William of Ockham and Adam of Wodeham hold different theories to explain how perceptual contents change and adapt

* *Profesora-investigadora en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la B. Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (México). I am very grateful for the reading, comments, and suggestions that José Filipe Silva made to a first version of this article. I also thank to the Société internationale pour l'étude de la philosophie médiéval (SIEPM) for partially supporting this research through the One-To-One stipend grant.*

lydia.gamboa@correo.buap.mx.

Recibido: 6 de abril del 2021.

Aceptado: 1 de junio del 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.48162/rev.35.025>

to changes of the perceived object. Content changes occur in cases where there is (i) attention, (ii) visual effort or (iii) the intensification of a vision. Ockham's theory of this subject involves the idea that the intellect is passive, but can perform with the help of the will. Ockham's account leads to what I call *the loop problem*, since for him the will can only want what the intellect is aware of. Wodeham seems to notice this problem and, for this reason, departs from Ockham's theory of perceptual content change. Wodeham's account does not involve the will. For Wodeham perceptual content change depends only on the variability of the perceptual field.

Key words: William of Ockham, Adam of Wodeham, representational contents, passivity of the intellect, will.

Resumen: William of Ockham y Adam of Wodeham sostuvieron diferentes teorías para explicar cómo los contenidos perceptuales cambian y se adaptan a los cambios sufridos por los objetos percibidos. Los cambios de estos contenidos ocurren cuando hay (1) atención, (2) un esfuerzo visual o (3) la intensificación de una visión. La teoría de Ockham sobre este tema involucra la idea según la cual el intelecto es pasivo, pero puede actuar con la ayuda de la voluntad. La teoría de Ockham conduce a un problema, al cual llamo *el problema del bucle*, pues según él la voluntad solo puede querer aquello que el intelecto ya conoce. Wodeham parece que detecta este problema y, por tal razón, se separa de la teoría de Ockham sobre el cambio de los contenidos perceptuales. La teoría de Wodeham no involucra a la voluntad. Para Wodeham, el intelecto parece ser pasivo y el cambio de un contenido perceptual depende solamente de la variabilidad del campo perceptual.

Palabras clave: Guillermo de Ockham, Adán de Wodeham, contenidos perceptuales, pasividad del intelecto.

1. Introduction

In the *Quaestiones variae*, Ockham discusses Duns Scotus's theory of the active role of the intellect in cognition.¹ This discussion, as Robert Pasnau has remarked in his influential book *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, deals with two opposing ideas: on the one hand, that only objects efficiently cause their cognition in our minds and, on the other, that our mind, together with the objects we encounter, efficiently causes the cognition of those objects. For Ockham, as Pasnau conspicuously says, the intellect is "like a stone heated by the sun",² that is, the intellect is a passive faculty, although throughout some mental processes it accepts an active intervention of the will. According to my reading, when the intellect receives information with the help of the activity of the will, these processes become dynamic – i.e. variable in time, in correlation with a dynamic visual content. In the *Quaestiones variae* Ockham presents three different scenarios where the will plays an important role in cognition, namely, cases where there is (i) attention, (ii) visual effort and (iii) the intensification of a vision. In these three scenarios, the will allows the representational content of a vision to change in a perceptual process.³

¹ All references to Ockham's Latin texts are from his edited works *Opera Philosophica* (Abrev.: OPh); *Opera Theologica* (Abrev.: OTh), and particularly from the following books: Ockham, *OTh I. Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio, Prologus et Distinctio Prima* (Abrev.: *Prol. Ordinatio*); Ockham, *OTh III. Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio, Distinctiones IV-XVIII* (Abrev.: *Ordinatio*); Ockham, *OTh VII. Quaestiones in Librum Quartum Sententiarum* (Abrev.: *Reportatio IV*); Ockham, *OTh VIII. Quaestiones Variae*; Ockham, *OPh I. Summa Logicae*; Ockham, *OPh II. Expositio in Librum Perihermenias Aristotelis*; Ockham, *OPh IV. Expositio in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis, Prologus et Libri I-III*; Ockham, *OPh VI. Brevis Summa Libri Physicorum*.

² Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 151.

³ For Augustine, according to Jose Filipe Silva, the intellect is active, since the whole process of cognition depends on the will. Ockham describes perceptual processes where one of its elements, the will, is active. Thus, Ockham does not hold an active theory of perception. See: Silva, "Medieval Theories of Active Perception," 120.

Ockham's account of the role of the will in some cognitive processes is problematic, and Adam of Wodeham, Ockham's student, seem to have detected this problem. The core of this trouble arises from the idea that attention, a visual effort, and the intensification of a vision, all require awareness. In fact, without awareness, the will would not be able to (i) want a *vision* to persist or continue, as in cases of attention; or (ii) want a more perfect *vision*, as in cases of visual effort; or (iii) want to push a *vision* as far as possible, as in cases of the intensification of a vision. In these three different scenarios (i-iii), as Ockham describes them, the will is directed at another mental state, and wants that mental state to be performed in a certain way. However, the will cannot want what the intellect ignores.⁴ In consequence, in these scenarios, the will requires the intellect to be aware that these visions are performed in the intellect. But why is this problematic? The problem is that, for Ockham, awareness occurs in virtue of a reflexive act which further needs the activity of the will, otherwise one would be always aware of every mental state present in one's mind. For Ockham, one is aware that one is in a certain mental state only when an agent voluntarily wants such awareness. Wodeham seems to notice that it is impossible that any of these three different scenarios (i-iii) occur if each of them requires that one is aware that one is in a perceptual state, because this awareness depends on a volitive act, which further depends on being aware that one is in that perceptual state. In other words, Wodeham seems to notice that there is no way to trigger a perceptual process like (i-iii) in Ockham's theory. I will call this problem hereafter "the loop problem".

Wodeham's solution to *the loop problem* consists in eliminating the will in these three cognitive processes (i-iii), without renouncing to the idea that visual representational contents are dynamic. Thus, as we will see, Ockham and Wodeham agree that visual content change – in cases like (i-iii) – occurs successively by the addition or loss of parts of the same nature, but for Wodeham, visual content change depends only on the variability of the perceptual field, that is, *on the environmental conditions*. This change does not depend on the activity of the will. With this move, Wodeham holds that the representational content of a vision

⁴ "...volitio non potest fieri sine cognitione..." *Prol. Ordinatio* q. 1, OTh I, 60.

changes in certain perceptual process depending only on the variability of the perceptual field.

In this article I will analyse those cognitive processes where, according to Ockham in *Quaestiones variae*, q. 5, the will plays an important role because it allows visual content change. In section 1, I will explain how visual content change occurs, and what the role of the will in that change is, according to Ockham. In the same section I will also explain Wodeham's theory of this subject, and we will see that he omits the will's role in visual content change. In section 2, I will investigate the problematic consequences of attributing a role to the will in dynamic perceptual processes in Ockham's theory, and how Wodeham's account really solves *the loop problem*.

2. The role of the will in cognition

In the *Quaestiones variae*, q. 5, Ockham analyses three different ways in which a certain mental act can be performed due to the activity or inactivity of the will. These three ways of being performed involve change. In addition, these three ways of being performed produce different results in different stages of a perceptual process. Thus, a certain mental act can be performed in such a way that it produces (i) attention, (ii) a greater or lesser effort, and (iii) its intensification or diminution. In general, what he says in this part of his writings is that the will partially causes a sensitive act or intellectual act to change. Ockham describes this change as follows:

[O.1] "...[i] attention, [ii] a greater or lesser effort [of an act], [iii] intensification and diminution in actuality happen due to an act of the will or the absence [of its activity]. Because when an intellection is caused by an object in the intellect or a *habitus* or a sensitive cognition, the will wants [i] that act to continue; [ii] or wants a perfect cognition of that object; [iii] or only a cognition of that object as much as possible. ...And [i] attention in actuality, and [ii] the effort [of an act], and

[*iii*] the intensification or diminution in actuality are said to be more or less in relation to the perfection or imperfection of that act of the will. And this act of the will, immediately with an object, or a *habitus*, causes a more perfect cognition than [the cognition] that was caused by the object alone, without the act of the will. Thus, an object, a sense, an intellect and an act of the will are the partial immediate causes of the intensification of an act in an intellect or in a sensitive [soul]”⁵

Thus, in this paragraph, Ockham explains the role that the will plays when a sensitive or intellective act changes during a perceptual process. In what follows, though, I will only consider what he suggests about visions. For Ockham in [O.1], a vision's change is caused partially by an object, the sight, the intellective soul and the will. Furthermore, in [O.1], Ockham understands (*i*) attention, (*ii*) a greater or lesser effort of a vision, and (*iii*) the intensification and diminution in actuality of a vision, as the results of three different ways in which a vision can be performed with the relevant help of the will. A vision can be performed in the following ways. It can (*i*) *continue* because the will wants it to *persist* in the intellective soul, directed at one object or aspect of that

⁵ “...attentio, conatus maior vel minor, intensio vel remissio in actu sunt effective solum ab actu voluntatis, vel privative. Quia causata intellectu in intellectu ab obiecto vel habitu vel cognitione in sensu, vult voluntas illum actum continuari, vel vult illud obiectum perfectius cognosci, vel tantum quantum potest cognosci ...Est attentio in actu et conatus et intensio in actu, quia secundum quod iste actus volendi fuerit perfectior vel imperfectior, dicitur conatus maior vel minor. Et ista volitio immediate cum obiecto vel habitu causat perfectiorem quam causaret obiectum per se sine volitione. Ita quod obiectum, sensus vel intellectus, et volitio ista sunt causae partiales immediatae respectu actus intensioris in intellectu sive sensu” *Quaestiones variae* q. 5, OTh VIII, 180-181.

object.⁶ A vision can also (ii) be a more perfect cognition because the will wants a greater effort of a vision, or a vision can (iii) be intensified because the will wants the best possible cognition of that object. These three different ways in which a vision can be performed are partially caused by the will's activity, but if the will stops acting, a vision will not continue, nor will it be more perfect, nor will it be more intense, although it will start to decay or diminish. Since a vision represents a present singular thing, its continuity, effort or intensification, due to the will's activity, can generally be understood as yielding a dynamic visual representation of an object. The immutability of a vision, due to the absence of the will's activity, can in contrast be understood as the loss of such variability in time.⁷ But what exactly is a vision in Ockham's theory of mind?

For Ockham, a vision is an intuitive apprehension or cognition, which has been described in secondary literature as an act of perceptual acquaintance, or as a simple grasping of a particular thing, or as a mental act in virtue of which a present particular thing is represented by an agent's mind in natural circumstances.⁸ An intuitive apprehension, from this viewpoint, seems to be a mental state with a static representational content. This perspective has been useful for seeing how, according to Ockham, a representational content is fixed, and even for understanding how the human soul produces abstract concepts. However, this

⁶ According to this description, attention is, for Ockham, to focus on an object for some time due to the activity of the will. Thus, the will partially causes a vision to receive more information about that object. From this perspective, attention allows more detailed visual representations. Moreover, since attention is triggered by the will, it is endogenously driven, as it is for Augustine. In other words, for Ockham and for Augustine, attention is voluntary oriented. On this subject, see Deborah Brown, "Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness," *In Consciousness from Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Heinämaa, Sara, Lähtenmäki, Vili, and Remes, Pauliina, (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2007), 161.

⁷ I will keep using the expression "visual content change", meaning the variability of the representational content of a vision.

⁸ Panaccio, *Ockham on Concepts*, 15–16; Panaccio, "Ockham: Intuition and Knowledge," 55; Brower-Toland, "Intuition, Externalism, and Direct Reference in Ockham," 318.

description of an intuitive apprehension or cognition has not looked at Ockham's account of visual content change or variability in time.

If one considers Ockham's account of the intensification and remission of mental qualities, an intuitive apprehension is, for Ockham, a mental act with a dynamic representational content. Moreover, if one relates this feature to Ockham's own definition of intuitive apprehensions, we can see that a mental act of this sort is also a stage in a perceptual process, which can also change. Ockham's definition of an intuitive apprehension states that this sort of cognition is that in virtue of which an agent can genuinely know or judge whether a thing exists or not, so that if the thing exists, the intellect forms a contingent true proposition such as "This thing exists", and evidently judges it, and so genuinely knows that the thing exists.⁹ For Ockham, an intuitive cognition is a mental state or act that normally¹⁰ allows an agent to form a contingent true proposition concerning the present existence of a singular thing, and to judge that proposition.¹¹ If the thing does not really exist, or if it no longer exists, the intellect will form a contingent true proposition such as "This thing does not exist" and evidently judge it. As we can see, Ockham's description of an intuitive apprehension includes a continuous and ordered series of acts: a process, and not just a mental act. Moreover, this process can change or variate in time. Thus, if the thing does not exist anymore or, as we will see, if the will plays a role in that

⁹ "...notitia intuitiva rei est talis notitia virtute cuius potest sciri utrum res sit vel non, ita quod si res sit, statim intellectus iudicat eam esse et evidenter cognoscit eam esse, nisi forte impediatur propter imperfectionem illius notitiae." *Prol. Ordinatio* q. 1, OTh I, 31.

¹⁰ For Ockham, an intuitive act may be caused in miraculous or non-normal circumstances, meaning, that God can be the cause of an intuitive cognition. On this subject see: Karger, "Ockham and Wodeham on Divine Deception as a Skeptical Hypothesis"; Panaccio and Piché, "Ockham's Reliabilism and the Intuition of Non-Existents"; Gamboa, "El Conocimiento Intuitivo Como Garante Epistémico Según William of Ockham y Adam of Wodeham."

¹¹ "Contingent proposition" means it is not necessarily true or false, but it is possibly true or false. *Expositio in librum Perihermenias Aristotelis* II c. 5, OPh II, 466.

process, the result will also change; that is, the content of the intellect's judgement will be qualitatively different than previous ones.

If we consider Ockham's definition of an intuition and its place in a perceptual process where the will plays no role, we find that, according to [O.1], any such process will result in an act of judgement concerning a certain contingent true proposition. For example, suppose that Clea is watching her cat Mitzi in the backyard, and without the will's activity, she has an ephemeral, imperfect and mild vision, which will produce a contingent true proposition, such as "This is Mitzi". But, suddenly, she wills (*i*) to keep watching her cat, or (*ii*) to make some effort in watching her, or (*iii*) to have an intense vision of her. In any of these cases, Clea's vision will change and, consequently, she will be able to formulate different contingent true propositions such as "Mitzi has something in her mouth" or "Mitzi is dirty". The will's role in such a perceptual process would cause a vision to change and, in consequence, enable different judgements related to that same vision.

In [O.1], Ockham also claims that an act of the will can be more or less perfect and, in relation to the will's degree of perfection, a vision can be more or less perfect. Thus, the perfection of Clea's vision of her cat, for example, is proportionate to the strength of her volition to have a more perfect vision of her cat. Furthermore, in [O.1] Ockham says that the will is not always involved in the process of cognition of a singular thing. Finally, only after an object has caused a vision can the will take part in that process and improve the vision of Clea's cat. Ockham stresses this idea as follows:

[O.2] "...an object can cause a cognition by itself without an act of the will, and after that, with the act of the will, [that object] can cause a cognition, making by itself one [act] with the pre-existing cognition, which cannot be caused without that act of the will."¹²

¹² "Sed est imaginandum quod obiectum potest aliquam cognitionem causare per se sine tali volitione, et post cum illa volitione potest causare aliquam cognitionem facientem per se unum cum cognitione praeexistente quam non

Thus, after an object has caused a cognition, without an act of the will, that same object, together with the will, can cause another cognition, which will make one cognition with the pre-existing cognition. In addition, according to [O.1] and [O.2], the will is an immediate cause of the intensification of an act; however, it is not the only immediate cause, but is a partial immediate cause together with the object. The sight and the intellect are other partial immediate causes, as Ockham claims in [O.1].¹³

Wodeham agrees with Ockham that a vision is an intuitive cognition. Moreover, Wodeham describes an intuitive apprehension as Ockham does, namely, as a noncomplex act (*actus incomplexus*) or simple act that is able to cause an evident assent or judgement concerning a contingent true proposition – such as "A black cat exists", with a verb in present tense –¹⁴ and which naturally needs the present existence of the apprehended thing.¹⁵ In addition, Wodeham agrees with Ockham that the mental representation of an actual singular thing can change and become more perfect or intense. However, for Wodeham, a visual

potest causare sine tali volitione. Quod autem aliqua talis cognitio causatur de novo quando actus intenditur patet per hoc quod talis actus transit de contradictorio in contradictorium, puta de non-intenso in intensum, quod non potest salvari sine nova causatione cognitionis" *Quaestiones variae* q. 5, Oth VIII, 182.

¹³ "...intellectus noster est causa intellectionis etsi non causetur ab intellectu [effective], quia est causa materialis quatenus intellectio illa recipitur in eo." *Quaestiones variae* q. 5, Oth VIII, 165. The intellect is not an efficient cause, like the will and the visible object, but rather a material cause. On this subject see: Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, 150–51.

¹⁴ On the nature of propositions in Ockham's early writings see: Karger, "Mental Sentences According to Burley and to the Early Ockham."

¹⁵ "...ille actus incomplexus qui natus est causare evidentem assensum de veritate contingenti de praesenti, et qua naturaliter requirit existentiam et praesentiam, est intuitiva notitia." *Prol. Lectura secunda* q. 2, 37. Wodeham's description of an intuitive apprehension or cognition further points out a process, and not one single mental state. In addition, he involves in this process a contingent true proposition and an act of evident judgement, as well as an intuitive apprehension, just as Ockham does.

content can change in proportion to the change of its object, and not because the will triggers that change.¹⁶ Furthermore, according to Wodeham, there might exist other causes that would explain the variability of a pre-existing visual representation, and none of these causes involve the will. In his *Ordinatio*, Wodeham suggested some other causes, as follows:

[W.1] "...it is necessary to concede that there may be change for a vision, and this may happen due to the change of the visible thing [¿?], due to the motion of the eye, due to the successive better disposition of the medium, due to the removal of an impediment, or due to the successive increase of something required in order to have a *perfect* and *intense* vision, and so on for similar causes, and it is false that visions are indivisibles..."¹⁷

Thus, in [W.1] Wodeham explains the change of a vision's representational content by reference to the agent's external conditions, such as (1) the permanence of the visible thing, or (2) the disposition of the medium, or (3) the removal of an obstacle, or (4) the successive increase of something. In addition, he considers one corporeal condition, namely, (5) the eyes' movement. Furthermore, in [W.1], Wodeham points out that there might be something which triggers the change of a vision. As we will see, that cause could be, for example, a perfect

¹⁶ "...visio potest intendi ad intensionem visibilis et remitti ad eius remissionem, ita potest alio modo crescere proportionaliter ad crementum extensivum sui obiecti et decrescere similiter ad obiecti decrementum extensivum." *Prol. Lectura secunda* q. 4, 102.

¹⁷ "...ad visionem posset esse motus concedendum est et hoc vel per motum vi[?] vel per motum oculi vel per successivam dispositionem maiorem medii vel per a motionem inpediti vel per successivam augmentationem alicuius requisiti ad perfectam et intensam visionem habendam et sic de similibus causis et ideo falsum est visiones esse formas indivisibiles..." *Ordinatio* I, d. 17, q. 5, 59. My emphasis.

amount of light. Finally, in [W.1], Wodeham claims that a vision is divisible. Thus, its variability must be explained through the idea that it may gain new parts or lose other parts. In fact, in his *Ordinatio*, Wodeham claims, in agreement with Ockham, that alteration occurs through the addition or loss of parts of the same quality. In general, Wodeham holds that "...successive alteration cannot happen without many parts of the same form in all events (*saltem*)..."¹⁸ But, what does it mean that alteration occurs through the addition or loss of parts of the same quality for Ockham and for Wodeham?

In medieval philosophy there were two main accounts of alteration. According to one of these accounts, this sort of change occurs when a substance receives part of an accidental form and successively loses or acquires new parts of the same form. According to the other account, alteration occurs when a substance acquires an accidental form, more or less intense, and then successively, another new accidental form of the same species, more or less intense, and then another, and so on. Ockham defended the first account of alteration.¹⁹ For Ockham, when an accidental form, such as a quality, is intensified or diminished, the original form remains, so it is not corrupted in that process,²⁰ but rather only gains new parts, or loses other parts, such as when a body of water loses or acquires parts of water.²¹

¹⁸ "...alteratio successiva non posset esse sine pluribus partibus saltem eiusdem forma..." *Ordinatio* I, d. 17, q. 4. 52.

¹⁹ This account has been called the *addition theory* since, according to Rega Wood, it "describes a gradual change over time as infinitesimal parts are gained or lost" Rega Wood, "Calculating Grace: The Debate about Latitude of Forms According to Adam de Wodeham," in *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Simo Knuutila, Reijo Työrinoja, and Sten Ebbesen (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 1990), 374.

²⁰ "...universaliter in augmentatione cuiuslibet formae accidentalis, scilicet qualitatis, forma praecedens non corrumpitur sed manet..." *Ordinatio* d.17, q. 5, OTh III, 491.

²¹ "... 'quaelibet pars caritatis est caritas', sicut haec est vera 'quaelibet pars aquae est aqua' et 'quaelibet pars ignis est ignis', et sic de aliis..." *Ordinatio* d.17, q. 7, OTh III, 531.

For Ockham, generation is not strictly change, because generation occurs suddenly, whereas change in a strict sense occurs successively. Change, in a strict sense, is the successive addition or loss of parts of a form.²² Thus, the term “change” indicates (*important*)²³ nothing more than one thing having one part after another of the same form. Consequently, when Ockham explains Aristotle’s definition of change, namely, “...the act of a being in potentiality in so far as it is in potentiality...”,²⁴ he first holds that the term “change” denotes that a substance has already acquired a *part* of an accidental form that it did not have before. For this reason, according to Ockham, the Philosopher said in his definition that change is “the act...”. Furthermore, when we say that something changes, we denote that it will have another part that does not have now. According to Ockham, this is what the Philosopher meant when he said in his definition that change is the act “of a being in potentiality”. Moreover, according to Ockham, because the thing that changes might not have the accidental part that it could have later (a third part), the Philosopher said in his definition of change that any such actuality of a being in potentiality happens “in so far as it is in potentiality”.²⁵ In brief, according to Ockham’s definition of change,

²² “...motus non importat nisi quod una res habet aliam partem post aliam...” *Summa Logicae* I, ch. 46, OPh I, 147.

²³ According to Claude Panaccio, Ockham normally used the term “importat” to indicate the things signified, in whatever way, by certain terms: Panaccio, *Ockham on Concepts*, 90.

²⁴ “...motus est actus entis in potentia in quantum in potentia...” *Expositio in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis* III, ch. 3, OPh IV, 453. Translated by Marilyn McCord in: McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2:801.

²⁵ “Unde quando dicitur communiter quod motus est, non denotatur quod omne quod consignificatur per motum modo sit actu existens sed denotatur quod mobile iam habet unam partem formae adquisitam quam prius non habuit. Et ideo dicit Philosophus quod motus est actus. Secundo denotatur quod mobile habebit postea aliam partem quam modo non habet. Unde addit Philosophus secundam particulam: quod motus est actus entis ‘in potentia’. Et quia non habebit illam partem quomodocumque posset immediate post, ideo additur tertia particula, scilicet ‘in quantum in potentia’, ita quod ly in quantum non tenetur reduplicative sed specificative” *Brevis Summa Libri Physicorum* III, ch. 1, OPh VI, 41.

which is an interpretation of Aristotle's own definition, change, in a strict sense, is alteration, because it occurs successively, through the addition or loss of parts of the same accidental form.

Wodeham's metaphysics of alteration can be described in relation to Ockham's own account, and in relation to the problems or questions they both face. The first of these questions concerns the ontological status of the parts that are added or separated from an *original quality* – i.e. the cognition that exists in a soul before its own change – in the process of alteration. For Ockham, these parts are of the same species as the original quality, like when a body of water loses or acquires parts of water.²⁶ Through this description, Ockham seems to emphasize that when an intuitive cognition changes, it acquires or loses pieces of intuitive cognitions. Wodeham seems to have the same perspective. In the Prologue to his *Lectura secunda*, he claims that "...if the parts of an object that is seen again are of the same nature (*rationis*) as the part previously seen, then the added vision is of the same nature; if not, this does not hold."²⁷ For Ockham and Wodeham, when a vision changes, the parts that it acquires or loses are said to be of the same nature or species, because they are parts of the same sort of act.

The second of these questions concerns the existence of the original quality: does this quality remain throughout a process of alteration, or is there successively something new during the addition or subtraction of parts? For Ockham, when a quality is intensified or diminished, the original quality remains, so it is not corrupted in that process, but only

²⁶ See again: *Ordinatio* d.17, q. 7, OTh III, 531.

²⁷ "...pars visionis adveniens aut est eiusdem rationis cum praecedente, et tunc cum recipitur adaequate in eadem parte subiecti cum priori, nec extendet priorem, igitur intendet. Aut est alterius rationis, et tunc non facient unam visionem nisi altera esset materia et altera forma, quod non potest dari... Dicendum quod si pars obiecti de novo [visa] sit eiusdem rationis cum [parte] prius visa, tunc visio addita est eiusdem rationis; si non, non." *Prol. Lectura secunda*, q. 4, 102-103.

gains new parts, or loses other parts.²⁸ Wodeham agrees with Ockham on this point.²⁹

It is important to notice here that Wodeham claims that after a singular thing causes a vision for the first time, that vision could start to change. This is also Ockham's idea as we have seen in [O.2]. Yet, Wodeham insists that the process of change of a vision can be triggered whenever the perceptual field changes:

[W.2] "...a soul, ...thus, receives an act that is perfect in relation to that object, and not one part first, and then another, as if it is produced continuously, but just like (*sicut*) the medium is disposed to immediately receive as much sunlight as exists in that place, [an act] can be produced in the same [way]... It is true that, if an object stretches, or if it is closer, or if there is the required light, and so on for other circumstances (*requisitis*), the act would always be more perfect."³⁰

²⁸ "...universaliter in augmentatione cuiuslibet formae accidentalis, scilicet qualitatis, forma praecedens non corrumpitur sed manet..." *Ordinatio* d.17, q. 5, OTh III, 491.

²⁹ "Contra: pars visionis adveniens aut est eiusdem rationis cum praecedente, et tunc cum recipitur adaequate in eadem parte subiecti cum priori, nec extendet priorem, igitur intendet. Aut est alterius rationis, et tunc non facient unam visionem... Igitur remanebunt duae distinctae visiones, et ita infinitae erunt totaliter distinctae, cum in omni instanti nova visio succedat in toto vel in parte." *Prol. Lectura secunda*, q. 4, 102-103.

³⁰ "...anima in prima instanti, si non habeat habitum contrarium – qualem non contingit dare respectu simplicium apprehensionum –, recipit actum ita perfectum respectu talis obiecti, et non partem unam prius et post aliam, sicut in perpetuum faceret, sed sicut medium est dispositum ad recipiendum subitò quantum lumen sol existens in tali situ potest in ipso producere, sic in proposito. Verum est tamen quod si intenderetur obiectum, vel approximaretur magis, vel lumen requisitum, et ita de aliis requisitis, actus foret perfectior semper." *Lectura secunda* I, d. 3, q. 5, 218.

In [W.1], as in [W.2], Wodeham does not consider the will to be a partial cause of the perfection of a vision. Wodeham believes that a vision change depends only on the variability of the perceptual field, that is, on the environmental conditions. Thus, Wodeham differs from Ockham on this point. However, according to [W.2] and [O.2], Wodeham and Ockham agree that alteration occurs after a quality has already informed a substance. For Wodeham, the process of perfection or intensification of a vision begins after the object has already caused a qualitative form in a soul. For Ockham, the effort or intensification of a vision can be wanted by the will when that cognition already exists in a subject.

Ockham and Wodeham also have similar accounts of attention in particular. They both understand visual attention as a mental act that persists in the intellect, directed at a certain object. Since Wodeham does not involve the will in his explanation, it follows that, for him, attention is exogenously driven,³¹ as it is the perfection or intensification of a vision. Thus, attention is triggered by the object itself, at least in his *Lectura secunda*. This is suggested when he discusses a particular sort of illusion: the appearance of the presence of an illuminated circle suspended in the air, caused by the circular and quick movement of a stick with a fire at one of its ends. According to Wodeham, that illusion results from an inference, one of whose premises is formed in virtue of the *continuous* vision of the fire at one end of the stick, that is, in virtue of attention. Wodeham explains his point as follows:

[W.3] "...it is necessary to say, in consequence, that because the eyes attentively pursue the end of this stick in fire that moves in circles, the intellect immediately, due to the same continuous vision of the fire itself

³¹ Attention is exogenously driven if it depends on external factors, thus, it is stimulus-driven attention. I borrow this concept and its definition from Brown, Deborah J, "Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness," 154.

moving in quick circles – or something equivalent –
composes a proposition...”³²

Thus, for Wodeham, attention is a persistent or focused vision directed at an object, and in consequence, a vision that receives more information from that object, enabling that act to change by the addition of parts of the same form, in accordance with Wodeham's theory of alteration. Wodeham does not involve the will in his explanation of how attention is triggered. It follows, I reaffirm, that he defended an exogenous theory of attention.

In brief, Ockham and Wodeham have similar accounts of the change of visions in certain perceptual processes. However, Ockham is clear about the significant role that the will plays in such perceptual process. Wodeham does not mention the will playing any role in these processes, in his *Lectura secunda*. As we will see, Ockham's ascription of a role to the will in his account of the change of a vision is problematic, since the will cannot want something that the intellect ignores.³³ The will cannot want (i) a vision to persist in an intellect directed at an object if the intellect ignores the existence of that vision. Nor can the will want (ii) a vision to make some effort if the intellect ignores the existence of that vision. Nor can the will want (ii) a vision to be more intense if the intellect ignores the existence of that vision. Briefly, Ockham's idea that the will plays a role in some cognitive processes brings *the loop problem*.

³² “...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 praedicato. 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. - Ista responsio est magis sensibilis quam prior, sive sit veri or sive non.” *Prol. Lectura secunda* q. 4, 105.

³³ See note 3.

3. Can the will want what the intellect ignores?

For Ockham, the change of a vision happens after a perceptual process has been initiated. Thus, when a vision already exists in a soul, the will can want that vision to continue, or to have a perfect cognition of the visible object, or to have a cognition of that object as far as possible. But how can the will possibly want for attention, a visual effort, or the intensification or remission of a vision before the intellect is aware that any such vision exists? The will can want a vision to continue and change only if the intellect is aware that the vision actually exists, that is, only if the intellect has a reflexive cognition of that vision.

Ockham calls the intellectual intuitive apprehensions that represent present intellectual acts "reflexive intuitions". These acts allow the intellect to evidently judge self-referential propositions such as "I see a black cat" or "I think that *p*". In his *Quaestiones Varias* Ockham adds a new element to his account of reflexivity, namely, that a reflexive intuition also needs a previous act of the will in virtue of which the soul wants to cognize a certain mental act present in that soul. Ockham stresses this idea as follows:

[O.11] "...an act of the will is required, [an act] through which [the will] wants this act to be cognized. But posited this act of the will with a straight act, at once naturally, without any activity of the intellect, it follows a reflexive act in the intellect."³⁴

Thus, a reflexive act needs that the will wants the cognition of a certain mental act. According to this description, a normal process of cognizing a vision is, for example, the following: suppose that Clea has a vision of a cat. If she wants that the intellect cognizes that vision, then there will follow a reflexive intuition. This reflexive intuition will cause in turn a

³⁴ [O.11] "...requiritur actus voluntatis quo vult illum actum cognosci. Sed posito isto actu voluntatis cum actu recto statim naturaliter, sine omni activitate intellectus, sequitur actus reflexus in intellectu." *Quaestiones Varias* q. 5; OTH VIII, 178.461-464.

true contingent self-referential proposition such as “My vision exists”, and then, finally, this contingent reflexive proposition would be evidently judged. I will call this process a “reflexive process”.

Ockham seems to bring the will to a reflexive process because, otherwise, an agent would reflexively cognize every single mental state present in her mind. In other words, Ockham apparently tries to explain why we do not have reflexive cognitions of all our present mental states by involving the will in a reflexive process. At first glance this move seems to be fear. However, Ockham claims that a human soul cannot want what she ignores.³⁵ How can the will possibly want an act to be cognized before the intellect even knows that such an act exists? Ockham seems not to have a clear solution to this problem.³⁶ Moreover, Ockham faces a similar problem by including the will in a cognitive process where there is visual content change, because the will cannot want what the intellect ignores, so either (i) attention, (ii) visual effort or (iii) the intensification of a vision requires that the intellect is aware that such a vision already exists. Only if the intellect produces a self-referential contingent true proposition like “I see a black cat” the will might (i) want a *vision* to persist or continue, as in cases of attention; or (ii) want a more perfect *vision*, as in cases of visual effort; or (iii) want to push a *vision* as far as possible, as in cases of the intensification of a

³⁵ [O.10] “...volitio non potest fieri sine cognitione...” *Prologus Ordinatio* q. 1; OTh I, 60. 22-23.

³⁶ Claude Panaccio and Susan Brower-Tolland have noticed this problem before in: Panaccio, “Intellections and Volitions in Ockham’s Nominalism,” 86; Brower-Tolland, “William Ockham on the Scope and Limits of Consciousness,” 211–12. It seems that Peter John Olivi also noticed this problem in relation to reflexivity. This is suggested when Olivi claims that “the will cannot (even with the intellect) turn over an object, except by an act of the will, however, [the will] cannot wish [that object] if it does not think [*intelligat*] about that which [the will] desires”. Translated and quoted by Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, 155. According to Pasnau, Olivi’s view reveals that Ockham’s account of the role of the will in cognition presents a problem, namely, an infinite regress. According to my reading, the problem was not only an infinite regress of higher-order acts, but also the will’s need for some sort of awareness, in order for it to be directed at another mental act. It seems that Olivi, Ockham and Wodeham were all involved in this discussion.

vision. Since, in cases like (*i-iii*), an act of the will requires a reflexive cognition directed at the object of that act of the will, and such a reflexive cognition requires an act of the will to be directed at the object of that reflexive cognition, it follows that a soul can never trigger a cognitive process that produces (*i*) attention, (*ii*) visual effort and (*iii*) the intensification of a vision. Ockham seems to have no clear solution to this *loop problem*.

Wodeham involves the will in reflexive cognition. Thus, he faces the same problem than Ockham on this subject. Wodeham presents his view on reflexivity by making clear first that a soul can naturally have a cognition of its own acts. This cognition is an intellective one, not a sensitive act, since it is not caused by a sensible thing through an external sense.³⁷ After this explanation, he claims that we have evident cognitions of self-referential contingent true propositions such as "I think", "I desire", "I see", "I feel happy", or "I feel sad". In general, contingent true propositions and beliefs are produced by intuitive apprehensions. Thus, we genuinely know self-referential contingent propositions in virtue of reflexive intuitive apprehensions.³⁸ Plainly,

³⁷ Wodeham does not claim that a perceptual process, when triggered by a sensible thing, needs a sensitive intuitive apprehension apart from, and previous to, an intellective intuitive apprehension – which gives rise to a contingent true proposition. For Wodeham, in fact, in a perceptual process there is only one intuitive apprehension, which may be considered a sensitive intuitive cognition, or an intellective intuitive cognition, depending on its cause. This is because Wodeham holds that a human animal is composed of matter, a corporeal form, and just one immaterial soul, see: *Lectura secunda* d. 1, q. 4, 267. In consequence, he claims that the distinction between a sensitive and an intellective intuitive cognition is grounded in their causes, not in the subject where they inhere. For Ockham, on the contrary, the qualities that inhere in an intellective soul are, for that very reason, intellective acts, and the qualities that inhere in a sensitive soul are, for that very reason, sensitive acts. See Ockham's argument for the distinction between the sensitive soul and the intellective soul, which presupposes the distinction between sensitive acts and intellective acts: *Reportatio* IV, q. 9, OTh VII, 161.

³⁸ "...anima potest naturaliter cognoscere actus suos, tam abstractivae quam intuitivae, cognitionibus aliquibus; et non sensitivis, ex prima conclusione; igitur intellectivis. Probatio maioris: omne cognoscibile ab anima, cuius aliqua notitia

Wodeham uses the same argument as Ockham for his theory of reflexivity.³⁹ Moreover, in the same way as Ockham, Wodeham involves the will in a reflexive process, and as he puts it, a reflexive intuition directed at a vision is freely elicited – not naturally, thus it is determined by an act of the free will.⁴⁰

As we have seen, Wodeham does not involve the will in (i) attention, (ii) visual effort or (iii) the intensification of a vision. Thus, he simplifies these cognitive processes and avoids the impasse that Ockham faces regarding his own account of this subject. If Wodeham had emulated Ockham's account of (i) attention, (ii) visual effort and (iii) the intensification of a vision, he would have had to accept that a reflexive act must be involved in those cognitive processes (i-iii), and consequently, he would have had to face *the loop problem*, because, for Wodeham as well as for Ockham, the human soul cannot want what the

incomplexa sufficit ad notitiam evidentem alicuius veritatis contingentis de eo - et sit notitia incomplexa eius - sufficienter cognoscitur ab anima intuitive et abstractive, ex primo articulo. Sed actus animae tam sensitivi quam intellectivi sunt huiusmodi, Igitur. Minor patet, quia quilibet experitur quod intelligit, quod diligit, quod videt, quod audit, quod gaudet, quod tristatur, et sic de aliis actibus vitalibus animae. Igitur etiam aliqua notitia talium actuum incomplexa sufficit ad evidentem notitiam utrum sint vel non sint, nam ex aliqua notitia certificamur quod sunt cum advertere volumus." *Prol. Lectura secunda* q. 2, 51.

³⁹ Ockham presents his theory of reflexivity for the first time in his Prologue to the *Ordinatio*, one of his early writings. There, he argues that we can intuitively cognize our own mental states. According to Ockham's first argument for his theory of reflexivity, since we have evident judgments about true contingent propositions concerning our own mental states –for example, "I perceive a black cat" or "I think that *p*" – and we can only form such propositions through intuitive cognitions, it follows that we can intuitively apprehend our own mental states. Ockham present this same argument in different ways along his writings. *Prologus Ordinatio* q. 1; OTh I, 39.18-41.3. On this subject see, for example: Brower-Toland, "Medieval Approaches to Consciousness: Ockham and Chatton," 6–7.

⁴⁰ "...concedo quod scilicet visio intentionis lapidis videtur per aliam visionem quando iudico certitudinaliter me videre visionem primae intentionis, et sic de tertia et quarta. Sed sicut non oportet nisi ad libitum meum quod videam intentionem primam quae est lapidis, ita – et a multo fortiori – nec aliquam posteriorem." *Prol. Lectura secunda* q. 2, 57-58.

intellect ignores.⁴¹ Wodeham's rejection of the role of the will precludes any need for a reflexive act in (*i-iii*). Consequently, Wodeham, holds that the activity of the will is only needed for reflexivity. Wodeham does not deny that visual contents can change by the successive addition or loss of parts of the same nature, but for him, visual content change depends only on the variability of the perceptual field.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that for Ockham and Wodeham, visions are dynamic qualities with dynamic contents, and that perceptual processes change in conformity with visual content change. Ockham and Wodeham defended the addition theory of alteration; thus for them, visions change by the addition of parts of the same nature or species, which means that they can be more detailed, more perfect and more intense; or alternatively, less detailed, more imperfect and milder. For Ockham, attention, visual effort and the intensification of a vision depend on the activity of the will. In contrast, for Wodeham, these different visual performances depend on the variability of the environmental conditions. Ockham and Wodeham agree that reflexivity depends on the activity of the will.

Ockham's account of the role of the will in attention, visual effort, the intensification of a vision, and reflexivity is problematic, because the will cannot want visions to be performed in those ways without the intellect's awareness that these visions are performed in the intellect. Since Wodeham does not attribute any role to the will in cases of attention, visual effort and intensification, his theory is not problematic. In contrast, Wodeham's account of reflexivity apparently faces the same impasse as Ockham's account.

⁴¹ “.....omnis actus volendi quem in nobis experimur, praesuppoit necessario cognitionem...” *Lectura secunda* d. 1, q. 5, 277.

Bibliography

Brower-Toland, Susan. "Intuition, Externalism, and Direct Reference in Ockham." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2007): 317–36.

———. "Medieval Approaches to Consciousness: Ockham and Chatton." *Philosophers Imprint* 12 (2012): 1–29.

———. "William Ockham on the Scope and Limits of Consciousness." *Vivarium* 52, no. 3–4 (2014): 197–219.

Brown, Deborah J. "Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness." In *Consciousness from Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*, edited by Heinämaa, Sara, Lähteenmäki, Vili, and Remes, Pauliina, 153–75. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2007.

Gamboa, Lydia Deni. "El Conocimiento Intuitivo Como Garante Epistémico Según William of Ockham y Adam of Wodeham." *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 60 (January 2018): 47–66. <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.BPM.5.116903>.

Karger, Élizabeth. "Ockham and Wodeham on Divine Deception as a Skeptical Hypothesis." *Vivarium* 42, no. 2 (2004): 225–36.

Karger, Élizabeth. "Mental Sentences According to Burley and to the Early Ockham." *Vivarium* 34, no. 2 (1996): 192–230.

McCord Adams, Marilyn. *William Ockham*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.

Ockham, Guillelmi de. *OTh I. Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio, Prologus et Distinctio Prima*. Edited by Gedeon Gál. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1967.

———. *OTh III. Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio, Distinctiones IV-XVIII*. Edited by Girardus I. Etzkorn. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1977.

———. *OTh VII. Quaestiones in Librum Quartum Sententiarum (Reportatio)*. Edited by Rega Wood and Gedeon Gál. Opera

Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1984.

———. *OTh VIII. Quaestiones Varias*. Edited by Girardus I. Etzkorn, Franciscus E. Kelley, and Josephus C. Wey C.S.B. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1984.

Ockham, Guillelmus de. *Oph I. Summa Logicae*. Edited by Philotheus Boehner, Gedeon Gál, and Stephanus Brown. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1974.

———. *Oph II. Expositio in Librum Perihermenias Aristotelis*. Edited by Angelus Gambatese and Stephanus Brown. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1978.

———. *Oph IV. Expositio in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis, Prologus et Libri I-III*. Edited by Vladimirus Richter and Gerhardus Leibold. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1985.

———. *Oph VI. Brevis Summa Libri Physicorum*. Edited by Stephanus Brown. Opera Philosophica et Theologica. St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Editiones Instituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1986.

Panaccio, Claude. “Intellections and Volitions in Ockham’s Nominalism.” In *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro, 75–93. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199579914.003.0005.

———. “Ockham: Intuition and Knowledge.” In *Rational Intuition: Philosophical Roots, Scientific Investigations*, edited by Lisa M Osbeck and Barbara S Held, 55–74. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

———. *Ockham on Concepts*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2004.

Panaccio, Claude, and David Piché. “Ockham’s Reliabilism and the Intuition of Non-Existents.” In *Rethinking the History of Skepticism*, edited by Henrik Lagerlund, 97–118. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.

Pasnau, Robert. *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Silva, José Filipe. “Medieval Theories of Active Perception: An Overview.” In *Active Perception in the History of Philosophy: From Plato to Modern Philosophy*, edited by José Filipe Silva and Mikko Yrjönsuuri, 117–46. Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04361-6_7.

Wood, Rega. “Calculating Grace: The Debate about Latitude of Forms According to Adam de Wodeham.” In *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Simo Knuuttila, Reijo Työriñoja, and Sten Ebbesen, 2:373–91. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 1990.