

CAUSATION AND COGNITION:  
DURAND OF ST.-POURÇAIN AND GODFREY OF  
FONTAINES ON THE CAUSE OF A COGNITIVE ACT

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It just seems ever so obvious that we are *affected* by the world: when I place my hand next to the fire, it becomes hot, and when I plunge it into the bucket of ice water, it becomes cold. What goes for physical changes also goes for at least some mental changes: when Felix the Cat leaps upon my lap, my lap not only becomes warm, but I also *feel* this warmth, and when he purrs, I *hear* his purr. It seems ever so obvious, in other words, that perception (at least, and at least under ordinary conditions) is a matter of being affected by the agency of perceptible objects. Who would ever wish to deny such an ever so evident doctrine?

Yet Durand of St.-Pourçain does, or at least he seems to.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Reid's nineteenth-century editor, Sir William Hamilton, writes, as a result, and with not a little praise, that "Durandus, I may notice, seems to deny, like Reid [...] absolutely and without reserve, the affection of sense by the agency of the object."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Durand declares that "sensing and thinking do not come about in us from [perceptible] objects as efficient causes,"<sup>3</sup> and he holds it as absurd to suppose that

1. The most complete source of information on Durand's life and career remains J. KOCH, *Durandus de S. Porciano O.P. Forschungen zum Streit um Thomas von Aquin zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts. Erster Teil: Literargeschichtliche Grundlegung*, Münster i. W. 1927. More recently, Jean-Luc Solère and Russell Friedman have taken up various aspects of Durand's cognitive psychology in two excellent articles. See J.-L. SOLÈRE, "Durand of Saint-Pourçain's cognition theory: its fundamental principles," in: R.L. FRIEDMAN – J.-M. COUNET (eds.), *Medieval Perspectives on Aristotle's De Anima*, Leuven / Louvain-la-Neuve 2013, and R.L. FRIEDMAN, "Peter Auriol vs. Durand of St. Pourçain on Intellectual Cognition," in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* (forthcoming).

2. W. HAMILTON, *The Works of Thomas Reid*, Edinburgh / London 1863, p. 958b.

3. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (VI), II, 3, 5, ed. F. RETUCCI, Leuven 2012, p. 156: "[...] sentire et intelligere non sunt in nobis effective ab obiecto." All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I have freely changed the Latin orthography and punctuation.

sensible qualities, in virtue of which sense objects purportedly affect our senses, might be able to do just that.<sup>4</sup> Hence, it certainly looks as if Durand rejects the ever so evident doctrine that, at least under ordinary circumstances, *perceptible objects are the causes of our perceptive acts*.

One of the theses that I want to defend in this article is that Durand does not reject this thesis, but rather he rejects a nearby one — call it *affectionism* — according to which *perception is a matter of being affected by perceptible objects*. Durand rejects affectionism, but he does not reject the doctrine that the object is the cause of a perceptive act. Durand establishes and defends a distinction between *efficient* causes and what he calls *sine qua non* causes. To say that X is an efficient cause of Y is to say something *more* than that X is a *sine qua non* cause of Y. Very roughly, the relation of *sine qua non* causality is what we would recognize nowadays as a relation of causal dependence. By contrast, the relation of efficient causality is causal dependence *plus something more*. More precisely, an efficient cause induces or impresses a ‘form’ upon some passive recipient. The campfire efficiently causes the hot dog to become hot, and this means that it induces or impresses the ‘form’ of heat upon the hot dog. The hot dog’s being hot does not simply depend upon the presence of a hot campfire; it depends upon it *and something more*.

Now, Durand does not reject the notion of efficient causality. In common with almost all of his contemporaries he would accept, for instance, this analysis of the heating of the hot dog. He, however, holds that it is inappropriate to characterize the object of our perceptive acts as *efficient* causes of those acts; rather such objects are mere *sine qua non* causes. Our perceptive acts depend upon the presence of their objects. Affectionists, by contrast, hold that our perceptive acts depend upon the presence of their objects *and something more*, namely, that when the object is present to the senses, it also *affects* the senses and so induces or impresses somehow its ‘form’ upon the senses. It is this doctrine, then, that Durand rejects and not the doctrine that objects are the causes of our perceptive acts.

This article has three parts. In the first part, I will sketch, briefly, what motivates Durand to reject affectionism. In the second part, I

4. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2), II, 3, 5, p. 152, quoted below in nt. 10.

will take up the affectionist doctrine as defended by Durand's older contemporary at Paris, Godfrey of Fontaines.<sup>5</sup> Godfrey maintains an extreme form of affectionism: the object of all our mental acts (not just perceptions, but also thoughts and desires) is the efficient cause of those acts, or, in other words, all mental acts (not just perception) come about owing to the affection of the relevant mental faculty by the agency of the object. As it turns out, Godfrey develops a celebrated argument against the thesis that the object is not the efficient cause but a mere *sine qua non* cause. Hence his position offers a challenge to Durand's position, a challenge, I argue in the third part, Durand meets.

### 1. AGAINST AFFECTIONISM

Durand thinks that there are good reasons to be suspicious of Godfrey's view and, in general, affectionism. In this section, I will discuss two arguments Durand advances against such a view. The first appeals to facts about language, and the second argument is based upon the (more mysterious) notion of nobility.

#### 1.1. *Language*

Godfrey had argued at length that verbs of cognition (for instance, 'to hear', 'to see', 'to think', and so on) are active in form but passive in meaning, that is to say, such verbs pick out *passions* or *affections* on the side of the subjects of the sentences in which they occur in the

5. Durand, in fact, seems to have had the nineteenth question from Godfrey's ninth set of quodlibetal questions in front of him. Compare, for instance, DURAND, *Super Sent. (II)*, II, 3, 5, p. 151: "[...] quae tamen species non est essentialiter ipsa sensatio alioquin sensatio esset in medio et in organo virtute sensitiva corrupta [...]" with GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. IX*, 19, ed. J. HOFFMANS, Leuven 1928, p. 274: "[...] quae etiam non est essentialiter sensatio alioquin etiam esset sensatio in medio et etiam in organo virtute sensitiva corrupta [...]" For a careful analysis of *Quodl. IX*, 19 (held either in 1292 or 1293) see J. WIPPEL, "Godfrey of Fontaines on Intelligible Species," in: M. PACHECO – J. MEIRINHOS (eds.), *Intellect and Imagination in Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2, Turnhout 2006, pp. 1131-1141. On the date, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines: A Study in Late Thirteenth-Century Philosophy*, Washington, D.C. 1981, pp. xxiv-viii, and P. GLORIEUX, *La littérature quodlibétique de 1260 à 1320*, vol. 1, Paris 1925, pp. 44-45. For Godfrey's biographical details, see nt. 15 below.

active form and not, contrary to grammatical appearance, *actions*.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Godfrey would analyze the following sentence as follows.

(1) Socrates is seeing Felix's colour.

The active verb ('is seeing') is active in form but passive in meaning: it picks out a passion on the side of Socrates, for Socrates' act of seeing is in fact a passion, a kind of affection of Socrates owing to the agency of the object (Felix's colour).

Suppose that Godfrey is right: verbs of cognition are active in form but passive in meaning. Durand reasons that if this were true, then the passive form of those verbs should be taken to be passive in form but active in meaning.<sup>7</sup> After all, when a sentence is changed so that the mood of its verb is switched up, any number of prescriptivist rules about things being said in the passive voice will be violated, but nothing much about what was said will be changed. "Socrates is hitting Plato" means, more or less, the same thing as "Plato is being hit by Socrates." Hence, Durand reasons, Godfrey must be committed to the following analysis of the following sentence.

(2) Felix's colour is being seen by Socrates.

The passive verb ('is being seen') is passive in form but active in meaning: it picks out an action on the side of Felix's colour.

But even if we allow language its quirks and so allow that the active form of certain verbs are, although active in form, nevertheless passive in meaning, it is a stretch to suppose — so says Durand — that the passive form of verbs of cognition are passive in form yet active in meaning. Durand identifies two problems with such a situation. First, we would then be committed to the thesis that I see the object *because* the object is being seen, for a patient is affected *because* an agent is affecting it and not the other way around; but our intuitions

6. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. IX*, 19, p. 280: "[...] illud quod hoc verbo [sc. 'intelligere'] significatur est vere passio intellectus possibilis et sic vere in ipso subiective; sed [...] illa passio significatur per modum activum verbaalem et per modum actionis [...]" See also *ibid.*, pp. 277-280.

7. DURAND, *Super Sent. (2l)*, II, 3, 5, pp. 152-53: "[...] si intelligere est pati secundum rem, intelligi erit actio secundum rem, licet e contrario sit utrobique secundum nomen, semper enim actio et passio proportionaliter designantur verbo activo et passivo."

about sentences like (2) seem to run in the other direction: Felix's color is being seen *because* Socrates is seeing it and not the other way around.<sup>8</sup> Second, it would follow that Felix's color's action would be more noble than Socrates' act (passion) of vision, because actions are more noble than passions; but — Durand is quick to point out — Socrates' act of vision (whatever that might be) has got to be more noble than Felix's color's action (whatever that might be), since Socrates' act of vision is *living* whereas Felix's color's action is not, and what is living is more noble than what is not.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2. *Nobility*

And so we arrive at Durand's second basic argumentative strategy. Durand holds that affectionists, like Godfrey, are committed to a violation of a very basic causal principle: what is less noble cannot *affect* what is more noble. Durand considers two ways of understanding this principle. On the one hand, it might mean that a less noble power cannot act upon a more noble power. According to most medieval philosophers, in any causal transaction, there is an active power in an agent in virtue of which it acts and a passive power in the patient in virtue of which it is acted upon, and the former must be more noble than the latter. As Durand puts it:

Even though the agent is not always better than the patient in connection with what it is as *suppositum* — for instance, fire is not better than a human being upon whom it acts — nevertheless it is without exception necessary that in connection with the principle in virtue of which the agent acts it be better and more noble than the patient in connection with the principle in virtue of which the patient is affected. For instance,

8. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (20), II, 3, 5, p. 153: “[...] non propter hoc agit agens, quia passum patitur, sed e contrario; sed obiectum propter hoc intelligitur, quia intellectus intelligit; ergo intelligi non est agere nec intelligere pati.”

9. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (20), II, 3, 5, p. 153: “Sed omnis actio perfectior et nobilior est passione sibi correspondente; ergo perfectius et nobilior est intelligi quam intelligere. Quod est absurdum, quia actus viventis et cognoscentis semper est nobilior omni proprietate communi viventibus et non-viventibus, cognoscentibus et non-cognoscentibus; sentire autem et intelligere competunt solis viventibus [et] cognoscentibus, sentiri autem et intelligi commune est non-viventibus et non-cognoscentibus.” John of Jandun (writing around the same time in Paris) declares that “this argument seems to me to be beautiful and completely solid in its truth” (“*haec ratio mihi videtur pulchra et insolubilis secundum veritatem*”). See JOHN OF JANDUN, *QQ. De anima*, III, 31, Venezia 1480, fols. 198b-199a.

the heat of the fire in virtue of which it acts is more noble than the dryness or wetness of a human being in virtue of which he is affected by the fire. However, a sensible quality in virtue of which a sense object acts upon a sense (as they say) is not more noble or more perfect than the sensitive power. And the same goes for the intellect's object and the intellectual power. Hence, the sense object or the object of intellect cannot cause in sense or intellect a sensing or thinking.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the nobility principle might mean that that in virtue of which a thing brings about an effect must be at least as noble as (if not more noble than) the effect, at least in cases where that thing causes the effect on its own. But, according to Godfrey, in the case of sensitive cognition sense objects on their own are supposed to be able to bring about perceptive acts in virtue of the sensible qualities which such sense objects possess. Yet, once more, perceptive acts are more noble than sensible qualities, since the former are living and the latter are not.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3. *Summary*

In sum, affectionists like Godfrey are committed to a view that not only runs against ordinary language but also flies in the face of certain intuitions (medieval authors at least had) about the nobility of things. Of course, such arguments do not constitute knock-down arguments against affectionism. Indeed, arguments based upon nobility might strike us as implausible or at least questionable. (Why should a living

10. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2), II, 3, 5, p. 152: “[...] quamvis agens non semper sit praestantius patiente quantum ad illud quod est secundum suppositum – puta ignis non est praestantior homine in quem agit – tamen oportet universaliter agens quantum ad principium quo agit esse praestantius et nobilius patiente quantum ad illud quo patiens patitur, sicut nobilior est caliditas ignis per quam agit quam sit siccitas vel humiditas hominis per quam ab igne patitur. Sed qualitas sensibilis per quam sensibile agit in sensum (ut isti dicunt) non est aliquid nobilius et perfectius potentia sensitiva, et idem intelligitur de obiecto intellectus et potentia intellectiva. Ergo obiectum sensus et intellectus non potest causare in sensu et intellectu sentire et intelligere.”

11. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2), II, 3, 5, pp. 154-155: “Tertio quia omnis causa quae non est agens solum instrumentaliter sed principaliter habet formam per quam agit quae est eiusdem rationis cum ea quam inducit, si sit agens univocum, vel est perfectior ea, si sit agens aequivocum. Sed obiectum sensus secundum istos est causans sentire in sensu non solum instrumentaliter (ut posset dici de obiecto intellectus ratione intellectus agentis) sed principaliter. Ergo sensibile, cum sit agens aequivocum, haberet in se formam et actum nobiliorem quam sit sentire, quod est absurdum.”

thing be more noble than a thing that is not?) And, although appeals to ordinary language have a distinguished pedigree and lasting legacy,<sup>12</sup> the fact remains that Latin is *ad placitum* and so who is to say how far ordinary language can carry an argument?<sup>13</sup> However, such arguments (and especially the nobility arguments) did strike medieval authors as compelling.<sup>14</sup> Hence, such arguments might best be viewed as *motivational*, and they indeed did motivate Durand to (re)consider the alternatives. The *better* theory of cognition, in other words, will be the one that preserves certain (medieval) intuitions and also explains what needs to be explained: namely, the occurrence of a cognitive act owing to what seems to be the object as efficient cause.

## 2. GODFREY'S DEFENSE OF AFFECTIONISM

Godfrey, whose scholarly career in Paris ends about the same time Durand's begins,<sup>15</sup> defends the thesis that cognition is passive and its object an efficient cause due primarily to his metaphysical commitments.

12. Thomas Reid, for instance, will adduce a similar argument almost five hundred years later. See T. REID, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. D. BROOKES, University Park, PA 2002, p. 21: "In all ages, and in all languages, ancient and modern, the various modes of thinking have been expressed by words of active signification, such as seeing, hearing, reasoning, willing, and the like. It seems therefore to be the natural judgment of mankind, that the mind is active in its various ways of thinking; and for this reason they are called its operations, and are expressed by active verbs."

13. A point which John Buridan (among many others) makes in response to such arguments. See JOHN BURIDAN, *QQ. De an.*, II, 12, ed. G. LOCKERT, Paris 1517 (quotation taken from A. PATTIN, *Pour l'histoire du sens agent: La controverse entre Barthélemy de Bruges et Jean de Jandun, ses antécédents et son évolution. Étude et textes inédits*, Leuven 1988, p. 269, 87-91): "Sed si sentire est pati, quare ergo significatur per verbum activum? Potest responderi quod nomina significant ad placitum et fuit talis communis impositio propter aestimationem vulgarem, quia saepe apparet vulgaribus quod sentire sit agere, eo quod ipsi non percipiunt motum per quem sensus moveatur a sensibili remoto."

14. See, for instance, among many others, HERVAEUS NATALIS, *Quodl. III*, 8; JOHN BURIDAN, *QQ. De an. [tertia redactio]*, II, 10; JOHN OF JANDUN, *QQ. De anima*, III, 31; PETER OF PALUDE, *Super Sent.*, II, 3, 4; GONSALVUS OF SPAIN, *QQ. disputatae*, esp. qq. 3 et 8.

15. On Godfrey's career and life, see M. DE WULF, *Un théologien-philosophe du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Étude sur la vie, les œuvres et l'influence de Godefroid de Fontaines*, Brussels 1904; J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*; and J. WIPPEL, "Godfrey of Fontaines at the University of Paris in the Last Quarter of the Thirteenth Century," in: J.A. AERTSEN – K. EMERY, JR. – A. SPEER (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277. Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte*, Berlin 2000, pp. 359-389.

He is perhaps most well known to scholars of medieval philosophy as a tireless advocate of the so-called act-potency axiom, according to which nothing one and the same can be in both act and potency with respect to the same thing at the same time, the most general form of Aristotle's *dictum* that what is moved is moved by another (*omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*).<sup>16</sup> Godfrey decides that this axiom ought to be considered so certain and fundamental as to be inviolable and universal in scope,<sup>17</sup> and so it comes as little surprise to find him appealing to it when he takes up issues that pertain to the subject-matter of psychology.<sup>18</sup>

Godfrey's reasoning can be put as follows. It is evident that a cognizant subject, or more precisely, a given cognitive power in a cognizant subject, is not always engaged in cognitive activity, or, in other words, it is sometimes in potency and sometimes in act. For instance, Socrates, a cognizant subject, has a power for sight and a power for

16. ARISTOTLE, *Physica*, VII, 1, 241b24. On Godfrey's act-potency axiom, see J. WIPPEL, "Godfrey of Fontaines and the Act-Potency Axiom," in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973), pp. 299-317 and the many references therein.

17. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VI*, 7, ed. M. DE WULF – J. HOFFMANS, Leuven 1914, p. 170: "Tamen ad praedictas dubitationes dissolvendas primo supponimus quod, quia aliqua principia esse certissima oportet, alioquin nihil etiam posset per ea investigari, communia ergo illa principia metaphysicae, quae quodam modo est omnis scientia, debent in qualibet scientia speciali supponi; et ideo quia ex metaphysica hoc scire debemus quod unum et idem non potest esse in actu et potentia et quod illud quod est in potentia ad aliquid non potest se reducere ad actum secundum illud — et hoc pertinet ad metaphysicam, quia est commune omni enti — ideo hoc debemus supponere circa angelos et circa animam et hoc supposito alia quae ad ipsam animam specialiter pertinent investigare, nec propter ignorantiam vel dubitationem circa posteriora debemus certissima et prima negare." See also *Quodl. VIII*, 13, ed. J. HOFFMANS, Leuven 1924, p. 193: "Et qui dicit contrarium hoc non probat et manifeste dicit contradictoria et contradicit primis principiis generalissimis fundatis super terminos generalissimos, scilicet super ens et non-ens, et super actum et potentiam."

18. Godfrey discusses psychological issues in a variety of texts, the most important of which are *Quodlibeta VI*, 7; *VIII*, 2; *IX*, 19; and *XIII*, 3. His cognitive psychology has been largely neglected in the secondary literature on medieval theories of cognition. For some discussion see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, pp. 194-200; J. WIPPEL, "The Role of Phantasms in Godfrey of Fontaines' Theory of Intellection," in: C. WENIN (ed.), *L'Homme et son univers au Moyen Âge*, vol. 2, Leuven 1986, pp. 573-582; M. PICKAVÉ – W. GORIS, "Von der Erkenntnis der Engel. Der Streit um die *species intelligibilis* und eine *quaestio* aus dem anonymen Sentenzenkommentar in ms. Brügge, Stadtbibliothek 491," in: J.A. AERTSEN – K. EMERY, JR. – A. SPEER (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, pp. 125-177; J. WIPPEL, "Godfrey of Fontaines on Intelligible Species;" and A. CÔTÉ, "L'Objet et la cause de la connaissance selon Godefroid de Fontaines," in: *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 54/3 (2007), pp. 409-429.



thought, each of which is sometimes engaged in its associated cognitive activity and sometimes not. Granted this, then, one might well wonder what actualizes a given cognitive power, that is, what reduces a cognitive power from potency to act. What reduces, for instance, Socrates' power for sight from potency to act? (In what follows I will often talk of an item *being reduced* from potency to act or of something *reducing* it to act; this is a very special and technical use of 'reduce', a literal translation of the scholastic Latin '*reducere*').<sup>19</sup> Since whatever it is that reduces a passive power from potency to act is to be considered an efficient cause, the question

“What reduces Socrates' faculty for seeing from potency to act?”

is the same as

“What is the efficient cause of Socrates' vision?”

On the surface, there are three options: (1) it reduces itself; (2) an item outside it reduces it; (3) both it and this item reduce it (as two necessary causes, jointly sufficient).<sup>20</sup> A cognitive power cannot reduce itself, neither (1) on its own nor (3) together with some other item, because then, Godfrey reasons, the act-potency axiom will be violated. It will be violated because, as I'll spell out in some more detail below, a cognitive power is (at least) passive with respect to its cognitive act since it receives it, and this much, Godfrey reasons, everyone would admit; but nothing can be both passive and active with respect to the same thing at the same time, for then it would be in potency and act at the same time with respect to the same thing.

Hence, it has to be the case (2) that something outside of it reduces it. The most plausible candidate here is, of course, the object and so Godfrey maintains that the object (and it alone) is the efficient cause

19. Godfrey and other authors also sometimes speak of a power being actuated (*actuare*), educed (*educere*), drawn out (*extrahere*), or, more simply, transitioning (*exire*) from potency to act.

20. In fact, Godfrey considers (and rejects) a fourth and fifth option: (4) that both the power and a 'disposition' (*species*) added to the power reduce it; (5) that both a disposition added to the power and some other item reduce the power. He rejects (4) on the grounds that it would violate the act-potency axiom in the same way that (1) and (3) would, since the power would still reduce itself from potency to act. He rejects (5) on the grounds that such an added disposition would be superfluous. See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. IX*, 19, pp. 271-274.

of the cognitive act, reducing the cognitive power from potency into act.<sup>21</sup> Hence, we are, Godfrey will go on to insist at length, in fact totally passive with respect to cognition and not at all active,<sup>22</sup> grammatical appearances and inchoate intuitions about nobility notwithstanding.

### 2.1. *Godfrey's Achilles Argument*

One way to appreciate Godfrey's position is to look at how he defends it against attack. We are fortunate here for many people attacked it.<sup>23</sup> One of the most famous was Henry of Ghent, Godfrey's older contemporary at Paris, who sparred with Godfrey on this topic (with a special focus on the will) in a series of public debates that spanned a baker's dozen years or so.<sup>24</sup> On Henry's view, the object of the will

21. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. IX*, 19, p. 276: "Obiectum ergo intelligibile habet rationem moventis et agentis respectu intellectus possibilis educens ipsum de potentia secundum actum intelligendi ad actum secundum illud [...] Obiectum est quod habet rationem efficientis et moventis ...". See also *Quodl. XIII*, 3, ed. J. HOFFMANS, Leuven 1935, p. 193: "[...] actus potentiarum animae qui dicuntur quaedam operationes non sunt effective a potentia animae in qua sunt sed potius ab obiecto;" *Quodl. X*, 14, ed. J. HOFFMANS, Leuven 1931, p. 379: "Dicendum quod nec voluntas nec intellectus proprie movent se sive educunt se de potentia ad actum aliquem, sed per se moventur ab obiecto. Obiectum enim respectu potentiae cuiuscumque animalis non habet rationem moti vel passi; nec est sicut materia vel subiectum operationis ipsius potentiae ut potentia actum suum in illud vel circa illud exercent; sed se habet in ratione moventis et agentis secundum cuius formam et actum habet etiam speciem et formam ipse actus potentiae; quod non posset esse nisi haberet rationem moventis et agentis ut causa per se et propter quam non ut causa per accidens et sine qua non."

22. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. IX*, 19, p. 276: "[...] et intellectus possibilis simpliciter habet rationem passivi et receptivi."

23. While most authors took Godfrey to be correct about sensitive cognition, many took him to be wrong about intellectual cognition, for Godfrey maintains that the intelligible object alone (without the causal aid of the so-called agent intellect) brings about an intellectual act. Many more took Godfrey to be wrong about acts of the will. In addition to Henry of Ghent (discussed below), see, for instance and among many others, JOHN OF JANDUN, *QQ. De an.*, III, 31; JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, 3, 3, 1-3; *QQ. Met.*, IX, 14; *Rep.*, II, 25; *Lect.*, II, 25; JOHN BURIDAN, *QQ. Eth. Nic.*, II, 3; HERVAEUS NATALIS, *Super Sent.*, II, 17, 2; JOHN BACONTHORPE, *Super Sent.*, Prologus, 2, 4; GONSALVUS OF SPAIN, *QQ. disputatae*, esp. qq. 3 et 8; and GUIDO TERRENI, *Quodl. II*, 13.

24. For a complete list of references to where Henry develops his position, see the *apparatus fontium* in HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodl. XIII*, 10, ed. J. DECORTE, Leuven 1985, p. 82. For discussion of the debate between Henry and Godfrey, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, pp. 148-202; B.D. KENT, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century*, Washington, D.C. 1995, pp. 140-146; and

— something presented to the will by the intellect — does not actualize the will's potency in the manner of an efficient cause but rather it is to be thought of as a so-called *sine qua non* cause, a mere necessary condition without which there would not be volition. It is not the object but the will itself that actualizes its own potency, for if acts of the will were caused by something other than the will, then they would not be free.<sup>25</sup> Hence, at least in the case of some mental acts — namely, volitions — the act-potency axiom does not apply.<sup>26</sup>

During the course of this debate, Godfrey developed and refined a kind of master argument both in defense of his own position and against a position like Henry's. John Duns Scotus, in his own recapitulation of the debate at the turn of the new century, labels this argument (or at least important bits of it) the '*Achilles*' argument, meaning that it drives at the core theoretical problem with *sine qua non* causality and any future proponent of the theory must face up to it if they wish to defend the notion.<sup>27</sup> The *Achilles argument*, as I will be calling it, is complex, having a number of components or steps. I think it is best to view it as having the following *four* steps.

(1) Let's begin with the alternative: a psychological power (in this case, the will) is an active not a passive power. But this seems impossible. An active power is by definition (at least Aristotle's definition) a power or ability to bring about a change in something else (*potentia*

S.D. DUMONT, "Did Duns Scotus Change his Mind on the Will?," in: J.A. AERTSEN – K. EMERY, JR. – A. SPEER (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, pp. 749-758.

25. HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodl. X*, 9, ed. R. MACKEN, Leuven 1981, p. 235: "[...] voluntas movet se, scilicet quia aliter periret liberum arbitrium [...]."

26. Henry held a more complicated view (which he seems to have changed over the course of his long career) about our other cognitive powers. For a recent discussion of Henry's view on this subject, see M. ROMBEIRO, "Intelligible Species in the Mature Thought of Henry of Ghent," in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49/2 (2011), pp. 181-220. For further discussion, see M. PICKAVÉ, "Causality and Cognition: An Interpretation of Henry of Ghent's Quodlibet V, q. 14," in: G. KLIMA (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, New York (forthcoming); B. GOEHRING, *Henry of Ghent on Cognition and Mental Representation*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University 2006; R. PASNAU, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1997; J.V. BROWN, "Intellect and Knowing in Henry of Ghent," in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 37 (1975), pp. 490-512 and 692-710; and ID., "Sensation in Henry of Ghent: A Late Medieval Aristotelian-Augustinian Synthesis," in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 53 (1971), pp. 238-266.

27. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, 3, 3, 2, 521, 524-5, 527, ed. P. BALIĆ, Città del Vaticano 1954, pp. 309, 10 – 312, 14.

*activa est principium transmutandi aliud in quantum aliud*).<sup>28</sup> For instance, when the hot campfire, having an active power to make something else hot, acts, something else, other than the campfire, becomes hot. We might call this the *necessity principle*:

[Necessity Principle] If A acts, then it is necessary that there be a P (somehow distinct from A) which is affected by A.<sup>29</sup>

It follows from the necessity principle that our various mental powers cannot be active powers, for when Socrates wills or sees something, nothing else, outside of Socrates, is affected.

The necessity principle is not simply true by definition. Appealing to another principle to be found in Aristotle — call this the *actualism principle* — Godfrey argues that in order for an agent to make a patient F, that agent must itself be *actually* F.<sup>30</sup> For instance, in order for the campfire to make the hot dog hot, the campfire must itself be hot. Hence, if an item were able to reduce itself from potency to act — from being able to be hot to being hot — then it would have to be already in act — already hot — in the first place, and so it will be in potency and act with respect to the same thing at the same time, a patent violation of the act-potency axiom.

(2) We might be tempted to reject the necessity principle.<sup>31</sup> However, if we do and so allow that an item can reduce itself from potency to

28. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica*, IX, 1, 1046a12-16; *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, 1, 219, ed. J. HAMESSE, Louvain / Paris 1974, p. 133, 85. See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VIII*, 2, pp. 18-19; *Quodl. VI*, 7, pp. 152-54, 161-62; and *Quodl. XIII*, 3, pp. 193, 198.

29. The necessity principle also, of course, applies to passive powers: if P is acted upon (or affected), then it is necessary that there be an A (somehow distinct from P) which is acting upon or affecting P. See *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, 1, 220, ed. J. HAMESSE, p. 134, 89: "Potentia passiva est principium transmutandi ab altero in quantum ab altero."

30. ARISTOTLE, *Physica*, III, 2, 202a9-12. See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. V*, 11, p. 41: "... ad hoc quod aliquid agat vel producat aliquid sufficiat quod sit ens ... in actu tale quale est aliud in potentia ...". See also *Quodl. XIII*, 2, p. 19, and *Quodl. VI*, 7, pp. 152-154.

31. Indeed, many people did, by way of a rejection of the actualism principle. Henry of Ghent, John Duns Scotus, and others argued that, rather, in order for an agent to make a patient F, that agent need not be *formally* (or actually) F, but rather it need only be *virtually* F. For instance, according to medieval authors, the Sun is not actually hot — it does not have the form of heat inhering in it; yet the Sun is able to make other things hot owing to the fact that it is virtually hot. See, for instance, JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Lect.*, I, 3, 3, 2-3, 403, Città del Vaticano 1960, p. 382; *Ord.*, I, 3, 3, 2, 513, ed. P. BALIĆ, Città del Vaticano 1954, p. 303-304; *Rep.*, II, 25, un., 12, Paris 1894, p. 129a-b; and HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodl. XIII*, 11, p. 131; *Quodl. X*, 9, pp. 221, 230. Godfrey recognizes

act, we face another problem, based upon another Aristotelian principle, call it the *sufficiency principle*:

[Sufficiency Principle] Whenever a sufficient agent is present to a sufficient patient, the action will come about.<sup>32</sup>

When the hot dog is next to the campfire, the campfire will make the hot dog hot. But the will (on Henry's view) is taken to be both the sufficient agent and sufficient patient of an act of willing, and so, since the will is also always present to itself, it would seem to follow that the will would always be engaged in an act of willing. Yet we do not always will (nor see, hear, and so on).<sup>33</sup>

This problem, known in the literature as *the problem of omniactivity*, compels us to admit that there is *some other cause* over and above the will that is necessary in order for a volition to occur when it occurs.<sup>34</sup> What might this something else be? Once more the most obvious candidate is the object. Of course, we need not take the object to be a necessary *efficient* cause. This is, presumably, what Henry of Ghent and others who endorse the notion of *sine qua non* causality mean

this move and rejects it as well, arguing (1) that only items, like the Sun, which bring about effects in other things, can (perhaps) be said to violate the actualism principle, and (2) that even if something like the will were able to violate the actualism principle, this would entail a violation of another principle: that nothing can reduce itself from a more perfect state to a less perfect state, for agents that virtually have forms are more noble than agents that actually (or formally) have them. See esp. GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VI*, 7, pp. 150-151.

32. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysica*, IX, 5, 1048a5-7. See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. X*, 14, p. 381: "[...] praesentibus activo et passivo consurgit actio [...]."

33. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VI*, 7, pp. 151-152: "Praeterea quando activum per se est praesens passivo per se sequitur actio et in hoc exclusum omne impeditivum, ut patet per Philosophum nono Metaphysicae. Si ergo in voluntate ponatur activum et passivum quae semper sibi sunt praesentia quia sunt id ipsum (ut dicit ista positio) vel sunt unum subiecto (ut dicit alia), sequitur actio et huic non potest praestari impedimentum. Quid enim potest impedire quod idem non sit praesens sibi ipsi?"

34. For discussion of the problem of omniactivity, see, for instance, S.D. DUMONT, "Did Duns Scotus Change his Mind on the Will?," pp. 749-758; J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, pp. 184-202; B.D. KENT, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century*, pp. 140-46; R. TESKE, "Henry of Ghent's Rejection of the Principle *Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*", in: W. VAN-HAMEL (ed.), *Henry of Ghent: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on the Occasion of the 700th Anniversary of his Death (1293)*, Leuven 1996, pp. 279-308; and R. EFFLER, *John Duns Scotus and the Principle 'Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur'*, St. Bonaventure, N.Y. 1962.

when they claim that the object is a cause but not an efficient cause: the efficient cause is the will which reduces itself from potency to act and affects itself *if and only if* the object is present.

We now arrive at the core theoretical problem — the Achilles proper — with the notion of a *sine qua non* cause. In Godfrey's lights, such a view is *mysterious* and *ad hoc*.

(3) It is mysterious because Aristotle recognizes but four kinds of causes: the material, the efficient, the formal, and the final. Since the subject and not the object is the recipient of the thought or volition, the subject and not the object is the material cause. Nor is it plausible to insist that the object is the formal or final cause, and since the object is explicitly not an efficient cause, it would seem that it is not a cause at all. In other words, what *kind* of cause is the object? If there is a fifth kind of cause over and above Aristotle's gang of four, I would like to hear a bit more about it. Hence, the notion of *sine qua non* causality is *mysterious*.<sup>35</sup>

(4) The other core problem with the notion of *sine qua non* causality is that it seems rather *ad hoc*, a ready-made solution to the problem. Henry of Ghent seems committed to the claim that *sine qua non* causality applies *only* in the case of the will: when the will changes, this is not owing to an extrinsic efficient cause but rather it is owing to a mere *sine qua non* cause; yet in *all other* cases, when something changes, this is owing not to a mere *sine qua non* cause but rather to an extrinsic efficient cause. Hence, a given change is to be treated as a case either of (ordinary) efficient causality or (special) *sine qua non* causality. In other words, Henry seems to be committed to a disjunctive analysis of causation. However, as with any disjunctive analysis, unless we provide a good reason for choosing one or the other of the disjuncts, our theory will be *ad hoc*, and Godfrey, for one, does not think that Henry has

35. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. XV*, 4, ed. O. LOTTIN, Louvain 1937, pp. 24-25: "Si autem sit causa sine qua non aliquid faciens ad effectum, quaero in quo genere causae se habet? Constat quod non in genere causae formalis, quia obiectum non est forma actus volendi; nec etiam est causa materialis, quia obiectum non est subiectum in quo recipiatur actus volendi [...] nec etiam in genere causae finalis solum, quia finis non est quod dirigit sed in quod inclinatio dirigitur [...] Ergo relinquitur quod si obiectum est causa sine qua non aliquid faciens ad effectum, quod sit causa effectiva in motione voluntatis et quod effective movet voluntatem."

given us such a reason.<sup>36</sup> To put it somewhat dramatically, if we admit that there are *sine qua non* causes, such that P, in the presence of A, becomes  $\varphi$  (whereas P not in the presence of A does not) and that this is owing to (i) P's self-affection and (ii) A as a mere *sine qua non* cause, then we might as well claim that whenever it looks as if any item whatsoever becomes  $\varphi$  owing to some other item as efficient cause, in fact what has occurred is that the former item became  $\varphi$  owing to (i) its own self-affection and (ii) the latter item as a mere *sine qua non* cause. As Godfrey puts it:

If this can be said about the will, then with equal ease and with reason one might deny that there is any active power distinct from the passive power and so claim that each and every thing moves itself from potency to act... But then how will one prove that the branch or a body becomes hot thanks to fire? Rather, one can say that it makes itself hot when the fire — as *sine qua non* cause — is present.<sup>37</sup>

Or, to quote Bartholomew of Bruges (writing in Paris between 1307 and 1309):

[M]atter would acquire form in the [mere] presence of some extrinsic thing and a woman would impregnate herself when a man is present and the wood would transform itself into man-made forms like beds and stools when the workman is present.<sup>38</sup>

36. See, for instance, GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VI*, 7, p. 158: "Non est enim dare quare in unum exeat potius quam in aliud si nulla facta sit in ea mutatio quae prius non erat [...]."

37. GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quodl. VI*, 7, p. 158: "Alioquin si sic dici potest de voluntate, aequè faciliter et rationabiliter poterit negari omnis potentia activa distincta a passivo, et dicitur quod unumquodque ens producit se ipsum de potentia ad actum [...] Quis etiam probabit lignum vel corpus aliquod califieri ab igne? Immo dicitur quod seipsum calefacit, praesente igne ut causa sine qua non." See also *Quodl. IX*, 19, p. 273: "Universaliter igitur tam in voluntate quam in aliis dicendum quod nihil movet se ipsum ... et hoc praecipue propter rationes activi et passivi [...] quia si de ratione potentiae activae secundum quod huiusmodi est posse agere in aliud secundum quod aliud, passivae autem est transmutari ab alio secundum quod aliud, patet quod in quolibet genere entis oportet activum et passivum esse realiter distincta. Si autem dicatur quod in quibusdam de ratione potentiae activae est transmutare aliud in quibusdam idem hoc sine ratione dicitur et in hoc etiam manifeste contradictoria implicantur et qua ratione dicitur in uno et in alio. Unde posito quod in uno solo idem agat in se ipsum vel educat se de potentia ad actum aequali facilitate ponetur in omnibus."

38. BARTHOLOMEW OF BRUGES, *De sensu agente*, ed. A. PATTIN, *Pour l'histoire du sens agent*, pp. 46-94, at 57, 79-82: "[M]ateria movet ad formam in praesentia alicuius rei exterioris et quod mulier impraegnet se viro praesente et quod ligna moverent se ad formas artificiales, scilicet scampni vel lectuli, artifice praesente."

If we admit *sine qua non* causality, in other words, then it will be a *slippery slope* into a view about causality which makes no sense at all, at least not to Godfrey.<sup>39</sup>

Godfrey, then, thinks it is better to claim that when X becomes  $\varphi$  this is not ever owing to the fact that X made itself  $\varphi$  in the presence of something else which although it looks to be an agent in fact is not, but it is rather *always* because there is some other item which is really an agent — something that acts upon as efficient cause whatever changes. Hence, either we abandon some (to Godfrey's mind) fairly robust metaphysical assumptions about the nature of causation or we abandon (or provide alternative explanations for) whatever intuitions we might have (in the case at hand) about the will's self-agency. Better to do the latter than the former in Godfrey's view, and that, so it would seem, is exactly what he did.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. DURAND'S DEFENSE OF ANTI-AFFECTIONISM

Durand thinks that it is better to revise our metaphysics than to give in to the idea that the object is an efficient cause of our cognitive acts. In this section, I want to evaluate the success of Durand's metaphysical revision. I will first lay out Durand's proposal, and then I will address Godfrey's Achilles argument in light of this proposal.

#### 3.1. *Durand's Analysis of Sine Qua Non Causality*

So, what is a *sine qua non* cause? Well, it is something that reduces an *accidental potency* to act. What is an accidental potency? As a first approximation, it is the sort of potency that a natural agent is in when it is not engaged in its natural operation, in what it does. For instance,

39. Of course, the alternative (*sine qua non* causation across the board) might strike philosophers after Hume as a plausible position. However, *nobody* in the period under discussion in this article even considered such an option. Either we reject the very notion of a *sine qua non* cause, as Godfrey and many others did, or we endorse a kind of disjunctivism, as Henry, John Duns Scotus (at least at one point), and Durand (as we will see below) did.

40. For Godfrey's discussion of the will's freedom and agency, see esp. *Quodl. XV*, 4, pp. 20-23 and B.D. KENT, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century*, pp. 108-109, 141-142.



it is the sort of potency that a campfire is in when there is no hot dog around for it to heat. It is also, Durand will claim, the sort of potency that Socrates is in when there are no visible items around for him to see or intelligible items around for him to think about. Just as a present hot dog is a *sine qua non* and not an efficient cause of the campfire's transition, as it were, from potency (being able to cook) to act (cooking), so too a present hot dog is a *sine qua non* cause and not an efficient cause of Socrates' transition from potency (being able to see) to act (seeing). There are, in short, two kinds of potency and so too there are two kinds of causes, that is, two sorts of answers that we can give to the question: What reduces a thing in potency from potency to act?

But we get ahead of ourselves. Let's start from the start: Aristotle. Durand's proposal is explicitly based upon a particular interpretation of a distinction that the Stagirite raises a number of times in a number of places — the passage Durand focuses on is *Physics*, VIII, 4.<sup>41</sup> There Aristotle writes:

But the fact that the term 'potency' is used in more than one way is the reason why it is not evident whence such motions as the upward motion of fire and the downward motion of earth are derived... Thus what is cold is potentially hot: then a change takes place and it is fire, and it burns, unless something prevents and hinders it. So, too, with heavy and light: light is generated from heavy, for example air from water (for water is first such in potency), and air is actually light, and will at once realize its proper activity unless something prevents it. The activity of lightness consists in the thing being in a certain place, namely high up: when it is in the contrary place, it is being prevented... As we have said, a thing may be in potency light or heavy in more ways than one. Thus not only when a thing is water is it in a sense light in potency, but when it has become air it may be still light in potency; for it may be that through some hindrance it does not occupy an upper position, whereas, if what hinders it is removed, it realizes its activity and continues to rise higher.<sup>42</sup>

41. Durand paraphrases this passage, as filtered through Averroes (see nt. 43 below), in DURAND, *Super Sent.* (20), II, 3, 5, pp. 159-160.

42. ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, VIII, 4, 255a27-b23; translation modified from the English translation of R. HARDIE – R. GAYE, in: J. BARNES (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, Princeton 1991. My modifications are based upon ARISTOTELES LATINUS (TRANSL. JAMES OF VENICE), *Physica (translatio vetus)*, ed. F. BOSSIER – J. BRAMS, Turnhout 1990, pp. 294, 7 – 295, 11: "Quoniam autem 'potentia' esse multipliciter dicitur, hoc autem causa est non esse manifestum a quo huiusmodi moveantur, ut ignis sursum terra vero

According to most medieval philosophers, following Aristotle's great Arabic commentator, Averroes, Aristotle is drawing a distinction here between *essential* and *accidental* potency.<sup>43</sup>

So, what is this a distinction between? One example Aristotle gives is the hot and the cold. A cold item is able to become hot, and so it is in one sort of potency — call it essential — with respect to becoming hot. Once a heat-making agent is present to this cold item, it will transition from something able to be hot to something actually hot; it will have undergone an essential reduction: its essential potency will become actual. However, once it is actually hot, it might still be in potency in another sense — call this accidental potency. It is now something able to make other things hot but (provided there is nothing around for it to heat up) it is not something actually making other things hot. Hence, present to it a heatable item and it will transition

deorsum ... Frigidum enim potentia calidum, cum autem mutet, iam ignis, ardet autem, nisi aliquid prohibeat et impediat. Similiter autem se habet et circa grave et leve; leve enim fit ex gravi, ut ex aqua aer (hoc enim potentia primum), et iam leve, et operabitur mox, nisi aliquid prohibeat. Actus enim levis est alicubi esse et sursum, prohibetur autem cum in contrario loco sit ... Potentia autem est leve et grave multipliciter, sicut dictum est; cum quae enim sit aqua, potentia quodammodo est leve, et cum aer, est etiam potentia; contingit enim impeditum non sursum esse; sed si auferatur impediens, agit et semper sursum fit."

43. See, for instance, AVERROES, *Physica*, VIII, 32, Venezia 1562, fol. 370raB: "... quia potentia ad motum dicitur duobus modis, quorum unus est de potentia essentiali, quae est materia ex qua generata sunt et est naturalis; alius autem est de potentia violentia, quae est accidentalis." See also *De caelo*, III, 28, Venezia 1562, fols. 197rbF-199raC. Hervaeus Natalis makes an explicit connection between Durand's remarks in q. 5 and Averroes. See HERVAEUS NATALIS, *Quodl. III*, 8, in: *Durandi de Sancto Porciano O.P. quaestio de natura cognitionis (II Sent. (A) D. 3 Q. 5) et disputatio cum anonymo quodam nec non determinatio Hervei Natalis O.P. (Quodl. III Q. 8)*, ed. J. KOCH, Münster 1929, pp. 73-74. On the distinction between essential and accidental potency in medieval philosophy, see A. MAIER, *An der Grenze von Scholastik und Naturwissenschaft*, 2nd ed., Roma 1952, and E.D. SYLLA, "Aristotelian Commentaries and Scientific Change: The Parisian Nominalists on the Cause of the Natural Motion of Inanimate Bodies," in: *Vivarium* 31/1 (1993), pp. 37-83. For some discussion of the distinction in Aristotle, see U. COOPE, "Aristotle on Action," in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume* 81 (2007), pp. 109-137; R. HEINAMAN, "Actuality, Potentiality and *De Anima* II.5," in: *Phronesis* 52 (2007), pp. 139-187; U. COOPE, "Aristotle's Account of Agency in *Physics* III 3," in: *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2004), pp. 201-221; M. WEDIN, "Aristotle on the Mind's Self-Motion," in: M. GILL – J. LENNOX (eds.), *Self-Motion From Aristotle to Newton*, Princeton 1994, pp. 81-116; and M. BURNYEAT, "*De Anima* II 5," in: *Phronesis* 47 (2002), pp. 29-90. ARISTOTLE, *De an.*, II, 5, 427a22-b1 contains a (more famous) invocation of the distinction. See also *De an.*, III, 4, 429b6-9.

from such accidental potency to act; it will have undergone an accidental reduction: its accidental potency will have become actual.

The distinction between essential and accidental potency is an important one for Durand. After paraphrasing Aristotle's text, Durand writes:

What is in mere accidental potency is not in potency to a new form nor does it need, in order to be reduced into act, an agent giving to it a new form.<sup>44</sup>

On Durand's view, there are two kinds of potency (essential and accidental) and so too two kinds of reductions (essential and accidental) which in turn demand two kinds of analyses. If A is in *essential potency* with respect to B, then (1) B is something absolute superadded to A ("a new form") and (2) A's reduction requires an agent or efficient cause, C ("an agent giving a new form"). By contrast, if A is in *accidental potency* with respect to B, then (1) B is not something absolute superadded to A and (2) A's reduction does not require an efficient cause.

In other words, whereas essential reductions can be explained with the standard causal model, accidental reductions demand a very different causal model; whereas our analysis of A's essential reduction will make reference to an efficient cause (indeed, an efficient cause distinct

44. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2), II, 3, 5, p. 160 (translated text in italics): "*Illud quod est solum in potentia accidentali non est in potentia ad novam formam nec indiget ad hoc ut reducat in actum agente dante novam formam; sed habens actum primum solum est in potentia accidentali ad actum secundum, qui est operatio; ergo etc.*" (On the notion of 'first' and 'second act' see below.) See also *Quaest. disp.*, I, ed. J. KOCH, Münster 1929, p. 41: "Illud quod est in potentia accidentali tantum non est in potentia ad aliquam formam facientem compositionem realem [...] Maior patet, quia illud quod est in potentia accidentali, ad hoc quod fiat actu, non indiget transmutatione; sed quod est in potentia ad formam indiget transmutatione, quia forma non potest induci in subiecto nec educi de subiecto nisi per actionem agentis transmutantis." See also PETER OF PALUDE, *Super Sent.*, II, 3, 4, 3, Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. lat. 1073, fol. 18va (Z) and Basel, *Universitätsbibliothek*, B II 22, fol. 25ra (B): "Prima ratio sumitur ex diversitate potentiae accidentalis ad essentialem, quae ponitur octavo Physicorum, potest enim potentia accidentalis reduci ad actum [primum *add.* Z] sine violentia, nulla [ulla Z] nova forma sibi impressa, sicut grave remoto prohibente fertur deorsum nulla forma absoluta de novo sibi impressa, quia est in potentia accidentali, non essentiali, quia iam habet essentialiam quam natus est consequi talis actus. Potentia autem accidentalis reducitur in actum a causa per accidens. Sed potentia essentialis non reducitur in actum sine causa per se formam imprimente, nisi forte per violentiam, sicut grave sursum non fertur nisi vi aut levitate sibi impressa et gravitate expulsa."

from A), our analysis of A's accidental reduction will not; instead it will make reference to, on the one hand, the fact that A has some form or nature which enables it to do something and, on the other hand, something else, which, although a cause of some sort, *is not an efficient cause*, for, as Durand puts it a few lines earlier, if this 'something else' were an efficient cause, then A "would not have been in accidental potency but rather it would have been in essential potency."<sup>45</sup>

This is all still very abstract. Let's return to Aristotle's example. Suppose that A is cold. Hence, A is in *essential potency* (with respect to becoming hot or having heat). If we introduce a heat-making agent, then A will undergo an essential reduction and become hot: it will have received the form of heat from that heat-making agent as efficient cause. Now, once hot, and provided nothing is around for A to heat up, A will be in *accidental potency* (with respect to making some other item hot). If we introduce a heatable item — a hot dog, say — A will undergo an accidental reduction and elicit its heat-making action (and so make the hot dog hot). Hence, the hot dog is a cause of some sort of A's transition from potency to act, yet A did *not* receive a form from the hot dog as efficient cause, for A was not in *essential* potency but rather mere *accidental* potency with respect to making the hot dog hot. Hence, the hot dog is not an *efficient* cause but, well, a mere *sine qua non* cause.

Medieval authors also associated Aristotle's distinction between two kinds of potency with a distinction between two kinds of acts (or actuality), namely, first act (*actus primus*) and second act (*actus secundus*).<sup>46</sup> On Durand's view, an essential reduction — the reduction of an item existing in essential potency from potency to act — results in *first act*

45. DURAND, *Super Sent. (2)*, II, 3, 5, pp. 159-60 (translated text in italics): "Auctoritas etiam Aristotelis octavo Physicorum est ad hoc, dicit enim ibi expresse quod generans dans formam dat etiam operationem et motum convenientem formae, sicut dans calorem igni dat ei ut calefaciat combustibile praesens et dans ei levitatem dat ei per se motum sursum; habens enim formam solum est in potentia accidentali ad operationem et motum convenientem formae; et ideo ad hoc, ut reducatur in actum, non indiget agente dante novam formam, quia iam *non esset in potentia accidentali solum, sed essentiali.*"

46. See, for instance, NICOLAS MEDENSIS (DURANDELLUS), *Evidentiae contra Durandum*, II, 15, ed. P.T. STELLA, Tübingen 2003, vol. 1, p. 434: "[...] duplex est actus: primus et secundus. Et huius ratio est quia duplex est potentia [...]." The first/second act distinction was also traced back to Aristotle. See *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, 6, 39, ed. J. HAMESSE, p. 177, 54: "Duplex est actus, scilicet primus et secundus: primus ut scientia, secundus ut speculari secundum scientiam."

(at least) and provided it is able to execute a second act and nothing is preventing it *second act* as well. Yet sometimes an item, having been reduced from essential potency to first act, is impeded such that it cannot execute its second act. It will then be said to be in first act but not second act, or, in other words, it will then be said to be in accidental potency. Once more, when the cold item becomes hot (and so reduced from essential potency to act owing to some efficient cause and the reception of a form) it might be impeded from making some other item hot (owing to the absence of a heatable item, say). Hence, it will be in first act with respect to heating but not second act, or, alternatively, it will be in accidental potency. So too the heavy item that rests upon a plank and anything that has a nature upon which certain activities, operations or motions naturally follow which is in the wrong circumstances so that its operation is impeded. Remove these impediments and an accidental reduction occurs and so the item transitions from its first act into its second act even though it received no new form from an extrinsic efficient cause.

With this as background, let's now turn to Durand's answer to the question: What is the cause of a cognitive act?<sup>47</sup> A few passages after his discussion of Aristotle's *Physics*, Durand writes:

(A) Sometimes first and second act perfect a thing without reference to something else ... In these cases, a thing is made to be under first and second act all at once from the same item ... However, sometimes first and second act perfect a thing not without reference to something else but in relation (*in habitudine*) to something else and, thus, are signified as, e.g., able-to-make-hot (*calefactivum*) or able-to-break (*disgregativum*) and makes-hot (*calefacere*) or breaks (*disgregare*). Here first act implies a potential relationship (*respectus*) whereas second act implies an actual one. In these cases, something is not always at once under first act and second, but it might happen sometimes that it has first act without second act.

47. Strictly speaking, Durand wishes to show how it is that the object is a *sine qua non* cause, but in doing so he tells us he will also provide an answer to the questions: How thoughts and sensory perceptions come about in us? And why do we not always think or engage in sensory perception granted that we always have senses and intellects? DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2D), II, 3, 5, p. 160: "Secundum patet, scilicet quod sint ab obiecto sicut a causa sine qua non, et in hoc apparebit tertium principale, scilicet qualiter intelligere et sentire fiant in nobis et quare non semper intelligimus aut sentimus, cum semper habeamus sensum et intellectum." The first question, of course, is the question Aristotle had raised in *De an.*, III, 4, 429a10-12; the second question seems to be an attempt at avoiding the omniactivity objection (see above nt. 34).

(B) The reason for this is because such first acts only require the potential presence of that with respect to which they are said whereas such operations or second acts require its actual presence. For instance, in order for something to be able-to-make-hot it is sufficient that it can have a heatable item present to it; but in order for it to make-hot it requires an actually present heatable item. And since it sometimes happens that something is potentially present which is not actually present, it will sometimes be the case that something is under first act without second act.

(C) Numbered among such acts are the intellect (or the intellective principle) and thinking (*intelligere*), for both of these are spoken of not without any reference whatsoever to something else but in relation to an intelligible item, and the intellect implies this relationship as potential whereas the act of thinking implies it as actual. Hence, something that has an intellect does not always think since it does not always have an intelligible item actually present to it ... The object's presence or the presentation of the object is the *sine qua non* cause since an act of thinking is not a perfection that makes no reference to something else but rather it is a perfection in relation to something else ... And the same is the case with sensitive cognition.<sup>48</sup>

Durand suggests in (B) that we should view both dispositions and the manifestation of those dispositions as non-absolute or relational properties, for the terms that we use to talk about such items 'imply'

48. DURAND, *Super Sent.* (2), II, 3, 5, pp. 160-161: "[A] Actus primus et secundus quandoque perficiunt rem secundum se et absolute et sic significantur, ut calor et calere, albedo et albescere. Et in talibus simul et inseparabiliter res ab eodem efficitur sub primo actu et secundo, simul enim et ab eodem aliquid est calidum et calet, album et albescit. Quandoque autem actus primus et secundus perficiunt rem non absolute, sed in habitu ad alterum et sic significantur, ut calefactivum et disgregativum, calefacere et disgregare. Et respectum talem importat actus primus secundum potentiam, actus autem secundus secundum actum. Et in talibus non semper simul est aliquid sub actu primo et secundo, sed contingit quandoque habere actum primum sine secundo. [B] Cuius ratio est quia actus primus requirit praesentiam eius ad quod dicitur solum secundum potentiam, sed operatio vel actus secundus requirit praesentiam eius secundum actum, ad hoc enim quod aliquid sit calefactivum sufficit quod possit habere calefactibile, sed ad calefacere requiritur actualiter praesens calefactibile. Et quia contingit aliquid esse praesens secundum potentiam quod tamen non est actu praesens, ideo contingit aliquid esse sub actu primo absque actu secundo. [C] De numero autem talium actuum sunt intellectus vel principium intellectivum et intelligere, dicitur enim utrumque non omnino absolute, sed in habitu ad intelligibile, quam habitudinem importat intellectus secundum potentiam, intelligere autem secundum actum. Propter quod habens intellectum non semper intelligit quia non semper habet intelligibile actu praesens [...] Obiectum autem praesentatum vel praesentans obiectum est causa sine qua non pro eo quod intelligere non est perfectio mere absoluta, sed in comparatione ad alterum [...] Et idem est de actu sentiendi [...]."

something else.<sup>49</sup> For instance, when one says that something is calefactive (that is, it has the disposition to make something hot) one implies that it bears a relationship of some sort to something else, namely, to potentially present heatable items; so too with the manifestation of that disposition: when one says that something is engaged in the activity of making something hot (that is, is calefacting), one implies that it bears a relationship of some sort to something else, namely, to an actually present heatable item. Whereas calefaction (the operation of making something hot) implies the relationship of actual presence to a heatable item, calefactivity (the disposition to make something hot) implies the potential presence of at least one heatable item. In other words, dispositions and their manifestations are not *monadic* properties but rather *polyadic* properties.<sup>50</sup>

49. In characterizing Durand's view, the anonymous author of "Utrum actus intelligendi aliquid reale absolutum addat super potentiam intellectivam" writes that operations like thinking and calefaction 'connote' a relation (*respectus*) to something else. See Paris, BnF, *lat.* 14572, fol. 159va: "[...] actus enim primus, ut dicunt isti [sc. Durandus], semper perficit rem in se et absolute, ut calor perficit [for: habet(!)] ignem et intellectus hominem et gravitas terram vel lapidem. Actus autem secundus dicit quandoque eandem perfectionem connotando respectum ad alterum, ut calefacere, intelligere, sursum moveri et sursum esse; quandoque vero dicit talem perfectionem nullum talem respectum connotando, ut patet de lucere respectu lucis."

50. In at least two texts Durand makes it explicit that he has the stronger (ontological) claim in mind, rather than the weaker (linguistic) claim. See *Quaest. disp.*, I, ed. J. KOCH, Münster 1929, pp. 38-39 (emphasis mine): "Omnis forma absoluta quae est fundamentum relationis potest intelligi sine relatione; sed intelligere est huiusmodi, quia est fundamentum relationis referentis ad obiectum, ut ponebat Respondens; ergo poterit intelligi sine relatione ad obiectum. Ergo possum intelligere ipsum intelligere absque hoc quod cognoscam obiectum, quod falsum est. Ergo intelligere est relatio sola, et sic non facit realem compositionem cum intellectu, nec est res absoluta superaddita intellectui. Maior patet, quia possum creaturam intelligere sine relatione ad deum." See also an *additio* to ¶ contained in PETER OF PALUDE, *Super Sent.*, II, 3, 4, 4, Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. lat.* 1073, fol. 4vb (edited by J. KOCH in the first edition [1929] of his critical edition of Durand's *quaestio* 5, pp. 20-21, emphasis mine): "Quarta ratio sumitur ex habitudinem istorum actuum ad sua obiecta, quia si intelligere sit aliquid absolutum faciens compositionem cum intellectu, tunc intelligere et intelligibile erunt relativa secundum dici tantum et nullo modo secundum esse, quia relativum secundum esse est *illud cuius esse est referri et essentia est relatio*, quod non convenit alicui absoluto. Ex hoc sic arguitur: Relativa secundum dici non claudunt se mutuo in intellectu suo. Sicut si Sortes sit filius Platonis: in intellectu quidem patris clauditur filius et e contrario, sed in intellectu Sortis non includitur Plato nec e contrario, quia pater et filius sunt correlativa secundum esse, eo quod paternitas et filiatio sunt essentialiter relationes, Sortes vero et Plato sunt relativa solum secundum dici. *Intelligere autem et sentire necessario includunt intelligibile et sensibile. Ergo intelligere et sentire non sunt relativa secundum dici, nec per consequens sunt aliquid absolutum additum super*

An example might help. Consider the warm soapstone. Now this soapstone has heat, an absolute or monadic property, for it can be said to have heat regardless of whatever else exists in the world. However,

*sensum et intellectum faciens cum eis compositionem.*” This is not to say that such properties are relations that fall into the Aristotelian category of Relation. Although Durand does not, to my knowledge, discuss Aristotle’s categories in q. 5, elsewhere he argues that at least one sort of disposition (*habitus*) is a quality, even though it is not an absolute thing. See *Super Sent.* (2/3), III, 23, 1, a. 3, Paris, BnF, lat. 12330, fol. 128rb (square brackets indicate additions): “Nec propter hoc debet videri alicui quod habitus non sit qualitas eo quod proprie non est res sed modus rei, quia non solum relatio et sex ultima praedicamenta dicunt modos rerum sed etiam in Qualitate et Quantitate inveniuntur aliqua quae non dicunt proprie res sed modos reales, sicut numerus in Quantitate, non enim proprie est res aliqua praeter res numeratas sed est modus realis circa eas. [Similiter figura quae ponitur in quarta specie Qualitatis potius est modus] terminationis quantitatis quam aliqua res secundum se. Et idem est de habitu et dispositione quae sunt in prima specie Qualitatis, non enim sunt nisi quaedam pronitas et quidam modus se habendi bene et male in se vel ad alterum [...] Praedicamenta enim non distinguuntur secundum rem et modum neque secundum rem sed secundum formam praedicandi. Et ideo omne illud secundum quod subiectum disponitur aliquid ad se vel ad alterum, sive sit res proprie sive sit modus rei, dicitur qualitas, quia facit subiectum suum aliquale. Et similiter omne [illud] quod denominat subiectum [suum] aliquantum vel aliquotum dicitur quantitas — esto quod quandoque non sit proprie et secundum se res, sicut dictum est de numero.” Peter of Palude cites the above verbatim in *Super Sent.*, III, 23, 1, Paris 1517, fol. 116vb (1a opinio, a. 3); emendations to the text are taken from Palude. See also *Articuli in quibus magister Durandus deviat a doctrina venerabilis doctoris nostri fratris Thomae*, a. 159, ed. J. KOCH, “Die Magister-Jahre des Durandus de S. Porciano O.P. und der Konflikt mit seinem Orden,” in: *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2, Roma 1973, p. 104: “Ibidem dicit [sc. Durandus in III, 23, 1] quod non solum Relatio et sex praedicamenta ultima dicunt modos rerum, immo in Quantitate et Qualitate inveniuntur aliqua quae non dicunt proprie res sed modos reales, sicut numerus in Quantitate non est aliqua natura proprie praeter res numeratas, sed est modus realis circa eas; similiter figura, quae ponitur in quarta specie Qualitatis, potius est modus terminans quantitatem quam aliqua res secundum se. Contra opinionem communem.” See also NICOLAS MEDENSIS (DURANDELLUS), *Evid.*, III, 30, vol. 2, pp. 904-905 and the (incomplete) q. 5 of *Tractatus de habitibus* contained in Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. lat. 1076, fol. 9rb-va and Città del Vaticano, BAV, Vat. lat. 1086, fols. 192vb-193ra, which asks “Utrum habitus acquisitus sit res absoluta vel modus rei.” For Durand’s discussion of the ontology of *modi rerum*, see *Quodl. Par.*, I, esp. qq. 1-2 and *Quodl. Av.*, I, 1. For discussion, see, among others, T. DEWENDER, “Der ontologische Status der Relationen nach Durandus von St.-Pourçain, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli,” in: S.F. BROWN – T. KOBUSCH – T. DEWENDER (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Leiden / Boston 2009, pp. 287-307; M. HENNINGER, *Relations: Medieval Theories, 1250–1325*, Oxford 1989, pp. 177-178; I. IRIBARREN, “Some Points of Contention in Medieval Trinitarian Theology: The Case of Durandus of Saint-Pourçain in the Early Fourteenth Century,” in: *Traditio* 57 (2002), pp. 293-294; EAD., *Durandus of St. Pourçain: A Dominican Theologian in the Shadows of Aquinas*, Oxford 2005, pp. 109-121; and R. SCHÖNBERGER, *Relation als Vergleich. Die Relationstheorie des Johannes Buridan im Kontext seines Denkens und der Scholastik*, Leiden 1994, pp. 125-131.



in a world in which there is no heatable item at all, the warm soapstone cannot be said to have the disposition associated with calefactivity — the ability to make items hot — for there just isn't anything heatable that is even potentially present to it. But in a world in which there is at least one heatable item the soapstone *will* be said to have this disposition. Now, if we transport the soapstone back and forth between these two worlds, it will acquire and lose this disposition even though none of its monadic properties varied. So too in the case of an operation — that is, the manifestation of its disposition. None of the monadic properties of the soapstone change when the circumstances change such that a heatable item which before existed far away now comes to be present to the soapstone, thus occurring its act of heat-making.

Thought and sensory perception will, of course, turn out to be analyzable along the same lines — which is what Durand tells us in (C). On Durand's view, cognitive acts are the natural operations of things that have senses and intellects (monadic properties like heat).<sup>51</sup> Hence, once a thing has an intellect or a visive power, and provided something intelligible or visible exists in the world, it will have a disposition founded upon that cognitive power, and so it will be in one of two

51. Elsewhere, Durand defends Aquinas's thesis (although he rejects his arguments leading up to it) that our cognitive powers are really distinct absolute qualities superadded to the essence of the soul. Hence, his view is that cognitive dispositions and their manifestations are *founded upon* absolute qualities such as calefactivity and calefaction are *founded upon* heat, an absolute quality. See, for instance, *Super Sent.*, I, 3, 2, 1, Paris, *BnF*, lat. 14454, fols. 8va-9va (the text is the same as the one found in *Super Sent. [C]*, I, 3, 2, 2, §§ 38-39, Venezia 1571, fols. 25rb-va): "Ergo potentia est aliquid additum super essentia [sc. animae]." In fact, Durand explicitly rejects Henry of Ghent's view that such powers are mere *respectus*. See *ibid.*: "Et si dicatur, quod illud additum est solus respectus et non aliquid absolutum, contra [...]" For Henry's position, see HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodl. III*, 14, Paris 1518 (repr. Louvain 1961), vol. 1, fols. 66r-71r. Godfrey had also defended the real distinction against Henry's view. See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quaest. disp. XII*, ed. J.F. WIPPEL, "Godfrey of Fontaines: Disputed Questions 9, 10, and 12," in: *Franciscan Studies* 33 (1973), pp. 351-372, at 365-372, and *Quodl. II*, 4, ed. M. DE WULF – A. PELZER, Louvain 1904, pp. 80-85. On Godfrey on the real distinction between powers and the soul, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, pp. 202-207, 314-347. For the general scholastic debate, see P. KING, "The Inner Cathedral: Mental Architecture in High Scholasticism," in: D. PERLER (ed.), *Transformations of the Soul: Aristotelian Psychology 1250-1650* [= *Vivarium* 46/3 (2008)], pp. 253-274, and R. PASNAU, "The Mind-Soul Problem," in: P.J.J.M. BAKKER – J.M.M.H. THIJSSSEN (eds.), *Mind, Cognition, and Representation. The Tradition of Commentaries on Aristotle's De anima*, Aldershot 2007, pp. 3-19.

states: either it will be in accidental potency if it is prevented or it will be engaged in cognitive operation if it is not. What prevents it, of course, is the absence of an intelligible or visible object, and so when the object is present to it, it will then be said to see or think. And so it is that the object — or, more precisely, its presence — is the cause *sine qua non* of a cognitive act.

### 3.2. *Durand's Answer to Godfrey's Achilles Argument*

I think the foregoing discussion should now put us in a position to examine how Durand would respond to Godfrey's objections to the notion of a *sine qua non* cause. Recall that Henry of Ghent's characterization of the object of the will as mere *sine qua non* cause strikes Godfrey at least as both *ad hoc* and *mysterious*. It is *mysterious* because Henry claims it is a cause, yet it does not classify as any of the four kinds of causes Aristotle lays out. It is *ad hoc* because it only applies to the will.

Now, in order to answer the mystery objection all one must do is provide an adequate positive account of the notion. After all, why should the Stagirite have a stranglehold on the kinds of causes that are? Durand explains *sine qua non* causality in terms of the Aristotelian distinction between essential and accidental potency. On Durand's view, the cause of an accidental reduction cannot be reduced (in our sense of the term) to one of the four kinds of causes, for, were it an efficient cause, then it would have caused an essential reduction and not an accidental reduction. Whenever a natural operation or motion is impeded, whatever removes that impediment should be treated as a *sine qua non* cause of the natural operation or motion. Who could ask for a better explanation than that?

Nor is an appeal to a *sine qua non* cause *ad hoc*, for on Durand's view a *sine qua non* cause is not involved in a few exceptional cases, such as volition or mental acts, but it is involved in *any* accidental reduction: the fire's transition from inactivity (not burning something) to activity (burning something) and a rock's downwards motion are both owing to the removal of an impediment as a *sine qua non* cause. When the campfire elicits its cooking act, the presence of the hot dog is the *sine qua non* cause; when a rock falls down, the removal of

the plank is a *sine qua non* cause; so too when Socrates sees Felix, the presence of Felix is the *sine qua non* cause. Of course, Durand's position is still a kind of disjunctivism, for either a given reduction is an essential reduction or it is an accidental reduction. But unlike Henry's disjunctivism, Durand seems to have a well-grounded criterion by which we can choose one or the other of the disjuncts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Let's sum up. We'd all like to think that the object of cognition somehow causes our cognitive acts. But what is the nature of this causal relation? Godfrey holds the conservative view that the object is an efficient cause whereas Durand takes the liberal position that the object is a special kind of cause: a *sine qua non* cause. But, as with all novelties, the burden is seemingly on Durand. What is a *sine qua non* cause?

He provides us with a number of reasons to be suspicious of the standard theory (§ 1). But Godfrey provides us with a very consistent theory of causation that renders the notion of a *sine qua non* cause pretty dubious (§ 2). An efficient cause is something that reduces a potency to act and since nothing can reduce itself from potency to act and since we are in potency (with respect to seeing, hearing, and so forth) it stands to reason that it is the object that, as efficient cause, reduces us from potency to act. Durand's response (§ 3) is to draw our attention to a distinction between two kinds of potency: accidental and essential. On his view, there is no efficient cause that reduces a natural agent in accidental potency to its act; rather what does this is the removal of an impediment, that is, a *sine qua non* cause. This is true with all natural agents, in a broad sense: rocks move down of their own accord owing to the removal of an impediment, campfires cook hot dogs, and Socrates sees Felix when Felix is present to him. A *sine qua non* cause reduces an accidental potency to act whereas an efficient cause reduces an essential potency to act. And we ought to hold that things with intellects or functioning eyes are in accidental and not essential potency.

So when Felix leaps upon my lap, Felix efficiently causes any number of effects in my body and, in a sense, he also causes my vision.

However, he did not cause my vision *in the same sense of 'cause'* as he did these other effects, for he *efficiently* caused my lap to become warm but he did not *efficiently* cause me to *feel* that warmth. Rather, his presence alone caused that as a mere *sine qua non* cause.<sup>52</sup>

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