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The Relation-Theory of Mental Acts: Durand of St.-Pourçain on the Ontological Status of Mental Acts

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Abstract: The relation-theory of mental acts proposes that a mental act is a kind of relative entity founded upon the mind and directed at the object of perception or thought. While most medieval philosophers recognized that there is something importantly relational about thought, they nevertheless rejected the view that mental acts are wholly relations. Rather, the dominant view was that a mental act is either in whole or part an Aristotelian quality added to the mind upon which such a relation to the object can be founded. In this paper, I examine Durand of St.-Pourçain’s defense of the relation-theory of mental acts against two objections raised against it: the first from John Duns Scotus, among others, and the second from an anonymous Thomist and Adam Wodeham.

Sometimes I change my mind. A moment ago I was thinking about my macchiato — indeed, I was looking at its color and had its taste on the tip of my tongue. But now I am thinking about this piece of paper before me. Last night, in a deep and dreamless sleep, I was thinking about nothing at all, perhaps, and in the morning, when I woke up, I started having thoughts and perceptions the moment I opened my eyes. My mind changes and it undergoes discrete mental episodes. Medieval authors called such episodes cognitive or mental acts.

In this article, I will look at a debate that occurred at the turn of the 14th century over the ontological status of such mental acts — what is a mental act? — with a special focus on Durand of St.-Pourçain. The dominant view holds that a mental act is or at the very least requires a quality added to the mind and that episodic mental change is or at the very least requires a kind of qualitative change to the mind.¹ When I newly perceive the color on the wall, my mind is affected and undergoes a kind of qualitative change resulting in a new quality added to it; this quality either is or is required for a mental act. Such a view I will call the quality-theory of mental acts (QTMA). Philosophers as different as Godfrey of Fontaines, who maintained that thought and perception are both completely passive,² Thomas Aquinas, who maintained that at least thought is

1. In what follows, unless the context demands a more fine-grained term, I will use ‘mind’ and ‘mental acts’ to characterize what medieval authors would call the intellectual and sensitive powers of the soul and their intellectual and sensitive acts, or more generally, cognitive powers and their cognitive acts. As well, my focus will be on what medieval authors called ‘direct’ mental acts — acts directed at some item outside the mind — and not ‘reflexive’ mental acts — acts directed at some further mental act or the mind itself.

2. On Godfrey, see Antoine Côté, “L’objet et la cause de la connaissance selon Godefroid de Fontaines” [in French], *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 54, no. 3 (2007): 407–429 and Peter Hartman, “Causation and Cognition: Durand of St.-Pourçain and Godfrey of Fontaines on the Cause of a Cognitive Act,” in *Durandus and His Sentences Commentary*:

an action, even if perception is a passion,³ and Peter John Olivi, who maintained that all cognition is active in character,⁴ still agreed that mental acts either are or at least require qualities added to the mind.

The alternative view — very much a minority position — rejects QTMA: a mental act is not nor does it require a new quality added to the mind, and episodic mental change is not nor does it require a qualitative change to the mind. However, this is just a negative thesis, and there are at least two ways of developing the positive alternative. On the one hand, one might suppose that mental acts are not at all really distinct from the mind — at best a mental act is conceptually distinct, and mental change is not a kind of real change at all. We might call this theory the identity-theory of mental acts (ITMA): on this view, mental acts are really identical with the mind. Such a view, while applicable to divine cognition, seems on the surface to be untenable if applied to human minds, for non-divine mental acts are really distinct from our minds, and mental change is a real kind of change.⁵ The other way of developing the alternative to QTMA, however, allows that a mental act is a real entity really distinct from and added to the mind, and that mental change is a real kind of change. However, it is not a new non-relational entity, such as a quality, but rather a new relative entity of some sort, having as much ontological standing as certain real relations do. On this view, mental acts are wholly relations and mental change is best analyzed as a kind of relational change. This is the view — call it the relation-theory of mental acts (RTMA) — that Durand of

Historical, Philosophical and Theological Issues, ed. A. Speer et al., *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales: biblioteca 9* (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014), 229–256 and the references therein, especially *Quodl.* (ed. Hoffmans) 9.19. See also below footnote 14.

3. On Aquinas’s views about the ontological standing of mental acts and mental change, see especially Giorgio Pini, “Two Models of Thinking: Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus,” in *Intentionality, Cognition and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Gyula Klima (Fordham University: Fordham University Press, 2015), 81–103 and Jeffrey Brower and Susan Brower-Toland, “Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality,” *The Philosophical Review* 117, no. 2 (2008): 193–243 and the references therein. In general, a proponent of the *species*-theory of cognition, according to which cognition requires the reception of a *species*, will subscribe to the QTMA, as defined here. Some might hold a further stronger form wherein the mental act is some quality in addition to *species* — such as John Duns Scotus — but for our purposes here both views amount to the same thing.

4. For Olivi, see especially *Sent.* 2 (ed. Jansen) q. 72, 36–37, q. 58, 470–473, q. 25, q. 16, and q. 54, 274. Olivi maintains that mental acts are distinct from his notion of ‘virtual attention’: they are non-relational accidental qualities really distinct from and produced by the mind. For discussion, see Juhana Toivanen, *Perception and the Internal Senses: Peter John Olivi on the Cognitive Functions of the Sensitive Soul* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), esp. chs. 1 and 8, Han Thomas Adriaenssen, “Peter John Olivi on Perceptual Representation,” *Vivarium* 49 (2011): 324–352, José Silva and Juhana Toivanen, “The Active Nature of the Soul in Sense Perception: Robert Kilwardby and Peter Olivi,” *Vivarium* 48 (2010): 245–78, and Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 130–134, 168–180, 236–246, 271–276.

5. Some of Richard Drayton’s critics pinned this view on him. On Drayton, see below, footnote 11. For discussion of Drayton’s view as a kind of ITMA, see especially Walter Chatton, *Lect.* (ed. Etzkorn) 1.3.1, a. 1, *Rep.* (ed. Wey and Etzkorn) 2.5.1, dub. 2, 235–236, Wodeham, *Lect. secunda* (ed. Wood), 1.1.4, 255, *Lect. oxoniensis* (PARIS, *Bibl. de l’université (Sorbonne)* 193) 1.1.2, f. 16rb.

St.-Pourçain defends.

After sketching the historical backdrop of this debate (§1), I will present a brief overview of Durand’s core arguments in defense of RTMA (§2). I will then raise two objections put to the view: the first from John Duns Scotus (§3) and the second from Adam Wodeham and an anonymous Thomist critic (§4), assessing along the way the prospects and pitfalls of the view.

1 The historical background

Durand puts forward his version of RTMA in the earliest (*A*) redaction of his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, especially Book 2, Distinction 3, Questions 5 through 8, and Distinction 38, Questions 1 and 3, as well as in a *quaestio* entitled “Is thinking something added to the intellect making a real composition with it?” (*Utrum intelligere sit aliquid additum intellectui cum eo faciens compositionem realem*; henceforth: *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”).⁶ Durand’s lectures on Book 2, Distinction 3 (between 1303 and 1308) seem to have generated an almost immediate reaction from his contemporaries in the Dominican order, especially Hervaeus Natalis, who, upon hearing them or reading a pirated copy of them,⁷ dedicated an entire quodlibetal question (*Quodlibet* 3, Question 8) against the view, likely during Lent or Advent 1309 (and certainly no later).⁸ Durand’s position is also reproduced in and criticized by Peter of Palude in his commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences* Book 2, Dist. 3, Q. 4 as well

6. For Durand’s first (*A*) and second (*B*) redactions I will use the critical edition unless otherwise noted (Book 2, dd. 1–5: ed. F. Retucci 2012; Book 2, dd. 22–38: ed. F. Retucci and M. Perrone 2013). For the third (*C*) redaction, I use Venice 1571. On the dating of Durand’s various redactions, see Chris Schabel, Russell Friedman, and Irene Balcoyiannopoulou, “Peter of Palude and the Parisian Reaction to Durand of St Pourçain on Future Contingents,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 71 (2001): 183–300 and William Courtenay, “Durand in His Educational and Intellectual Context,” in Speer et al., *Durandus and His Sentences Commentary: Historical, Philosophical and Theological Issues*, 13–34. In *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”, which can be dated to the same period, Durand features as the ‘*opponens*’ against an anonymous ‘*respondens*’. I use J. Koch’s edition of this text in Josef Koch, *Durandi de S. Porciano O.P. Quaestio de natura cognitionis (II SENT. (A) D. 3, Q. 5) et Disputatio cum anonymo quodam necnon Determinatio Hervei Natalis O.P. (QUOL. III Q. 8)*, 2nd edition, *Opuscula et textus* 6 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1935), 33–42. For a discussion of this text, see Josef Koch, *Durandus de S. Porciano O.P. Forschungen zum Streit um Thomas von Aquin zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1927), 143–150.

7. See Durand’s comment at the end of his third redaction, f. 432rb, where he tells us his early draft was “stolen (*subreptum*)” from him. For discussion on this episode, see Koch, *Durandus de S. Porciano*, 68–69 and Isabel Iribarren, *Durandus of St. Pourçain: A Dominican Theologian in the Shadows of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

8. Hervaeus appears to make a brief reference to the view in *Quodl.* 2.8 as well. As to the dating, Hervaeus became regent master in Easter 1307 and he was no longer regent master in Paris in Easter 1310. J. Koch argues that *Quodl.* 1 was delivered during Christmas 1307, *Quodl.* 2 during 1308, and *Quodl.* 3 during 1309. A. Guimarães suggests that *Quodl.* 2 should be later: Easter 1309 (and P. Stella agrees) and so *Quodl.* 3 should be Christmas 1309. However, the evidence isn’t decisive. For the *status quaestionis* on the dating, see Russell Friedman, “Dominican Quodlibetal Literature, ca. 1260–1330,” in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages. The Fourteenth Century*, ed. Chris Schabel, vol. 2, Brill’s Companion to the Christian Tradition 7 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 401–491.

as Thaddeus of Parma in his commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima* Book 3, Q. 15, and a few years later by, among others, Peter Auriol and Gregory of Rimini in their commentaries on the *Sentences*: Book 2, Dist. 35, Q. 1 and Book 2, Dist. 7, Q. 2, Art. 1 respectively.⁹

The view had its proponents too. It was defended by Prosper de Reggio Emilia, writing in Paris around a decade later, who explicitly cites Durand as a source.¹⁰ As well, a version of the view was defended by Richard Drayton, who lectured at Oxford around 1324, and William Crathorn, a decade after that.¹¹ Drayton’s works are not extant, but we can piece together some of his views from what his opponents report, notably Walter Chatton, Adam Wodeham, Gregory of Rimini, and John Mirecourt.¹² It is not clear if Drayton picks the view up from Durand, although Gregory of Rimini runs together Drayton’s arguments with Durand’s arguments, suggesting a connection.¹³ Crathorn, an Oxford Dominican writing in the 1330s, uses several of Durand’s argumentative strategies in *Sentences*, Book 1, Question 1 to defend the view — notably those that focus on the nobility principle as well as those that appeal to the separability of qualities by divine power — although he does not quote Durand directly.¹⁴

9. See also Durandellus, *Evidentia contra Durandum* (ed. Stella) 2.10 and 2.51, Anonymous, *Quaestio* “Utrum actus intelligendi aliquid reale absolutum addat super potentiam intellectivam” (PARIS, *Bibliothèque nationale de France* 14572) f. 159v, and Peter Schwarz aka Petrus Negri, *Clipeus Thomistarum* (Venice 1504) 2.46.

10. *Sent.* (VATICAN lat. 1086) Prologus, pars 1, q. 5, q1a 1, ff. 30va–34ra, especially ad 8, f. 33va–vb and pars 3, q. 3, q1a 1, ff. 59rb–67rb, especially ad 1, f. 63ra. On Prosper, see William Courtenay, “Reflections on Vat. lat. 1086 and Prosper of Reggio Emilia, O.E.S.A.,” in Schabel, *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages. The Fourteenth Century*, 2:345–358 and Peter Hartman, “Are Cognitive Habits in the Intellect? Durand of St.-Pourçain and Prosper de Reggio Emilia on Cognitive Habits,” in *The Ontology and Deontology of Habits in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. M. Roques and N. Faucher, Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind and Action (Berlin: Springer, Forthcoming). Prosper likely started his work in the 1310s and revised it later in 1318.

11. On Drayton’s dates, see the editorial footnote in Adam Wodeham, *Lect. secunda* (ed. Wood) 1.1.4, 252, footnote 1, as well as William J. Courtenay, *Adam Wodeham: An Introduction to His Life and Writings* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 63.

12. In Chatton: *Rep. et Lect.* (ed. Wey) Prologus, q. 2, a. 1, *Rep.* (ed. Wey and Eitzkorn) 2.4.5, a. 1, dub. 3, *ibid.*, 2.5.1, dub. 2, and *Lect.* (ed. Wey and Eitzkorn) 1.3.1, a. 1. In Wodeham: *Lect. secunda* (ed. Wood) 1.1.4 and *Lect. oxoniensis* (PARIS, *Bibl. de l’université (Sorbonne)* 193) 1.1.2, both of which report Chatton’s objections as well. In Rimini: *Lect.* (ed. Trapp) 2.7.2, a. 1, likely relying on Wodeham. In Mirecourt: *Sent.* (ed. Parodi) 1.19, which reports the position verbatim from Wodeham.

13. However, the marginalia in at least two manuscripts clearly identifies them as separate sources: one Durand’s as recited by Auriol (“*hanc opinionem si bene meminit tenuit Durandus in secundo opere libro 2o sic recitat Aureolus / Durandus in secundo opere libro 2o Aureolus*”), the other Drayton’s as recited by Wodeham (“*sic recitat Adam / Adam*”). See the apparatus criticus in Rimini, *Lect.* (ed. Trapp) 2.7.2, a. 1, 85, fn. 1 and 86, fn. 4.

14. *Sent.* (ed. Hoffman) q. 1, conc. 1. On Crathorn, see Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 64–66, 89–100, 229–235 and Aurélien Robert, “William Crathorn on Predication and Mental Language,” *Analytica* 14, no. 2 (2010): 227–258. For Crathorn’s arguments, see below footnotes 18 and 19. Before Durand, two authors in particular — James of Viterbo and Godfrey of Fontaines — are worth mentioning in this context, both because of their influence on Durand in other aspects of his philosophy of mind, and because both might be interpreted as having rejected QTMA. James of Viterbo in *Quodl.* (ed. Ypma) 3.5 (ca. 1294–6) argues that mental

One final historical point: RTMA (or at least the denial of QTMA) came to be condemned three times, and it would seem that its third condemnation took place in complete ignorance of its first two condemnations. Durand’s Dominican order condemned his version of RTMA as against brother Thomas in 1314 and again in 1316, along with several other propositions.¹⁵ However, just over thirty years later, in 1347, Mirecourt’s plagiarized presentation of Wodeham’s presentation of Drayton’s version of the view comes to be condemned — and this time with no reference that I can find to the earlier condemnations.¹⁶

2 Durand’s Motivations

Durand’s defense of RTMA might best be viewed as motivated by two primary concerns. First, mental acts seem to be relational in character owing to the fact that all mental acts have a kind of aboutness to them: a mental act is always directed at or about something else. As Durand puts it in *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”:

A non-relational form (*forma absoluta*) [e.g., a quality] that serves as the foundation for a relation can be thought about without that

acts are not distinct from mental powers, and so seems to defend a kind of identity-theory of mental acts; however, James still demands that mental acts require a quality added to the mind — it is just that for James this quality does not come from outside, but is innate. For discussion, see Antoine Côté, “Simplicius and James of Viterbo on Propensities,” *Vivarium* 47 (2009): 24–53 and John Wippel, “The Dating of James of Viterbo’s Quodlibet I and Godfrey of Fontaines’ Quodlibet VIII,” *Augustiniana* 24 (1974): 372–86. As well, Godfrey of Fontaines in *Quodl.* (ed. Hoffmans) 12.1 (circa 1296/1297) might be interpreted as endorsing RTMA. As Giorgio Pini, “Can God Create My Thoughts? Scotus’s Case Against the Causal Account of Intentionality,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49, no. 1 (2011): 39–63 and Rega Wood, “Intuitive Cognition and Divine Omnipotence: Ockham in Fourteenth-Century Perspective,” in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 51–61 point out, Godfrey seems to hold in *Quodl.* 12.1 that mental acts are relational entities insofar as he maintains that they are passions on the side of the mind directed at external objects as efficient causes. While it is true that Godfrey holds that a mental act necessarily includes such a relation, so much so that even God could not separate it from its object (79–80, 82), he also holds in *Quodl.* (ed. Hoffmans) 9.19 that mental acts are in themselves non-relational qualities (272, 275, 279), albeit special qualities, like light in the air, that exist only as long as their efficient causes exist (279–280). It is worth noting that Durand explicitly quotes Godfrey’s *Quodl.* 9.19 in *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, e.g., pp. 151 and 156, and treats his view as a kind of QTMA. For more on Godfrey and Durand, see Hartman, “Causation and Cognition: Durand of St.-Pourçain and Godfrey of Fontaines on the Cause of a Cognitive Act.”

15. *1314 Condemnation* (ed. Koch) n. 18, 58; *1316 Condemnation* (ed. Koch) n. 58, 83–84.

16. For some discussion of the Condemnations of 1347, see Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes 1274–1671* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 19, Stefano Caroti, “*Modi Rerum* and Materialism: A Note on a Quotation of a Condemned *Articulus* in some Fourteenth-Century Parisian *De Anima* Commentaries,” *Traditio* 55 (2000): 211–234, Stefano Caroti, “*Les Modi Rerum...* Encore une fois. Une source possible de Nicole Oresme: Le Commentaire sur le livre 1er des *Sentences* de Jean de Mirecourt,” in *Quia inter doctores est magna dissensio*, ed. S. Caroti and J. Celeyrette (Florence: Olschki, 2004), 195–222, and Jack Zupko, *John Buridan’s Philosophy of Mind: An Edition and Translation of Book III of His Questions on Aristotle’s De Anima (Third Redaction) with Commentary and Critical Interpretative Essays* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1989), 3.11.

relation; but, according to the respondent [i.e., Durand’s opponent], a mental act (*intelligere*) is like this, since it serves as the foundation for a relation to the object; therefore, a mental act can be thought about without this relation to its object. But if this is so, then I can think about a mental act without thinking about its object, which is false. Hence, a mental act is merely a relation, and so it does not make a real composition with the intellect, nor is it some non-relational thing (*res absoluta*) added to the intellect. (38–39)¹⁷

Not only does Durand think that objectless thoughts are inconceivable, but he also thinks that they are metaphysically impossible: even God cannot make a thought exist on its own without a relation to an object, a metaphysical possibility that, he thinks, follows from the quality-theory of mental acts.¹⁸

A second kind of objection Durand raises against QTMA concerns the causation of mental acts. This objection can be best viewed as a combination of two metaphysical principles. On the one hand, there is what we might call the nobility principle according to which what is less noble cannot bring about a more noble effect or act upon and affect what is more noble — a principle that can be found in both Augustine (for instance, *De musica* [ed. Migne] 6.5, n. 8, 1167) and Aristotle (for instance, *De anima* 3.5 430a18), and one to which many medieval philosophers at least paid lip service.¹⁹ On the other hand, Durand also takes seriously what has come to be called the act-potency axiom, according to which nothing one and the same can be in both act and potency at the same time with respect to the same thing, or, in other words, nothing can affect itself or change itself. The act-potency axiom, too, was often appealed to by medieval philosophers.²⁰ Now, according to the nobility principle, material objects in the world cannot affect or change the mind, for they are less noble

17. A variation of this argument also shows up in Peter of Palude’s otherwise verbatim presentation of Durand’s *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5 (VATICAN lat. 1073) f. 20vb, and so it was included in Koch’s 1935 edition; however it is not included in any of the recognized manuscripts containing A, and so it is not included in Retucci’s 2012 critical edition.

18. See especially *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 155–156: “God can produce the effect of any given secondary efficient cause without it; but God cannot produce a mental act (*intelligere*) wherein nothing is thought about (*nihil intelligeretur*).” Versions of this argument are present in Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodl.* (ed. Koch) 3.8, 43, Peter Auriol, *Sent.* (ed. Buytaert) Prooemium, sec. 2, art. 3, 201, and Rimini, *Lect.* (ed. Trapp et al.) 1.3.1, 321. Durand makes a similar argument in *Sent. (C)* (Venice 1571) Prologus, q. 3 and *Sent. (A)* (PARIS, *Bibliothèque nationale de France* 14454) Prologus, q. 1. A related line of attack is also present in both Durand and Crathorn, namely, that it follows from QTMA that God might separate the mental act from the mental power, and thus it is a metaphysical possibility at least that there could be a mental act without a mental power or a subject of the act, or in the wrong subject, such as a rock. In Durand, see *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 149–150 and *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere. . .”, 33. In Crathorn, see *Sent.* (ed. Hoffman) q. 1, conc. 1, 74–78.

19. For discussion of this principle, see Hartman, “Causation and Cognition: Durand of St.-Pourçain and Godfrey of Fontaines on the Cause of a Cognitive Act” and Jean-Luc Solère, “Sine Qua Non Causality and the Context of Durand’s Early Theory of Cognition,” in Speer et al., *Durandus and His Sentences Commentary: Historical, Philosophical and Theological Issues*, 185–227. In Durand, see, for instance, *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 149, 152–155. In Crathorn, see *Sent.* (ed. Hoffman) q. 1, conc. 1, 78–79, 80–81.

20. For a general discussion of the act-potency axiom, see James Weisheipl, “The Principle *Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur* in Medieval Physics,” *Isis* 56, no. 1 (1965): 26–45. For

than the mind and its mental acts; but, according to the act-potency axiom, the mind cannot affect or change itself. Hence, it follows that either the mind does not change at all or that the change involved is a special kind of change; Durand opts for the latter.²¹ Neither the nobility principle nor the act-potency axiom is violated if we suppose that thinking and perceiving are a matter of the mind's entering into new relations to objects in the world, and so mental change is a kind of relational change. Hence, on Durand's view, a mental act is a new relation that the mind enters into when an object of the right sort is suitably present to it.²²

In sum, then, Durand is motivated to maintain that mental acts are wholly relations and mental change relational change because of intuitions he had about the relational character of thinking and very specific metaphysical concerns about causation.²³ It is also worth noting that, for Durand, RTMA applies to all the soul's cognitive powers: both sensation and intellectual thought are wholly relational in character, the former occurring when certain (non-relational) impressions on the bodily organs are made, and the latter occurring when certain internal physiological (non-relational) conditions, such as the presence of a

a discussion of the principle in John Duns Scotus, see Roy Effler, *John Duns Scotus and the Principle 'Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur'* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1962) and Peter King, "Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change," in *Self-Motion From Aristotle to Newton*, ed. M. Gill and J. Lennox (Princeton: PUP, 1994), 227–90. For a discussion of the principle in Godfrey of Fontaines, see John Wippel, "Godfrey of Fontaines and the Act-Potency Axiom," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973): 299–317. In Durand, see, for instance, *Quaestio* "Utrum intelligere...", 33, *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 157–160, and *ibid.*, 2.3.8, 188, 193.

21. Durand also rejects cocausation views which attempt to bridge the nobility gap by supposing that the mental power together with the object bring about the mental act, for either this still will not overcome the gap, or this will collapse into a violation of the act-potency axiom. See, for instance, *Sent. (A)* 1.3.4 (ERFURT *Allgemeinbibl. der Stadt*, Ampl. F 369), f. 77rb and *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 147–150.

22. See *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 159–163.

23. The relation-theory of mental acts is distinct from the relation-theory of mental content or intentionality, according to which the specific content or aboutness of our mental acts is fixed owing to extrinsic, usually causal, relations to the object: I am thinking about cats and not dogs because my thought was caused (somehow) by cats and not dogs. One is a thesis about the ontology of acts, the other about their content. While Durand maintains both RTMA and the relation-theory of intentionality, his arguments for RTMA are quite independent from his arguments against what he saw as a kind of internalism about mental content in his opponents, according to which the content of a mental act is fixed by a quality intrinsic to the mind. For Durand's relation-theory of intentionality, see Peter Hartman, "Thomas Aquinas and Durand of St.-Pourçain on Mental Representation," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2013): 19–34 and Peter Hartman, "Direct Realism with and without Representation: John Buridan and Durand of St.-Pourçain on Intelligible Species," in *Questions on the Soul by John Buridan and Others*, ed. Gyula Klima (Berlin: Springer, 2017), 107–129. For discussion of the relation-theory of intentionality more broadly, see Calvin Normore, "Primitive Intentionality and Reduced Intentionality: Ockham's Legacy," *Quaestio* 10, no. 1 (2010): 255–266. For discussion of medieval theories of intentionality in general, see Peter King, "Rethinking Representation in the Middle Ages: A Vade-Mecum to Mediaeval Theories of Mental Representation," in *Representation and Objects of Thought in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 81–100 and Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, among many others.

phantasm in a certain inner organ, are met.²⁴

3 John Duns Scotus and the Change Objection

John Duns Scotus provides us with one of the earliest and most direct attacks on RTMA in his only set of quodlibetal lectures, dedicating the whole of the thirteenth question to precisely our question: “Are acts of cognizing and desiring essentially non-relative (*absoluti*) or essentially relative (*relativi*)?” His answer is that a mental act is not wholly a relation, despite linguistic practice and even Aristotle’s own remarks to the contrary.²⁵ Scotus does admit that mental acts ‘include’ relations to the object, but the mental act itself, if we are being precise, is a quality added to the mind upon which such relations are founded. While it has not been established who Scotus has in mind as his opponent, the Parisian lecture usually dated to 1306 or 1307 certainly overlaps with Durand’s early redaction (1303–1308).²⁶

Scotus’s primary objection to RTMA I will call the basic change objection. He formulates it in two different ways in *Quodlibet* 13, and it is also, in one form or another, an objection that can be found in a number of other authors who responded to RTMA: Peter of Palude and Hervaeus Natalis both adduce it against Durand, and Walter Chatton raises it against Drayton.²⁷ The argument is straightforward: a mental act cannot wholly be a relation, because a relation must exist when its relata exist; but a mental power and the object (the relata) might exist and yet the mental act about that object might not exist.²⁸ Put another way, relational change requires a non-relational change in one or both of the relata beforehand; but mental change does not require an antecedent

24. On the extension to sensory forms of cognition, see especially *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5, 161–162.

25. On Aristotle, see footnote 32 below. On linguistic practice, see especially *Quodl.* (ed. Wadding-Vivès) 13, n. 32.

26. On the view as found in *Quodl.* 13, see Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition* (Oxford University Press, 2014), ch. 5 and Pini, “Two Models of Thinking: Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus.” Two historical documents attest to Durand’s being in Paris in 1303 and again in 1307. See Courtenay, “Durand in His Educational and Intellectual Context.” On the dates for Scotus, see Timothy B. Noone and H. Francie Roberts, “John Duns Scotus’ *Quodlibet*: A Brief Study of the Manuscripts and an Edition of Question 16,” in Schabel, *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages. The Fourteenth Century*, 2:131–98 and (with caution) Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006). While there is no strong evidence that Scotus had Durand in mind (or Durand had Scotus in mind), the opening argument *quod non* in *Quodl.* 13 is precisely Durand’s argument from *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”, 33, quoted above on page 5.

27. Palude, *Sent.* (VATICAN lat. 1073) 2.3.4, q1a 4, f. 20va; Hervaeus, *Quodl.* (ed. Koch) 3.8, 47–48; Chatton, *Rep. et Lect.* (ed. Wey) Prologus, q. 2, a. 1, 83, 85 and *Lect.* (ed. Wey and Eitzkorn) 1.3.1, a. 1, 2–3. See also the anonymous respondent’s argument in Durand, *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”, 33–34.

28. Scotus, *Quodl.* (ed. Wadding-Vivès) 13, n. 5: “All real relations necessarily follow from or are concomitant with [the existence of] their proximate foundations (or reason for founding) when the term of the relation exists. However, in the case at hand, an actual relation to the object is not necessarily concomitant with the [existence of] the mental (*operativa*) power [when the object exists].”

non-relational change in either my mental power or the object.²⁹ When I start to think about Felix, a new relation comes about between me and Felix — I am now thinking *about* Felix whereas before I was not. But in order for this new relation to come about, something non-relational must change beforehand, either in me (my mental power) or in Felix, or in both of us. However, clearly nothing need change in Felix in order for me to newly think about Felix. Hence, something must change in me, a non-relational change that results in a new quality added to my mental power upon which such a new relation to Felix is founded.

As simple as the basic change objection is, so too is Durand’s answer to it: not all relational change requires an antecedent non-relational change in one or both of the relata, or, to put it another way, it is sometimes the case that both relata exist and yet the relation does not exist, at least for some sorts of relations. Sure, color similarities must exist when the colors exist, and a change in color similarity requires an antecedent change in one or both of the relata: in order for Socrates to become like Plato in terms of color, either Socrates must acquire a new color, or Plato must acquire a new color. However, color similarity is a special kind of relation. Durand calls these *intrinsic* relations. There are other sorts of relations, which Durand calls *extrinsic* relations, and these come about after the existence of the relata. One common example of an extrinsic relation is a spatial relation. If I move a ball, say, from one side of a column to the other, the ball undergoes a relational change — its spatial location changes relative to the column — even though neither its nor the column’s non-relational properties changed at all, that is, neither it nor the column underwent a qualitative or quantitative change beforehand.³⁰ A mental act, conceived of as a relation between the mental power and the object, is an extrinsic not an intrinsic relation, and so Scotus’s argument misses its mark.

To be fair to Scotus, Scotus too distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic relations elsewhere,³¹ and he tells us that his argument applies only to intrinsic relations. However, Scotus thinks that his opponent either is, or at least must be, committed to the thesis that a mental act is an intrinsic relation on the sole grounds, it would seem, that this is how Aristotle had classified mental relations (n. 5).³²

29. Ibid., n. 4: “A relation, in its strict sense, is not new without a newness of some prior non-relational entity (*aliquid absolutum*) in either the subject or the term. But a mental act (*operatio*) can be new without a newness of any prior non-relational entity in the subject (*operans*) and also without a newness of any non-relational entity in the term.”

30. See especially Durand, *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”, 35. For the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic relations, see especially *Quodl. parisiensis* (ed. Takada) 1, qq. 1–4. For Durand’s ‘modalist’ theory of relations more generally, see Thomas Dewender, “Der ontologische Status der Relationen nach Durandus von St.-Pourcain, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli,” in *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, ed. Stephen Brown, T. Kobusch, and T. Dewender, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 102 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), 287–307 and the references therein.

31. See, for instance, *Ordinatio* (ed. P. Hechich) 4.13.1, nn. 42–55, 450–453 and *Quaestiones super secundum et tertium De anima* (ed. Bazán et al.) q. 7. For discussion, see Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 116.

32. He repeats the assertion that the mental relation must be intrinsic again at n. 11

Scotus’s basic change objection, then, rests upon the assumption that a mental act, if it is a relation and not a quality upon which a relation is founded, must be an intrinsic relation, an assumption Durand at least rejects.³³ Another form of the change objection — found in Hervaeus Natalis’s *Quodlibet* 3.8 — concedes that a mental act might be a kind of extrinsic relation, like a location. However, this too won’t do because such extrinsic relations, while not requiring an antecedent quantitative or qualitative change on the side of one or both of the relata, still require an antecedent *movement* on the side of one or both of the relata. For instance, in order for the ball to change its spatial location relative to the column, I must move it, or the column, first. But with mental change, once more, the mind can change even if neither it nor the object changed or moved beforehand.³⁴

This form of the change objection seems more robust. Is there a kind of relational change that requires neither an antecedent non-relational (qualitative or quantitative) change nor an antecedent movement in one or both of the relata? Hervaeus Natalis can’t make sense of such a change.³⁵ But Durand thinks there is. In response to precisely this sort of objection raised to his account by an anonymous opponent, Durand writes in *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”:

It seems that it is not true that something changes from not such-and-such to such-and-such only through a reception [e.g. of a quality in it] or through a production [e.g. of a quality in something else] or through its being applied [i.e. moved] to something else or something else to it. For something [can] change from not moving to actually moving, for instance, when a light object [begins to] move up, and this does not come about through applying [i.e. moving] something to it, since all that is needed in this case is the removal of an impediment; nor does it come about through its producing something in something else, as is obvious, nor through its receiving something new which enters into composition [with it, i.e., a qualitative or quantitative change]. And yet it changes, from not moving to moving in reality. Therefore, the intellect will be able to change from

although no argument is given why this must be so. In Aristotle, see especially *Metaphysics* 5.15 1020b30–33, cited at nn. 5 and 22 in *Quodl.* 13; *Physics* 7.3 247b2–4 and 5.2 225b1–12, cited at nn. 4, 7, 19–21, 26, 30; and *Categories*, ch. 8, cited at n. 25.

33. Prosper de Reggio Emilia does seem to have endorsed the view that mental acts are relations in the category of Relation. See *Sent.* (VATICAN lat. 1086) Prologus, pars 1, q. 5 q1a 1, ad 8, f. 33va–vb and pars 3, q. 3, q1a 1, ad 1, f. 63ra. But Durand does not. While Durand is somewhat circumspect as to the appropriate category into which one should place mental acts, in his discussion of mental habits (*habitus*), where he maintains a similar view about the ontological standing of habits as external relations, he is explicit: even though habits are relative entities — indeed, extrinsic relative entities, which he calls modes — they can still be considered qualities in the category of Quality. See *Sent. (A/B)* (PARIS, *Bibliothèque nationale de France* 12330) 3.23.1, a. 1, edited in Peter Hartman, “Durand of St.-Pourçain on Cognitive Habits (*Sent.* III, D. 23, QQ. 1–2),” in *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy*, ed. M. Roques and J. Pelletier (Berlin: Springer, 2017), 331–368.

34. See Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodl.* (ed. Koch) 3.8, 47–48. See also the anonymous Respondent’s version of this argument in *Quaestio* “Utrum intelligere...”, 33–34.

35. See, for instance, Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodl.* (ed. Koch) 3.8, 47–48.

not thinking to actually thinking without its reception of something [non-relational] that enters into composition with it. (34–35)

Consider a rock that sits upon a plank. When we remove the plank, the rock changes — before it was stationary and now it is in motion. Such a change did not require an antecedent motion on the side of the rock, nor did it require any qualitative or quantitative change on the side of the rock. All that is required in this case is that one removes the plank which was acting as an impediment to the rock’s natural operation, its downwards motion.

Durand will go on to extend this intuition to mental change: the change from not thinking to thinking about Felix — a relational change — will be owing to the removal of an impediment, and not owing to either a qualitative change or a movement on the side of the mind or the object. He writes in *Sent. (A)* 2.3.5:

Just as a heavy thing obtains its location at the same time that it obtains its heaviness, unless something is impeding it, so too someone who has an intellect immediately thinks through it, unless there is a defect on the side of the intelligible object. (159)

With the rock the impediment is something that impedes its natural operation, its downwards motion; with the mind it is something that impedes its natural operation, thinking and sensing, namely, the absence of the object. Once this impediment is removed, and so the object is suitably present — through whichever means, and this will vary case by case, be it via impressions upon our sensitive organs, the lighting conditions, or phantasms in the brain — a mental act, this relation of presence, will occur, and when the object comes to be absent, the mental act will go away. Consider Durand’s appeal to Augustine’s theory of cognition as set out in *De musica* here:

The same is the case with an act of sensing, a view St. Augustine advanced in *De musica*, Book 6 [6.5 (ed. Migne), n. 10, 1169]. He writes: “Any given corporeal item outside that is present does not affect the soul but the body.” And later: “And, in brief, it seems to me that the soul in the body when it perceives is not affected by the body but it acts more attentively upon the affections of the body, and these actions, be they easy due to fit or hard due to lack of fit, do not lie hidden from it; and this is what we call sensing.” His meaning, as is clear from what he says in Book 6, is that the sense object (*sensibile*) does not act upon the sensitive [i.e., mental] power but upon the organ by reason of the qualities disposing it. This action, since it is present to sense, is not hidden from sense, and so [the sense object] is sensed. Nor is sensing anything but a present sense object not being hidden from sense. (*Sent. [A]* 2.3.5, 161–162)

In brief, then, Durand maintains that a mental act, conceived of as a relation, does not depend for its new existence upon a non-relational change in the *relata*

— in the mental power or the object — even though it does require a non-relational change: the removal of an impediment. Like a curtain lifted, certain physiological and physical states in the organ that before impeded the presence of the object are removed, and so when conditions are such and so (and this is an empirical question) a new mental act comes about and when they are not, it does not.

4 The objection from agency: Adam Wodeham and an Anonymous Thomist

Durand's ultimate answer to the change objection, then, is that there is a kind of relational change that does not require an antecedent non-relational change on the side of the relata, even though it still requires an antecedent non-relational change somewhere in the world, and mental change is precisely this kind of relational change. However, such a view entails a kind of dependence thesis: mental change — as with any kind of relational change — is dependent upon a change outside the mind, a change either in the impediment or the object. It is upon this dependence thesis that the final objection — from agency — pushes.

Before I turn to the objection, it is worth highlighting a difference between two forms of the quality-theory of mental acts. On the one hand, there is a kind of QTMA that is just as much committed to the dependence thesis as RTMA is. On this view — defended for instance by Godfrey of Fontaines (see above page 1 as well as footnote 14) — all mental change is passive qualitative change brought about by the object outside the mind as efficient cause. Godfrey rejects the nobility principle (see §2) according to which what is less noble cannot act upon or affect what is more noble, or at least he does not think it applies here. However, in terms of the dependence thesis, the two views are the same: something outside the mind must change in order for the mind to change, for the object must come to be present such that it can then act upon and bring about a qualitative change in the mind. Let us call this the passive quality-theory of mind (P-QTMA). However, there is another form of QTMA — this is the view defended by John Duns Scotus, for instance — which rejects the dependence thesis. On this view, not all mental change requires an antecedent change outside the mind: some mental changes are self-caused. Call this the active quality-theory of mind (A-QTMA). Whereas P-QTMA rejects the nobility principle, this view rejects the act-potency axiom (see §2), according to which nothing can bring about a qualitative change in itself. For A-QTMA, the mind is able to change itself even if all other conditions outside the mind are the same.

It is the proponent of the active quality-theory of mental acts (A-QTMA) who, then, will raise the final objection to Durand's account (and, indeed, such an objection will apply *mutatis mutandis* to the passive quality-theory of mental acts). In what follows I will look at two versions of the objection from agency: the first from an anonymous Thomist critic of Durand's view, the second from

Adam Wodeham.

In a *quaestio* edited by Josef Koch in 1930 contained in one of the manuscript witnesses to Durand’s *Tractatus de habitibus*, an anonymous author — whom Koch calls “a certain anonymous Thomist (*Thomista quidam anonymus*)”³⁶ — interprets Durand as defending precisely the dependence thesis outlined above: there can be no change or variation to the mind without some change or variation outside the mind, for instance, on the side of the phantasms present in the imagination. (In this context, the imagination and its phantasms are purely corporeal entities located in the brain.)³⁷ Against this thesis, he writes:

Variation to the intellect is not totally explained by appeal to the imagination which presents to the intellect its object, for if this were totally explained by the imagination, then there could be no variation to the intellect without an antecedent variation to the imagination. But the consequent is false. (*Quaestio* “Utrum habitus...” [ed. Koch] 76)

According to the anonymous Thomist, the intellect can change — it can elicit a new mental act — even if nothing on the side of the imagination and the phantasms within the imagination changes, or, in other words, even if everything outside the intellect remains the same, the intellect can still change. As support for this independence thesis, our author points to two phenomena where this seems to happen. First, the intellect is able to perform further deductions (mental acts) on the phantasms already present in the imagination and thus strengthen its intellectual habits associated with such deductions (*ibid.*, 76). Second, the intellect must be able to organize and structure these phantasms in the first place; it must be able to elicit a mental act in virtue of which it changes the phantasms, and this mental act must be prior to and independent from the phantasms themselves (*ibid.*, 77–78).³⁸

Wodeham’s version of the objection amounts to much the same point. He is responding to Richard Drayton’s view, which he interprets as a kind of RTMA — noting that on Drayton’s view mental change is relational change (*relativa transmutatio*).³⁹ His example appeals to acts of the will:

With all other things involved being the same, experience teaches us that a human being can freely (*libere*) will and nill and not-will the very same thing. (*Lect. secunda* [ed. Wood] 1.1.4, sec. 3, 255)

36. *Quaestio* “Utrum habitus acquisitus intellectualis vel moralis sit ponendus in illa potentia subiective cuius actum primo et immediate respicit” (henceforth: *Quaestio* “Utrum habitus...”). This text is edited in Josef Koch, *Durandi de S. Porciano O.P. Tractatus de habitibus. Quaestio quarta [De subiectis habituum] addita quaestione critica anonymi cuiusdam*, *Opuscula et textus* 8 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1930), 70–80. The anonymous author self-identifies as a follower of Thomas Aquinas on p. 73. For more on this author, see Koch, *Durandus de S. Porciano*, 142–143 and Hartman, “Are Cognitive Habits in the Intellect?”

37. See especially Durand, *Tractatus de habitibus* 4.8 (ed. Koch) 58.

38. For further discussion of these two arguments, see Hartman, “Are Cognitive Habits in the Intellect?”

39. *Lect. secunda* (ed. Wood) 1.1.4, sec. 4, 256.

And later:

I can will and nill the very same thing without any variation whatsoever — present or future — over and above a change on the side of the will. (ibid., sec. 4, 261)

With all other things being held the same, I can change my mind: I can stop wanting to eat the pie and then start wanting to eat the pie.

What the anonymous Thomist and Wodeham are driving at is mental agency. The dependence thesis denies that there can be a mental change without an antecedent change in the world, because mental change is just relational change, albeit of a very qualified sort; for the anonymous Thomist and Wodeham, however, there are at least some cases of mental change that can come about over and above the, so to speak, physical changes in the world and brain (or ‘imagination’): both at the level of the will and at the level of the intellect I can change my mind *independent* from any change whatsoever outside my mind. But if mental acts are mere relations dependent upon some change outside the mind, then this would be impossible, because relations, even extrinsic relations, are dependent upon some antecedent non-relational change; therefore, a mental act must be a quality, a new quality that the mind brings about in itself.

4.1 Durand’s reply to the objection from agency

RTMA, in other words, renders mental change into a kind of passive affair: it is not up to me, as it were, to think about Felix when Felix or his phantasm is present, and it is not up to me to desire the pie when the pie is presented as desirable, just as it is not up to the fire to burn the branch presented to it, or for Socrates to become similar in color to Plato when Plato comes to acquire a new color.⁴⁰ Is there any way out for Durand?

One might be tempted to opt for a kind of disjunctive analysis of mental acts: some mental acts — simple apprehensions and perceptions — are such that their occurrence is not up to me and occur once the impediments have been removed; but other mental acts — intellectual deliberations and acts of the will — are up to me, and so some mental acts are purely relations whereas others are qualities (together with relations). However, Durand elsewhere (*Sent.* 2.38) tells us that RTMA applies to all immanent acts — including acts of the will.⁴¹ Hence, a disjunctive account seems to be off the table.

40. On the analogy with fire burning the branch, see Durand, *Sent. (A)* 2.3.8, 193: “An angel’s intellect is reduced to a [mental] act about those things it does not actually consider from the Creator as the *per se* cause and the present object as the *per accidens* cause, in the same way that fire newly burning the branch does this because of what generated it as the *per se* cause and from the posited branch as a *sine qua non* cause. Nor is there any difference between the two, except that burning passes into outside matter [...] whereas thinking does not pass into an outside matter[...].”

41. See *Sent. (A/B)* 2.38.3, 284: “But this is because acts of the will and other powers with regard to their own objects are not said to be a nature added to the power but rather they arise out of the relation (*habitus*) between the power and the object.” See also *Sent. (A/B)* 2.38.1, 273.

Could Durand deny the dependency thesis? Could he suppose that mental acts, conceived of as extrinsic relations, can change even if nothing else changes beforehand? When the curtain has been lifted, as it were, and so Felix is suitably present to me, it could still be up to me to elicit a mental act conceived not as a new quality impressed upon the mind, but rather as a new relation to Felix. Or the apple pie: when conditions are the same, the mind can still change such that it is now related to the apple pie in the manner of a wanting whereas before it was not. After all, this seems to be, in part, what the active quality-theory of mental acts holds: when conditions are right, the mind changes itself and produces in itself a new quality upon which the relation to the object is founded, independent of any changes outside the mind. Perhaps Durand could hold the same thing, although the change here is not qualitative change but mere relational change.

However, the problem with this move is that it fails to avoid the main thrust of the earlier change objection: if a mental act is a matter of the mind taking on a new relation, a different posture, so to speak, then this posture will still require a non-relational change beforehand, either in the mind or outside the mind, in the object or on the side of the impediment. If my hand, for instance, comes to take on a new grip such that it can now grip an object which before it could not, this new grip comes about thanks to the re-arrangement of qualities already in the hand; but the intellect has no such qualities, and so any new relation that the intellect enters into requires some non-relational change beforehand; and assuming nothing else changes on the side of the object, this non-relational change will result in a new quality in the mind itself, upon which this new relation to the object is founded.

The only option, then, seems to be to bite the bullet: all mental acts (even higher-order acts, such as acts of willing and assent) are passive and dependent upon changes (physiological or physical) outside the mind. I cannot, for instance, change my mind and want the apple pie unless something else changes inside my body or in the pie to make it seem more desirable and so more good. Indeed, Durand seems to suggest as much in his *Tractatus de habitibus* (ed. Koch) Question 4, Article 5. He writes:

The sensitive power's judgement about a sense object that ought to be desired or avoided can only change if there is a change either to the object or to the whole subject. (25)

For instance, to use Durand's own examples, a dog can be trained to judge that taking bread from the left hand is to be avoided if we smack it on the nose each time it goes for bread held out in the left hand. In this case the object — the bread — comes to have something bad associated with it. We, too, can be trained in a similar fashion to view stealing or adultery as something to be avoided. Durand even suggests that dogs (and we too) can be trained to view something as impossible: if every time it goes after the bread in the left hand we take it away, the dog will decide that taking bread from the left hand is not possible. Such are cases where there is variation on the side of the object (*ibid.*, 26–28). As to variation on the side of the whole subject, Durand points out

that if you sit in a cold room long enough, your sex drive drops and so certain objects will not appear as desirable as they might have otherwise (ibid., 29).

The mind enters into different relations — or even better a mental act is a relation — to objects outside it, but these relations depend upon and arise from states of the body and the world. Such a view is not as odd as it might seem: it is, in fact, a kind of cognitive determinism when applied to acts of the will; and it is a kind of determinism when applied to acts of the intellect. This might well explain a cryptic comment from the Dominicans in Paris who, in condemning the view, write (*1314 Condemnation* [ed. Koch], n. 19, 58): “We think this is dangerous to freedom of choice.”

5 Conclusions

So here’s where we are. Durand defends a minority theory about the ontology of mental acts according to which a mental act is not a quality added to a mental power but rather just the relation that obtains between a mental power and a suitably present object. Richard Cross notes that this theory is “highly plausible on the face of it” (Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 111), and even Chatton, Wodeham, and Mirecourt, who maintain that ITMA — the view that mental acts are nothing more than the mind — is ‘illicit’, find RTMA to be a philosophically plausible (*philosophice probabilis*) theory, and one that is hard to refute.⁴² After all, mental acts do look relational — it seems absurd to talk of a mental act that has no object or to think of a mental act without also thinking about its object, and both Aristotle and linguistic practice suggest that mental acts are relational in some way. However, on the *other* face of it, so to speak, the view is absurd: sometimes I think, sometimes I do not: thinking is a change; but at least according to Aristotelian views about change, this would seem to mean that it must be a qualitative change: the reception of a new quality in my mental power. This was the thrust of Scotus’s argument from change. What is more, even if thinking is a mere relational change and not a qualitative change, it is still entirely dependent upon changes outside of my mental power, and so, at least for Adam Wodeham and the anonymous Thomist, it will not guarantee a robust enough form of mental agency, according to which I can change my mind even if nothing else changes in the world. Durand seems to hold that this is exactly right: thinking is passive inasmuch as mental change is relational change and so depends upon changes outside my mental power. At least in this life, this might just be enough to explain what needs to be explained.

42. Wodeham, *Lect. secunda* (ed. Wood) 1.1.4, sec. 3, 253; Chatton, *Rep.* (ed. Wey and Etzkorn) 2.5.1, dub. 2, 234; Mirecourt, *Sent.* (ed. Parodi) 1.19, n. 65.

ABBREVIATIONS:

Quodl. Quaestiones de quolibet
Lect. Lectura super Sententias
Rep. Reportatio super Sententias
Sent. Commentarium in Sententias

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