

OCKHAM ON AWARENESS OF ONE'S ACTS: A WAY OUT OF THE CIRCLE

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Abstract. In this paper, I proceed from the assumption that Ockham's account of self-awareness can be correctly described as a kind of higher-order approach, because just like modern higher-order theorists, Ockham accounts for a mental act being conscious in terms of a higher-order act that takes the act as its object. I aim to defend Ockham's approach against the objection that it fails to provide an explanation of how self-awareness comes about because any such explanation would be circular. Part of the critique, in light of recent findings in Ockham scholarship, is that the ontological identity of the subject does not suffice to explain – in a non-circular way – the psychological identity and unity of the subject of awareness. Here, I argue that Ockham can respond to this objection by highlighting the power of will. Roughly speaking, the idea is that he can account for the limits of the psychological subject in terms of what the subject can want or will with respect to her *own* acts and these acts alone. It is along these lines that Ockham can account for the asymmetry between first-person and third-person perspective in a non-circular way, with reference to the exotic case of angelic mind-reading and the comparatively less exotic case of human memory.

Keywords: Ockham, self-awareness, higher-order accounts, first-person vs. third-person perspective, asymmetry of first-person and third-person perspectives, angelic mind-reading, memory

1. Introduction

While many contemporary scholars assume that there was a considerable discussion of the problem of consciousness in the later middle ages, including an extensive discussion of self-consciousness, they do not consider whether this assumption is at all justified.¹ In order for this assumption to be justified it requires further qualification, since contemporary debates involve not only *the* problem of consciousness but rather a whole bundle of interrelated problems.² If one agrees that at least part of the problem of consciousness is how to account for the various aspects

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of cognition that imply consciousness, then this would support the view that there was indeed a substantial discussion of the problem of consciousness and self-consciousness among medieval authors, at least in this sense,³ even though these authors did not use the term or any of its Latin correlates but instead discussed the topic using terms relating to perception and cognition.⁴

This also applies to William Ockham (ca. 1287-1349). Like other fourteenth-century philosophers, Ockham distinguishes between an awareness of external things, such as cats and trees, and the awareness of our own acts or states, such as seeing or thinking about cats and trees. According to Ockham, we are dealing with a kind of *object awareness* in both cases. We can become aware of a cat by means of an intentional act (of seeing, for instance) that takes the cat as its object, just as we can be made aware of the fact that we are seeing the cat by another intentional act that takes the act of seeing as its object. In Ockham's terms, this intentional act is a *reflexive* act.

Like modern higher-order theorists, Ockham accounts for a mental act being conscious in terms of a higher-order act that takes the act as its object.⁵ One kind of objection raised by critics of higher-order accounts of self-awareness is that if it intends to provide an explanation of how self-awareness comes about, any such explanation would be circular. The problem is that awareness of one's own act cannot merely result from some reflexive act that takes that act as its object, because this fails to explain why one should not merely become aware of *some* act, but in fact, of one's *own* act. Is it not somehow presupposed that the subject is already aware that the act she is reflexively grasping is indeed her own, rather than someone else's? The objection, however, is that the reflection account fails to explain what it was intended to explain in this case.⁶

My aim in this paper is to demonstrate that Ockham can account for self-awareness in a non-circular way. The point is that he does not intend to explain how we come to be aware of *our own* act – and not merely of *some* act – based on this reflexive act *alone*. Far from admitting some basic or primitive form of self-awareness, Ockham in fact believes that we are not always self-aware. For him, any kind of awareness is intentional; that is to say, it is always directed towards something *as its object*. It is simply not the case that we are always aware of our own acts, as we are, for instance, according to Olivi.⁷ However, if this is so, how *can* we become aware of *our own acts*?

In Ockham's view, we only reflexively grasp our act if we *voluntarily* turn our attention to it. That is to say, an act of will is a necessary condition for the occurrence of a reflexive act of the intellect. According to Ockham's psychology, the rational soul has both the power of the intellect and of will. Ontologically speaking, acts of the intellect and acts of will occur in the very same subject.⁸ Ockham scholars have recently argued that the subject's ability to correctly and infallibly ascribe her own acts – and only these – to herself is grounded in the ontological identity of the subject to which these acts pertain.⁹ With this argument, the scholars in question claim that Ockham's position is compatible with some form or other of epistemic externalism.¹⁰ In this paper, I assume that the notion that the subject's ontological identity grounds the subject's ability to ascribe her acts to herself is compatible with Ockham's conception.

It should become clear that part of the critique of the kind of account Ockham proposes *is* that the ontological identity does not suffice to provide a non-circular explanation of the psychological identity and unity of the subject of awareness. I will argue that Ockham could counter this objection by highlighting the power of the will. The basic idea is that he can account for the limits or boundaries of the psychological subject in terms of what the subject may want or will: The point, as I see it, is that the subject can only voluntarily turn her attention away from something she cognizes to the cognitive act with respect to her *own* acts. This is not a trivial point, though it may seem so at first glance, since it is along these lines that Ockham can account for the asymmetry between first-person and third-person perspectives in a non-circular way.

I will proceed as follows: First, I will outline the cognitive mechanics of reflexive acts (sections 2 and 3) before discussing one key objection, i.e., that Ockham fails to account for the asymmetry between first-person and third-person perspective in a non-circular way (section 4). Since the argument that Ockham fails to account for this asymmetry in a non-circular way implies that he also fails to account for self-awareness in any interesting sense, I shall take pains to counter this objection with reference to a case of angelic mind reading. I will then move on to the somewhat less exotic case of human memory to support the findings of this discussion: According to Ockham, the structure of memory in the strict sense is engendered by the asymmetry between the first-person and third-person perspectives.

Generally speaking, it should become clear that the critics of the reflection account may be correct when they say that self-awareness does not come about by some reflexive act *alone*. However, critics are premature when they consequently jump to the conclusion that some basic or primitive form of self-awareness must be posited in addition to reflexive self-awareness here.

2. Ockham's model of reflexive acts: intuitive cognition and evident judgements

To gain a better understanding of Ockham's idea of reflexive acts, it is helpful to consider his conception of what he calls 'intuitive cognition', since reflexive acts *are* acts of intuitive cognition. In his early *Ordinatio*, Ockham initially presents intuition as a kind of intellectual cognition by reference to extra-mental things. It is only in a corollary that he also argues for the possibility of intuiting one's own mental acts.¹¹ He writes:

[...] [I]ntuitive cognition of a thing is cognition that enables us to know whether a thing exists or does not exist, in such a way that, if the thing exists, then intellect *immediately* judges that it exists and evidently knows that it exists [...].¹²

He characterizes intuition as a kind of singular cognition of particular things that are present to the cognizing subject. Intuiting the very presence of thing *a* allows the subject to judge correctly that *a exists*. For instance, if the presence of a cat allows Anne to judge that *this [cat] exists*, then what she accepts to be true *is* indeed true

because of she has intuited the cat. Ockham calls this kind of judgement ‘evident’. If an act of judging is evident, then by definition what is judged must be *true*. Furthermore, Ockham states that “the intellect *immediately (statim)* judges”. This is to say that intuition-based thoughts leave no room for any lack of truth commitment.¹³ A subject cannot *merely entertain the thought* that a thing exists if she actually intuits the thing in question. The intuition of *a* combined with the formation of the thought that *a exists* is enough to bring about the acceptance of this.

In terms of awareness, it can be said that whenever someone is intuiting thing *a*, then she is also aware of *a*. This awareness of *a* can be described as a *first-order object awareness*. This object awareness is not propositional. Whenever someone evidently judges that *a exists*, she can be said to be aware that *a exists*. The awareness that *a exists* is a kind of propositional *first-order object awareness*. Furthermore, the intuition of *a* is part of what is evidently judged (namely *that a exists*). That is to say, object awareness (e.g. the awareness of *a*) is part of the propositional object awareness (e.g. *that a exists*).

Now, Ockham endeavours to explain evident judgements about our own mental acts along similar lines.¹⁴ He argues that since we *do* have evident knowledge of our occurrent mental acts, intuition of our own acts – similar to the intuition of extramental things – is the best way to account for this. Note that Ockham is not concerned with explaining how this kind of evident knowledge is possible here. Rather, he is simply appealing to both experience and Augustine as an authority in order to assume that human beings can have such evident knowledge.¹⁵ In the *Quodlibeta*, Ockham highlights a strictly analogous case regarding the existence of a mental act. He states:

[...] [F]or the first contingent proposition known evidently by the intellect is formulated concerning the intellect’s cognition and willing – e.g., a proposition such as ‘An act of intellect exists’ or ‘An act of willing exists’. [...] [I]herefore, this proposition is formulated through the mediation of either (i) an intuitive cognition or (ii) an abstractive cognition [...].¹⁶

Ockham refers to existential propositions of the form *a exists* as “first contingent propositions”.¹⁷ Suppose that Anne is still intuiting the cat: If she now intuitively cognizes her occurrent act of intuiting the cat, then she can judge *evidently* that *this act (of intuition) exists* (or is *occurring*). If Anne judges that *this act of intuition exists* while her act of intuition is occurring, then what she accepts as true must indeed be true because she intuits this act of thinking. Again, Anne cannot merely entertain the thought that *this act occurs* because she is actually intuiting the act in question. Her intuitive cognition of her act combined with the formation of the thought that *this act exists* is enough to bring about the acceptance of the thought. Her evident judgements that (a) *this cat exists* and (b) *this act (of intuition) exists* are structurally alike: Anne’s intuition of the cat is both cause and part of the propositional act of thinking that *this cat exists*, just as the reflexive intuition of her act is both cause and part of the propositional act of thinking that *this act (of intuiting the cat) exists*.

Ockham calls acts of intuiting extra-mental things 'direct', and he refers to acts directed towards these direct acts as 'reflexive', if only in an "improper sense".¹⁸ The point is that in Ockham's view, no cognitive act can be reflexive in the proper sense since this implies that acts can be directed at themselves, or as Ockham puts it, that they "begin and end in the same thing".¹⁹ According to his conception, cognitive acts can only be called "reflexive" insofar as one act is directed at another *act*.²⁰ It should become clear, however, in the context of angelic cognition, that the condition of being directed at another act – and not, say, towards an extra-mental thing – is only necessary for an act to be reflexive, even in the improper sense.²¹ Another requirement is that the direct act and the act that is directed towards it must pertain to the same cognitive subject.²² Over the course of this paper, it should become clear why I think that this interpretation is in line with Ockham's account. I will thus also refer to acts of intuitive cognition of one's own acts as reflexive intuitive acts or simply as reflexive acts.

What is striking here is that Anne is judging from a third-person perspective whether the cat exists or the act of intuiting (the cat) exists. But is it not true that the first-person perspective is a specific feature of the judgements we make about our own acts? One of the difficulties with Ockham is how he provides examples of judgements about one's acts from both the third-person and first-person perspectives, switching back and forth between these quite freely. For example, in the very same *Quodlibet* he writes: "I assent evidently to the proposition 'I am seeing', and I maintain that this assent is caused by a vision of that vision."²³ Of course, I evidently judge *that I see* on the very same basis on which I can also judge that *this act (of seeing) exists*, namely based on the intuitive cognition of the act of seeing: the "vision of that vision" here is merely the intuitive cognition of the act of seeing. How can the same intuitive cognition of an act give rise to judgements from both the third-person and the first-person perspective? A serious problem arises when making the strict analogy between the intuition of external things and then intuition of mental acts. If the intuitive cognition of the act merely refers to the process of grasping an act as a *thing*, but not to grasping this as *one's own act*, then how can the subject ascribe this act to herself non-arbitrarily, that is to say, in a way by that excludes the possibility of her ascribing it to another person?

As previously mentioned, I think that turning to acts of will as a necessary condition could provide the answer to this question. But before moving on to consider the role of the will in Ockham's account, I will start by summarizing his account of reflexive acts of intuition in terms of awareness: Whenever we (reflexively) intuit our own act we are always aware of it. Again, this is a kind of *non-propositional object awareness*. This specific object awareness is an *objectual act awareness*. The *objectual act awareness* (awareness of the act) is part of a *propositional act awareness*. Now the issue here is that this object awareness can give rise to two different kinds of *propositional act awareness*, namely (a) the awareness *that the act exists* or (b) the awareness *that one's own act exists*. The latter is problematic since it implies the self-ascription of the act. With these distinctions at hand, I will now turn my attention to the role of acts of will in Ockham's account.

3. Acts of will as a necessary condition for reflexive acts of intuition

Ockham attempts to respond to the objection of infinite regress by adding acts of will as a further condition for reflexive intuitive acts. This objection is raised in the *Quaestiones Varias*.²⁴ It goes as follows:

[...] [A] reflexive act is neither caused by the direct act nor by the object of the direct act. After all, if this were the case, then, insofar as these are natural causes, by parity of reasoning they [the direct act or its object] would cause [another] act, one that is reflexive on that [preceding reflexive] act, and so on to infinity. And so one reflexive act could only be caused if an infinite number of them were to be caused, which is false.²⁵

I think the wording is a little misleading here: The point is not that the same direct act – for instance, an act of seeing a cat – can give rise to infinitely many reflexive acts of seeing the cat. Rather, if it is held that an act is sufficient to cause another act, then this other act should also suffice to cause another act which, in turn, would suffice to cause yet another act, and so on. The underlying assumption here is that the direct and reflexive acts have similar causal powers. If the direct act causes the reflexive act, then this will give rise to a causally connected chain of an infinite number of acts. This is something Ockham does not want to accept. He thus replies as follows:

[...] [I] say that a reflexive act is caused by the direct act as [its] object and by an act of will – namely, one by which one wills that the act be intellectually cognized. That it is [partly] caused by the direct act is clear, since the reflexive act depends necessarily on the direct act, and cannot be caused without the direct act's existing. Hence, it depends on [the direct act] as some kind of cause and, clearly, only as an efficient cause. That an act of will is [also] required is obvious, since someone can think about something and, nevertheless, not perceive that he is thinking about it. In the same way, someone can see and not perceive that he sees. But if a reflexive act were caused just by the intellect and the direct act, then as soon as the direct act is introduced and so long as it persists, the intellect would immediately and necessarily perceive that it thinks. But this is manifestly contrary to experience.²⁶

For Ockham, since the direct act, by itself, is only necessary, but not sufficient to cause a reflexive act, it does not give rise to an infinite chain of causally connected reflexive acts. He states that it only *partially* causes the reflexive act because we can only grasp our own act if this act actually occurs – just as we can only intuitively grasp something external if this thing exists and is present to us. In his view, it is clear that the direct act alone does not suffice to produce a reflexive act, as we do not simply gain an automatic awareness of being aware whenever we are aware of something.

This should be the case, however, were the direct act a sufficient cause for the reflexive act. Aside from the fact that this would imply an infinite chain of acts, it would not do justice to the phenomenon in question, namely, one's *act awareness*. As Ockham puts it, this is "contrary to experience". He clearly denies that we have, as I mentioned previously, *objectual act awareness* whenever we have *object awareness (of something)*. Furthermore, propositional act awareness is not something we have whenever we are aware of something, since objectual act awareness is part of propositional act awareness. Ockham thus concludes that an act of will is required in order to explain why we are sometimes aware of being aware and why we are sometimes unaware of being aware. To put it crudely, we only become aware of our occurrent act if we *want* to become aware of it. Ockham continues:

And so it is clear that it is not necessary to posit an infinite regress, since the will can *want one act of the intellect to be cognized and yet not want another act to be cognized*. From this it becomes clear [...] that it is in the power of the will to reflect upon its own act and *upon the act of the intellect*. And this is not the case as regards the intellect, because [the intellect] is purely passive.²⁷

Several points are worth noting here. First, there is one important difference between the power of the intellect and the power of the will: As Ockham puts it, the intellect is "purely passive". Obviously, being "purely passive" does not imply being "totally inactive", since the intellect produces an act of, say, intuition once all the requisite conditions have been met. What Ockham seems to have in mind here becomes clear in contrast with acts of will. The point is that unlike acts of the intellect, acts of will may be produced in one situation while they may not be produced in another similar situation.

It is not possible for the intellect to produce an act of intuition of something in situation *A* but not in situation *B* if situations *A* and *B* are alike. For instance, if the same cat is present to the subject in situations *A* and *B*, if it is the same distance from the subject and the lighting conditions are the same, etc., and the subject intuits the cat in situation *A*, then given that the two situations are the same, it is not possible that the subject will not intuit the cat in situation *B*. One could say that acts of the intellect are completely determined by compliance with the requirements, whereas acts of will are not.²⁸ As Ockham puts it elsewhere, an act of will can occur freely.²⁹ In the *Quodlibeta* he writes: "... it should be noted that what I am calling freedom is the power by which I can indifferently and contingently posit diverse things, in such a way that I am both able to cause and able not to cause the same effect when there is no difference anywhere outside this power."³⁰ Note the passive mood in the following: Ockham says that the will "wants one act of the intellect *to be cognized (cognosci)*." Due to the "division of labor" of the two powers, the will itself does not cognize anything; only the intellect cognizes things. The will "directs" the intellect to one of its acts *as an object of cognition* by drawing the attention to it. Ockham also calls this act of the will *reflexive*. What does this mean? Recall that – ontologically speaking – the powers of the will and the intellect pertain to the same subject, namely the rational soul. An act of

will which is directed at an act of the intellect *as an object* is reflexive if – and only if – both acts pertain to the same subject, i.e. the same rational soul.

This act of will is only secondary in relation to acts of will that are directed at external things. Ockham is committed to the view that we cognize external things before we can make our own acts into objects of cognition. He repeatedly states that “the will can only want something that is cognized.”³¹ Since the subject first cognizes external things in the order of cognition, acts of will are initially directed toward these things. If something desirable is presented to the subject by a cognitive act, then the will can produce an act of wanting that thing.³² For instance, if Anne perceives a juicy apple, then she can want that apple. Trivially, Anne can only want that apple if she is somehow aware of it. She (only) becomes aware of it by means of a cognitive act. The will being directed at external things presented by first-order cognitive acts is something like the will’s “default” position: It takes a further act of will to make the cognitive act itself *an object* of cognition.

As I said in the introduction, one way of framing the critique of the reflection account of self-awareness is to say that it is not enough simply for both the first-order act and the reflexive act of grasping this act to pertain to the same subject. Critics of this account say that the ontological identity of the subject – both acts pertaining ontologically to the same subject – does not explain the psychological identity of the subject of awareness.

Although Ockham is not explicit about this, I think it is possible for him to account for the identity of the psychological subject by determining the limits or boundaries of the psychological subject in terms of the causal powers of her will. As I would like to demonstrate, the fact that the subject can voluntarily turn her attention away from the object of a direct cognitive act to that act itself only when dealing with her *own acts* is not contingent. The point is that only *her own* acts are vehicles of cognition *for her* insofar as it is by means of *her* acts that she becomes aware of the *objects* of these acts. By speaking of cognitive acts as “vehicles of cognition”, I merely wish to stress that, ontologically speaking, the cognitive *act* is the *means* of cognition and not its *content*. To highlight another aspect in this regard, I think it is also important to note the following explanatory relation here. The occurrence of an act of intuition – of, say, a cat – in my intellect explains why I see that very cat; it is not because I intuit a cat that an act of intuition occurs in my intellect. In other words, that an act of intuition of that cat obtains in my intellect is the reason why I intuit that cat.³³ Ontologically speaking, the act is the very thing that must be highlighted in order to form the basis of an explanation of cognition. I will now move on to the case of mind-reading angels in order to develop and explain this in greater depth.

4. Mind-reading subjects: the case of angels

Why is it not trivial to say that we can turn our attention away from the object of an act, as a mere means of presentation, and towards that very act itself? And why is the power of the will so important for Ockham’s account of self-awareness? It is possible to answer these questions if we consider the case of mind-reading angels, who can intuit not only their own cognitive acts but also the acts of their fellow angels. But there is still one important difference between intuiting the acts of others and

reflexively intuiting one's own acts: As I indicated in the introduction, the requirement for an act to be directed at another act in order to be reflexive is only a necessary condition; but this condition alone is not sufficient, since another requirement for a reflexive act is that both acts must pertain to the same ontological subject.³⁴

In the *Quodlibeta*, Ockham presents an argument he intends to use to establish that the direct act and the reflexive act are indeed two distinct acts and not just one. It reads as follows:

[...] [I] claim that the direct act and the reflexive act are not a single act. I prove this, first, as follows: If anything is cognized by a given power through an act that is of a different type from the object, then that thing can be cognized by another power of the same type through an exactly similar act. But one angel cognizes another angel's act though an act distinct from the cognized act. Therefore, an angel whose act is cognized by another angel is able to cognize its own act through a cognition that is exactly similar to the cognition through which the other angel cognizes it. But this cognition is distinct in species from the object. Therefore, it is a different act.³⁵

The general assumption concerning powers, their acts and the objects of these acts can be illustrated as follows: Suppose there are two human subjects, Peter and Anne, and Peter is seeing a cat. Of course, Peter's act of seeing and the cat are different in kind: a perceptual act is not of the same ontological category as a substance. Now if Peter can see the cat, then Anne can also see it, since her sense of sight is of the same kind as Peter's. Humans, however, are not able to cognize the acts that occur in the intellects of their fellow human beings. This is why Ockham resorts to angels, for whom this is not the case. Now if one angel (Michael) can intuitively grasp the act of another angel (Gabriel), then Gabriel, whose act is cognized by Michael, can also grasp his own act by means of an act that is similar to Michael's, since angels have the same kinds of cognitive powers. This similarity is structural: Michael's act is directed at Gabriel's act as its *object*, just as Gabriel's act is directed at his own act as its *object*. It is this structural similarity that has caused scholars to criticize Ockham for being unable to account for the asymmetry between first-person and third-person access to cognitive acts in general.³⁶

In my view, Ockham does not fail to account for this asymmetry, since this similarity is merely structural, and thus *partial*: True, a reflexive act is an act that takes another act as its object, just as a case of grasping the act of another subject is an act that takes this act as its object. One crucial difference, however, is that the reflexive act can occur only *voluntarily*, whereas the non-reflexive act of grasping an act can occur *involuntarily*. In the case involving the angels, one could object that Ockham does not explicitly refer to an act of will as a necessary condition. Note that Ockham's aim is to show that direct acts and reflexive acts are different kinds of acts. He does not need to mention acts of will at all for this purpose. However, it is appropriate to posit an act of will as a necessary condition for a reflexive act so as not to fall prey to the kind of infinite regress argument I discussed earlier. Ockham makes it clear that an

angel can intuitively grasp the act of another subject in the same way that a human subject can intuitively grasp an extra-mental thing. In this respect, the angelic intellect is just as passive as the human intellect: If a thing is present to the subject, without any impediments, this causes the intellect to produce an act of intuitive cognition.³⁷ As Ockham puts it, the act of a subject can act upon the intellect of an angel “in the way of an object” (*per modum obiecti*). Elsewhere, he writes: “... one angel acts upon another only in the manner of an object, since it can be the object of an intuitive or abstractive cognition and [the object] of an act of will.³⁸ He expands upon this point in the following:

[...] [A]n angel can only cause something by willing and understanding [something]. Given that one [angel] can see another [angel] intuitively and love him, the angel that is seen can be a partial cause of another [angel’s] act of intuitive cognition and volition, just as the object is a partial cause *without* [there being] *any previous act of the intellect or the will.*³⁹

The crucial point is made in the very last line: an angelic subject can intuitively grasp a thing – be it extra-mental or mental – without previously cognizing or willing anything at all; as Ockham says, “without any previous act of the intellect or will.”⁴⁰

By contrast, a subject who reflexively grasps one of her own acts must first cognize something by means of *some act* to which she then *wants* to turn her attention to *as an object of cognition*. The cognitive act is not initially present to the subject *as an object*; instead, it only serves as a *vehicle* of cognition for her. By contrast, the act of another subject is only present to the mind-reading subject *as an object*; it never serves as a *vehicle of cognition* for her. For this reason, the mind-reading subject cannot voluntarily turn her attention to the act of another subject as an object of cognition. If this act is present to her at all, then it presents itself as an *object of cognition*. Ockham also discusses the question whether the mind-reading angel who intuitively grasps my intuitive act also thereby grasps the object of my intuition. He puts it as follows: “But if it is supposed that he [the angel] intuitively sees our acts of thinking and our affections, then the doubt is this: does he intuitively see the object limiting (*terminans*) [the act]?”⁴¹

What does it mean that the object “limits” or “restricts” the intuitive act? Ockham accounts for both the unity and the identity of an act of intuitive cognition by means of its *object*. If it is a cat that is present to a subject, then the cat itself *causes* the subject’s intellect to produce an act of intuitive cognition *of the cat*: by having this intuitive act, the subject becomes aware of its object, namely of *this cat* (and not of any other cat). I think that Ockham’s answer is in the negative because of the – causally determined – function of the intuitive act, namely that of making the subject that experiences the act aware of its *very object*. He replies:

It can be said that, in fact, [the angel] only sees the object that limits the act in general and by means of a concept that is common to him and to others. Suppose that I love Socrates, then the angel can

intuitively see my love if it is near to him and he sees that I love a man, but he does not see that I love Socrates. In the same way [...], if I think of Socrates, he can intuitively see my thought and he can see that I am thinking of a man, but he cannot see that I am thinking about this or that [man]. And the total cause is that the object of the act can only be cognized by the power cognizing the act by discourse and acuteness.⁴²

Roughly speaking, his general idea is that if a mind-reading subject cognizes another subject's intuitive act, the mind-reading subject does not become aware of the object of the intuitive act in the same way that she becomes aware of the other subject's activity of intuiting; at best, she gets some general idea of what kind of thing the object of the intuitive act is; that is, whether it is a cat or a dog.

This has something to do with the question of the – *representational* – content of an act of intuition. The issue of the content of cognitive acts in Ockham is hotly debated and presents a problem in itself.⁴³ It suffices to say here that, according to Ockham, the mind-reading subject is not able to demonstratively *identify* the particular object (*this* cat, and not *that* cat) by merely “looking at” the intuitive act. To simplify things for the purposes of the paper, think of an intuitive act as something that represents its object in the way that a picture represents a thing.⁴⁴ Suppose Anne takes a picture of an apple. Since there are many apples that all look very similar, it will be hard – if not impossible – for Peter to know which particular apple Anne took the picture of by merely looking at the picture. That is, by looking at the photograph Peter can learn that Anne took a picture of *a certain* apple, but just looking at the picture does not allow Peter to become directly acquainted, so to speak, with that particular apple. The cognitive situation of the mind-reading angel is similar to that of the subject merely looking at a picture of a thing which may be similar to many other things.

This is why Ockham states that “[the angel] only sees the object ... in general and by means of a concept that is common to him and to others.” Unlike the mind-reading subject, the subject intuiting a particular cat has the ability to *demonstratively* or *deictically identify* that very same cat. But this is because of the way in which the intuition presents the cat to her. Rather, it is due to the causal relation that obtains between the intuitive act and its object. Since an object such as a cat can only cause an intuitive act if it is present to the subject, the intuiting subject can demonstrate the object of her intuition simply by pointing to it and thereby deictically identifying it.

Let us consider a similar example to the one provided by Ockham. Anne and Peter are out in the garden during apple-picking season. For the sake of the argument, let us suppose that Peter can intuitively grasp Anne's acts. Anne intuits a nice shiny red apple in the garden. Now Anne, having been made aware of this nice apple by her intuition, wants to pick it. The possibility of demonstrative identification implied by her intuition means that Anne knows where that apple is, hence she knows where to direct herself in order to reach it. By contrast, Peter, concentrating on Anne's acts of thought, grasps her intuitive act, thus becoming aware that Anne is aware of some apple or other. Now it is possible, on this cognitive basis, that Peter wants to pick the

very apple that Anne herself is intuiting. However, merely grasping Anne's intuitive act does not mean that Peter knows where to find the apple he wants to pick. To put it crudely, Peter does not himself intuit the apple by merely seeing Anne's *intuition* of the apple, and this is simply because the intuition does not occur *in him*, but in Anne.

The crucial difference, however, is this: Anne is not only able to produce an act of will with respect to the object of her intuitive act, but she can also want to turn her attention to her intuitive act as an object of cognition. By contrast, it does not make sense for Peter to want to turn his attention to Anne's intuitive act as an object of cognition in the same way since Anne's act is always, and only ever, an *object*, and never a *means* of cognition *for him*. There is no point of wanting here for Peter, since it is not sensible to want something that one already has or something that is already happening, just as it does not make sense to want something that cannot happen. If Anne is aware of an apple, there is no point in her wanting to become aware of that apple. Likewise, as Peter is already aware of Anne's awareness of an apple, there is no point in him wanting to become aware of Anne's awareness as an object of cognition because he is already aware of it as an object; further, there is no point in Peter wanting to become aware of the apple by means of Anne's direct first-order act, the object of which is that particular apple, since this is impossible for him. I therefore think Ockham can account for the asymmetry between first-person and third-person perspectives in terms of the possible acts of will: A subject can only sensibly want to turn her attention to an act as an *object* of cognition if that act is a means of cognition *for her*.

This raises the question of how exactly Ockham can account for the possibility of voluntarily turning the attention to one's act as an *object* of cognition without falling into the trap of creating a circular argument. Recall that Ockham says that "the will cannot want a thing unless that thing is cognized."⁴⁵ If this is taken to mean that the subject of the act must already have some awareness of her act if she is to voluntarily draw her attention to it as an object of cognition, then the account would indeed be circular.

In my view, the point to be made here is this: If a subject becomes aware of something by means of a cognitive act, then the subject is simply able to turn her attention to her own act as an object of cognition because her awareness of a thing tells her that there is something, namely some cognitive act, that is making her aware of the thing, just as (by analogy) the presence of smoke can indicate to a subject that something must be producing the smoke, namely fire. Since the cognitive act that makes the subject aware of something is an entity within her rational soul, the subject can draw her (intellectual) attention to it, just as she can draw her attention to the fire by following the direction of the smoke. Of course, the ability to track down fire in the presence of smoke presupposes, among other things, that the subject is least in possession of the concepts of *smoke* and *fire*, including the causal relation between these two concepts. Analogously, turning to one's act as an object of cognition presupposes at least possession of the concept of a *cognitive act*, including the causal relation between the act and its object. It also presupposes some inferential abilities, such as the capacity to infer that being presently aware of something means that some cognitive act actually occurs.

In the *Quodlibeta*, Ockham clearly states that it may be necessary to draw an inference from an effect to its cause in certain cases to be certain about the *kind* of object of our cognition: “I am certain that I am having an experiential cognition because I see the vision of the rock. But it is by reasoning from effect to cause that I am certain that I am cognizing a rock discursively – in the way that I cognize a fire through its smoke...”⁴⁶ Although the problem discussed here concerns a different, epistemological problem, this passage is relevant as far as avoiding the aforementioned circular argument is concerned. The crucial point it makes is that Ockham has the conceptual means to avoid the circle by resorting to concept possession and inferential abilities, because doing so does not presuppose the awareness of our acts as a prerequisite for the ability to turn our attention to such acts as the object of our cognition. But why is that the case? It could be argued that turning our attention to our act as an object *is* simply cognizing it.⁴⁷ However, this objection fails to hit the mark. Consider Anne again: Suppose she has the relevant concept of a *cognitive act* and is able to draw inferences from effects to causes. Then suppose that Anne is presently aware of her cat because she intuits it. In this situation, Anne can infer that since she is aware of her cat, there must obtain some cognitive – that is, intuitive – act that makes her aware of her cat. At this point, by tokening the general concept *cognitive act*, Anne might think of cognitive acts *in general*; however, she does not yet need to be aware of her own act *in particular*. And, most importantly, it is on the cognitive, general basis that Anne then can *want* to track down the *particular* act that is occurring. True, it is plausible to suggest that turning our attention to our acts as objects is what makes us aware of such acts. But this does not presuppose any awareness of the act in question *before* turning our attention to this act. Ockham’s account of act-awareness is not, therefore, circular.

Finally, let us briefly consider the structure of human *memory* insofar as it mirrors the asymmetry between the first-person and third-person perspectives.⁴⁸ The upshot of Ockham’s conception is that, strictly speaking, one can only remember one’s *own* past acts, not other people’s acts; here, the act of remembering is nothing other than an evident judgement about one’s past act or acts.⁴⁹ Ockham writes:

Thus I say that the act of remembering has a twofold object, namely a partial and a total one. The partial object is a past act of the individual person who is remembering, and this can be an intuitive or abstractive act in the intellect or in the sensitive power, or [it can be] an act of striving in the will or in the sensitive appetite. The *immediate* partial object is not an act of anyone other than the one person who is remembering, for instance, another man’s act of reading [loudly], arguing or writing. The point is that I only remember such acts insofar as I remember hearing or seeing that person doing these things, so that my act, as the act of the person who is remembering, was at some point directed at those acts of disputing, reading, etc.⁵⁰

The asymmetry between remembering one’s own acts, strictly speaking, and “remembering” other people’s acts is articulated here in terms of the “immediate” and

“mediate” (partial) object of an act of remembering (*actus recordandi*).⁵¹ Only past acts of the person who *is* remembering are immediate objects, whereas other people’s acts are only mediate objects. If Anne remembers that she saw Peter petting the cat yesterday, then Peter’s act of petting the cat is only the *mediate* object of her act of remembering insofar as that act of petting the cat was the *immediate* or direct object of her past act of seeing. Ockham’s examples reflect the fact that he is concerned only with human – and not angelic – cognition here: We can say that only acts that are cognitively accessible to human perception can be the object of our own acts. But there is no such restriction when it comes to the cognition of our own acts, and this is due to the possibility of reflexively grasping any of our occurrent acts.

Any act that occurs in a person at some point as a vehicle or means of (intellectual or sensitive) cognition in that very person or, as Ockham adds here, an act that serves as a vehicle of (intellectual or sensitive) striving or desiring becomes a potential object of her *future* cognition due to the mere passage of time. Analogously, any act that is currently occurring is the potential object of some possible reflexive act *in the present*. The question that naturally arises is how something that no longer exists, like an act that has ceased to exist, can be the object of another act. This is where Ockham’s conception of habits becomes pertinent: In his view, any act which is occurring produces a habit; that is, some kind of disposition to produce similar acts. These acts are also individuated by their objects. Thus if Anne saw her cat playing, then her act of seeing produced a habit that has enabled her to mentally picture her cat in its absence.⁵² The cognitive mechanism that makes it possible to turn one’s attention to one’s past act as an object of cognition seems to involve both inferential abilities and reflection: If Anne pictures the playing cat in its absence, then Anne can take her act of picturing this – to which she can reflexively turn her attention – to indicate the former presence of some act in which she saw the cat playing. This, of course, involves other inferential abilities as well, such as taking the ability to picture a thing in its absence as a result of having perceived it. Anne can further infer and evidently judge that the cat played because of it being the object of her act of seeing it playing in the past. She cannot make the – admittedly, strange – inference that she herself was playing (like a cat), since that act of playing for her was never a *vehicle* or means (of action, in this case) but only an *object* of cognition.

Evident judgements about other people’s past acts and actions presuppose some cognition of them from which these judgements can be inferred. Perhaps it can be said that in Ockham’s view, what humans are able to sensibly *want* with respect to the acts and actions of others is the desire to *know* about them. And they can do so by means of their *own* acts, that is, insofar as the acts of others are the *object* of their own acts. But, again, other people’s acts – including the endeavours that become manifest in their actions – are always and only ever *objects*; they are never the *means* of cognition or willing for oneself. In this sense, then, the structure of memory mirrors the asymmetry between the first-person and third-person perspectives.

5. Conclusion

My aim in writing this paper was to show that Ockham can account for reflexive self-awareness in a non-circular way. According to Ockham, we only become

aware of our acts if we voluntarily draw our attention to them. In my view, Ockham can give us a plausible explanation as to why subjects can correctly and non-arbitrarily ascribe their acts to themselves based on acts of will that are connected to reflexive acts. By necessity, a subject can only willingly turn her attention to an act as an object of cognition if that act also presents something to her as a (mere) vehicle or as a means of cognition. Only her own acts present things to her, however, so it is not at all trivial that a subject can *only* reflexively grasp her own acts. It has become clear that resorting to an act of will as a necessary condition for a reflexive act of the intellect does not force Ockham to admit another kind of self-awareness in addition to reflexive act awareness. Turning one's attention to one's own acts, and *only* to one's own acts, as objects of cognition simply by wanting to do so does not presuppose some sort of *self*-awareness of those acts.

Ockham seems to hold that the nature of the rational soul means that a human subject is able to want things from a first-person perspective. This perspective would appear to be nothing but the perspective a subject takes on things that are presented to her by acts which serve as a means of cognition for her. Perhaps then, turning one's attention to the means of cognition as *objects* of cognition is nothing other than some way of making the perspective one usually takes on things explicit.

What I would like to suggest is that according to Ockham, the first-person perspective is not constituted by some basic kind of self-awareness; rather, it is "constituted" by our power of willing, or not willing, the things we are aware of by means of first-order cognitive acts. That is to say, my awareness of things, combined with the power of wanting or not wanting those things, is what makes me look at these things from *my very perspective*. And although I can make the perspective that I usually adopt explicit to myself, I do not need to do so in order to act from this perspective. The ability to cognize and want things from this perspective, however, is something that escapes further elucidation. As far as Ockham is concerned, the explanation stops here.

References

¹ For this tendency see Brower-Toland, S., "Medieval Approaches to Consciousness: Ockham and Chatton", *Philosophers' Imprint* 12/17 (2012): 1–29; Perler, D., "Suárez on Consciousness", *Vivarium* 52/3 (2014): 261–86; Perler, D. and Schierbaum, S., *Selbstbezug und Selbstwissen – Texte zu einer mittelalterlichen Debatte* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2014), 46–48; Rode, Chr., *Zugänge zum Selbst. Innere Erfahrung in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2015), 19–34; Yrjönsuuri, M., "Types of Self-Awareness in Medieval Thought", in: *Mind and Modality: Studies in the History of Philosophy in Honour of Simo Knuuttila*, eds. V. Hirvonen, T. J. Holopainen, and M. Touminen (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 153–69; Yrjönsuuri, M., "The Structure of Self-Consciousness: A Fourteenth-Century Debate", in *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*, eds. S. Heinämaa, V. Lähteenmäki, and P. Remes (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 141–152.

² For the contemporary debate, Güven Güzeldere structures these problems by distinguishing between five different types of questions. See Güzeldere, G., "Approaching Consciousness", in *The Nature of Consciousness – Philosophical Debates*, eds. N. Block, O. Flanagan, and G. Güzeldere (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 30–31.

³ The kind of problem I am alluding to here is the allegedly “easy” problem of consciousness as opposed to the “hard” problem of consciousness, which pertains to the “what-it-is-like-to-have-it” question of undergoing mental states. From a contemporary perspective, the problem is that there is an explanatory gap between the scientifically explainable cognitive functions of mental states and their subjective feel. Cf. Chalmers, D., “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2/3 (1995): 200–219, esp. 203.

⁴ On this terminological point see Perler, D. (2014): 261–263.

⁵ There are distinct types of “higher-order” theories, such as the “higher-order perception” (HOP) theory that was notably defended by Armstrong, D. in *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (London: Routledge, 1968) and Lycan, W. in *Consciousness and Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), and “higher-order thought” (HOT) theory, where the latter further divides into the actualist camp (for instance, Rosenthal, D., *Consciousness and Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)) and the dispositionalist camp (Dennett, D., “Toward a cognitive theory of consciousness”, in *Perception and Cognition: Issues in the Foundations of Psychology*, ed. C. Savage (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 201–228.; Carruthers, P., *Language, Thought and Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁶ For this and other objections against higher order accounts of consciousness more generally, see Aquila, R., “Consciousness as higher-order thoughts: two objections”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1990): 81–87; Dretske, F., “Conscious experience”, *Mind* 102 (1993): 263–283; Dretske, F., *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); Chalmers, D., *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷ “Hanc autem scientiam sui habet anima per immediatam conversionem sui intellectualis aspectus super se et super suos actus. Qui quidem, quamdiu est in pervigili usu liberi arbitrii, semper et continue stat super eam conversus.” Peter John Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, ed. B. Jansen (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1926), v. III, q. 76, 146.

⁸ Ockham holds that, although ontologically speaking, acts of will and acts of the intellect are distinct entities, the power of the intellect and the power of will are not two distinct entities. On Ockham’s argument that acts of a distinct nature do not necessarily imply corresponding distinct powers, see Panaccio, C., “Intellections and Volitions in Ockham’s Nominalism”, in *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. M. Pickavé and L. Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79–80.

⁹ See Schierbaum, S., “Ockham on the Possibility of Self-Knowledge: Knowing Acts without Knowing Subjects”, *Vivarium* 52 (2014): 220–240, esp. 238–240; Schierbaum, S., “Late medieval theories of (self-) consciousness”, in *Philosophy of Mind in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance: The History of the Philosophy of Mind Volume 3*, ed. St. Schmid (New York: Routledge, 2018), chapter 6, section 2.

¹⁰ These works include: Panaccio, C., “Intuition and Causality: Ockham’s Externalism Revisited”, *Quaestio* 10 (2010): 241–254; Panaccio, C., “Ockham’s Externalism”, in *Intentionality, Cognition and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. G. Klima (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 166–185; Choi, Ph., “Ockham’s weak externalism”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24/6 (2016): 1075–1096. Brower-Toland argues against any form of epistemic externalism in Ockham. See Brower-Toland, S., “Intuition, Externalism, and direct reference in Ockham”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24 (2007): 317–336.

¹¹ William of Ockham, *Ordinatio* (= *Ord.*). *Prologus et distinctio I*, Opera Theologica (= OTh) I, eds. G. Gál and S. Brown (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1967), henceforth cited as: *Ord.*, prol., q. 1 (OTh I, 39–44).

¹² Italics mine; William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans., ed. P. Boehner (Indiana: Hackett, 1990), 23. “[...] 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, [...].” *Ord.*, prol., q. 1 (OTh I, 31). (Italics mine).

¹³ I am grateful to Wolfgang Kühne for this wording. See Kühne, W., “Some Varieties of Thinking. Reflections on Meinong and Fodor”, in *Meinong und die Gegenstandstheorie, Grazer Philosophische Studien* 50, ed. R. Haller (Graz, 1995), 365–395 (370).

¹⁴ *Ord.*, prol., q. 1 (OTh I, 39–44).

¹⁵ See *Ord.*, prol., q. 1 (OTh I, 41); he explicitly refers to Augustine here. Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, lat.-dt., ed. J. Kreuzer (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), XIII.I, n. 3.

¹⁶ William of Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions, Quodl. I*, q. 14, trans. A. J. Freddoso and F. E. Kelley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 70–71. “[...] de cognitione intellectus et volitione formatur prima propositio contingens quae evidenter cognoscitur ab intellectu, puta talis ‘intellectio est, volitio est’; [...] igitur mediante cognitione intuitiva intellectionis [...]” William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem, OTh IX*, ed. J. C. Wey (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1980); henceforth cited as *Quodl. I*, q. 14, (OTh IX, 79).

¹⁷ Cf. *Quodl. V*, q. 5 (OTh IX, 496).

¹⁸ “... dico quod non accipitur actus rectus et reflexus proprie, quia illud dicitur proprie reflexum quod incipit ab eodem et terminatur in idem; et ideo nullus actus proprie dicitur reflexus. Sed accipiuntur ista improprie, quia vocatur actus rectus quo intelligimus obiectum extra animam, et actus reflexus quo intelligitur ille actus rectus.” *Quodl. II*, q. 12, (OTh 9, 165).

¹⁹ See quote in endnote 18.

²⁰ For a presentation of two medieval models of reflexivity see Perler, D. and Schierbaum, S. (2014), 41–51. Here, the two authors distinguish between a “weak” and a “strong” form of reflexivity, where the former roughly corresponds to the form of reflexivity implied by contemporary higher-order accounts of consciousness and the latter corresponds to the form of reflexivity implied by same-order accounts. Since Ockham’s conception corresponds to a higher-order account, it is no wonder that he denies that a cognitive act can be directed at itself, since self-directedness tends to be implied by same order accounts.

²¹ See section 4.

²² This interpretation is in line with Perler’s and Schierbaum’s interpretation of the same issue in Perler, D. and Schierbaum, S. (2014), 42–43.

²³ Trans. Freddoso, A. J. and Kelley, F. E. (1991), 70. “[...] evidenter assentio huic propositioni ‘ego video’, et dico quod ille assensus causatur a visione illius visionis.” *Quodl. I*, q. 14 (OTh IX, 80).

²⁴ This objection was initially raised by Scotus. Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. I, d. 3, p. 3, q. 2, n. 443 (ed. Vaticana, III, 268). It was also raised by Ockham’s contemporary and adversary, Chatton. See Walter Chatton, *Reportatio et lectura super Sententias Collatio ad librum primum et prologus*, ed. J. C. Wey (Toronto: Pontifical Inst. of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), prol., q. 2, a. 5, 118–119.

²⁵ “[...] actus reflexus non causatur ab actu recte vel obiecto actus recti. Quia si sic, cum sint causae naturales, pari ratione causabunt actum reflexum super illum actum et sic in infinitum. Et sic non posset causari unus actus reflexus nisi causarentur infiniti, quod falsum est.” William of Ockham, *Quaestiones Varias*, eds. G. Etzkorn, F. E. Kelley, and J. W. Wey (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1984), henceforth cited as *Quaest. Var.* (OTh VIII, 159–60). All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.

²⁶ Trans. S. Brower-Toland in “William Ockham on the Scope and Limits of Consciousness”, *Vivarium* 52/3-4 (2014): 197–219 (209). Original: “[...] dico quod actus reflexus causatur ab actu recte tanquam ab obiecto et ab actu voluntatis quo vult illum actum intelligi. Quod autem causetur ab actu recte patet, quia actus reflexus necessario dependet ab actu recto quia non potest causari nisi existente actu recto. Igitur in aliquo genere causae dependet, et patet quod

nonnisi sicut ab efficiente. Quod autem actus voluntatis requiritur patet, quia aliquis potest aliquid intelligere et tamen non percipere se intelligere, sicut potest aliquis videre et tamen non percipere se videre. Sed si actus reflexus causaretur praecise ab intellectu et actu recto, statim posito et stante actu recto, intellectus necessario statim perciperet se intelligere *quod est manifeste contra experientiam*.” *Quaest. Var.*, q. 5 (OTh VIII, 177–178), italics mine.

²⁷ “Et sic patet quod non oportet ponere processum in infinitum, *quia potest voluntas velle unum actum intellectus cognosci absque hoc quod velit alium cognosci*. Ex hoc patet [...] quod est in potestate voluntatis reflectere se super actum suum et *super actum intellectus*. Et non est sic in potestate intellectus, quia est pure passivus.” *Quaest. Var.*, q. 5 (OTh VIII, 177–178), italics mine.

²⁸ I would like to thank Martin Klein for drawing my attention to this terminological point.

²⁹ For a discussion of Ockham’s voluntarist’s account of the freedom of will, see Schierbaum, S., “Intellections and Volitions: Ockham’s Voluntarism Reconsidered”, in *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy*, eds. M. Roques and J. Pelletier (Cham: Springer 2017), 125–136; Osborne, Th., “William of Ockham on the Freedom of the Will and Happiness”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 86/3 (2012): 435–456.

³⁰ Trans. Freddoso, A. J. and Kelly, F. E. (1991), 75. “[...] voco libertatem potestatem qua possum indifferenter et contingenter diversa ponere, ita quod possum eundem effectum causare et non causare, nulla diversitate existente alibi extra illam potentiam.” *Quodl.* I, q. 16 (OTh IX, 87).

³¹ “...voluntas non potest aliquid velle nisi cognitum [...]” *Quodl.* III, q. 20 (OTh IX, 284).

³² When dealing with such primary volitional acts, Ockham distinguishes between non-propositional or non-complex and propositional or complex acts of will: “[...] distinctio est quod sicut quoddam est velle respectu incomplexi et hoc proprie vocatur amor, et quoddam est respectu complexi, large accipiendo complexum, sicut velle habere beatitudinem vel velle non esse vel aliquid tale, ita est quoddam nolle respectu incomplexi, et potest vocari odium vel detestatio, et est quoddam nolle respectu complexi, sicut nolle esse vel nolle habere divitias vel nolle habere honores, et tamen non odit propter hoc divitias nec honores, nisi accipiendo large ‘odire.’” *Ord.*, d. 1, q. 6, (OTh I, 502–503).

³³ This holds for all of Ockham’s accounts of cognition, for instance, with respect to his early “fictum” theory and his later “actus” theory. According to the former, the cognitive act and its representational content are ontologically distinct, since it is by means of a so-called *species* that extra-mental objects are presented to the subject; according to the latter, the representational content of an act is not ontologically distinct from that act. However, it is possible to distinguish between the act (as an entity) and its representational content by means of the act’s function of presenting its object to the subject. In this sense, ontologically speaking, the act is the means of cognition. For a discussion of Ockham’s two accounts, see McCord Adams, M., *William Ockham* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1987), 84–105. For a discussion of the problem of the species, see Pasnau, R., *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 18–27; Tachau, K., *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics 1250–1345* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Spruit, L., *Species Intelligibilis. From Perception to Knowledge*, Vol. I, (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 17–19; Adriaenssen, H. Th., “The Representation of Hercules: Ockham’s Critique of Species”, *Documenti e Studi* 26 (2015): 433–456.

³⁴ See above, Introduction.

³⁵ Trans. Freddoso, A. J. and Kelly, F. E. (1991), 139. “[...] dico quod actus rectus et reflexus non sunt unus actus. Quod probo primo sic: quidquid cognoscitur a potentia aliqua actu alterius rationis ab obiecto, potest cognosci actu consimili a potentia alia eiusdem rationis; sed unus angelus cognoscit actum alterius angeli actu distincto ab actu cognito; igitur angelus cuius actus cognoscitur ab alio, potest cognoscere actum proprium cognitione consimili illi

cognitioni qua alius angelus cognoscit; sed illa cognitio distinguitur specie ab obiecto; igitur est alius actus.” *Quodl.* II, q. 12 (OT IX, 165–166).

³⁶ For one such recent critique, see Brower-Toland, S., “William Ockham on the Scope and Limits of Consciousness”, *Vivarium* 52/3–4 (2014): 197–219. For a prominent critique of one of Ockham’s contemporary adversaries, see Walter Chatton (1989). For a thorough discussion of the debate between Ockham and Chatton on the issue of self-knowledge and self-awareness, see Gamboa Lopez, L. D., *Guillaume d’Ockham et Gauthier de Chatton à propos de la connaissance introspective des états mentaux*, Diss. (Montréal: Université de Québec à Montréal, 2016).

³⁷ For example, God could prevent the thing from demonstrating its power to produce an act of intuitive cognition.

³⁸ “[...] unus angelus non agit in alium nisi per modum obiecti, quia scilicet potest esse obiectum intellectionis intuitivae et abstractivae et volitionis.” William of Ockham, *Quaestiones in librum II Sententiarum*, OTh V, eds. G. Gál and R. Wood (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1981), henceforth cited as *Rep.* II, q. 16 (OTh V, 369).

³⁹ “[...] angelus non potest aliquid causare nisi volendo et intelligendo. Quia unus potest alium intuitive videre et diligere, igitur angelus visus potest esse causa partialis cognitionis intuitivae et volitionis aliterius, sicut obiectum est causa partialis *sine aliqua intellectione et volitione praevia*.” *Rep.* II, q. 6, (OTh V, 88–89), italics mine.

⁴⁰ Note that strictly speaking, Ockham should say that either an angel or one of its acts can be the (partial) cause of another angel’s act.

⁴¹ “Sed dubium est, hoc supposito quod videat cogitationes nostras et affectiones intuitive, utrum videat obiectum terminans intuitive?” *Rep.* II, q. 16 (OTh V, 366).

⁴² “Potest dici quod de facto non videt obiectum terminans actum nisi in universali et conceptu communi sibi et aliis. Quia posito quod diligam Sortem, potest angelus videre intuitive dilectionem meam si sit approximata sibi et videt quod diligo hominem, sed non videt quod diligo Sortem. Eodem modo [...] si intelligam Sortem, potest videre intellectionem meam intuitive et potest videre quod intelligo hominem, sed non quod intelligo istum vel illum. Et tota causa est quia obiectum actus non potest cognosci a potentia cognoscente actum nisi per discursum et arguitive.” *Rep.* II, q. 16 (OTh V, 366–367).

⁴³ The matter of how Ockham conceives of the (representational) content of acts of intuition is hotly debated among his scholars. See Panaccio, C. (2010); Brower-Toland, S. (2007); Brower-Toland, S., “Causation and Mental Content: Against the Externalist Reading of Ockham”, in *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy*, eds. M. Roques and J. Pelletier (Cham: Springer, 2017), 59–80. This topic, although important, is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴⁴ For a more thorough discussion of the representational content of acts of intuition and concepts based on intuitive cognition, see Panaccio, C., *Ockham on Concepts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

⁴⁵ Trans. Freddoso, A. J. and Kelley, F. E. (1991), 236. “[...] voluntas non potest aliquid velle nisi cognitum [...]” *Quodl.* III, q. 20 (OTh IX, 284).

⁴⁶ Trans. Freddoso, A. J. and Kelley, F. E. (1991), 71. “[...] sum certus quod intelligo per experientiam quia video visionem lapidis; sed certus sum quod intelligo lapidem per discursum ab effectu ad causam, sicut cognosco ignem per fumum [...]” *Quodl.* I, q. 14 (OTh IX, 82). Cf. *Quodl.* I, q. 6 (OTh IX, 40).

⁴⁷ I would like to thank Martin Klein for raising this objection.

⁴⁸ Cf. William of Ockham, *Reportatio. Quaestiones in Librum Quartum Sententiarum*, Opera Theologica VII, eds. R. Wood, G. Gál, adlaborante R. Green (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1984) henceforth cited as *Rep.* IV, q. 14 (OTh VII, 278–317).

⁴⁹ See *Rep.* IV, q. 14 (OTh VII, 312); see also Perler, D. and Schierbaum, S. (2014), 411–412.

⁵⁰ “Unde dico quod actus recordandi habet duplex obiectum, scilicet partiale et totale. Obiectum partiale est actus recordantis praeteritus, et hoc potest esse actus intuitivus vel abstractivus in intellectu vel in potentia sensitiva, vel actus appetendi in voluntate vel in appetitu sensitivo. Non enim obiectum partiale immediatum est actus alterius a recordante, puta actus legendi vel disputandi vel scribendi alterius hominis. Quia de talibus non recordor nisi quatenus recordor me audivisse vel vidisse eum talia facere, ita quod actus meus, qui sum recordans, aliquando terminabatur ad illos actus disputandi, legendi etc.” *Rep.* IV, q. 14 (OTh VII, 295).

⁵¹ Ockham distinguishes two such objects: one is the act that is remembered, the other is a past-tense (mental) proposition that is evidently judged to be true. Possible forms of this include: ‘I φ -ied’ or ‘I φ -ied x’. Cf. *Rep.* IV, q. 14 (OTh VII, 295). For a further discussion of Ockham’s conception of memory see also Wolter, A. and McCord Adams, M., “Memory and Intuition: A Focal Debate in Fourteenth Century Cognitive Psychology”, *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 175–230.

⁵² For a most recent discussion of Ockham’s account of habits, see Roques, M., “Ockham on Habits”, in *The Ontology, Psychology and Axiology of Habits (Habitus) in Medieval Philosophy*, eds. M. Roques and N. Faucher (Springer: Dordrecht, forthcoming).