

Future Contingents and God's *determinatio ad utrumlibet*. Insights from John Wyclif's *De scientia Dei*

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The *De scientia Dei* is one of four tracts found in Book 2 of John Wyclif's *Summa de ente* examining God's attributes of understanding, knowledge, will, and power. In it, Wyclif explores different ways of conceptualising God's knowledge, either as identical to His essence, and therefore uncaused, or as a relation of reason, dependent on the extremes of the relation – i.e. God and the known object¹. Delving into God's knowledge in this second sense, Wyclif raises several questions about the relationship between God's *scientia* and *intellectio*, the modal status of its objects, and the implications for its immutability and eternity. Among the many themes he discusses, which intersect with soteriological issues and engage directly with the freedom of human will, Wyclif dedicates the final three chapters of his tract to explaining how God knows future contingents².

- 1 For the peculiarities of Wyclif's treatment of the category of relation, conceived as diadic, see ALESSANDRO D. CONTI, *Wyclif's Logic and Metaphysics*, in *A Companion to John Wyclif*, edited by Ian Christopher Levy, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 67-125: 110-13. Cfr. LUIGI CAMPI, *Mutual Causality in Wyclif's Political Thought. Some Logical Premises and Theological Results*, in *Legitimation of Political Power in Medieval Thought*, edited by Celia López Alcalde *et al.*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2018, pp. 85-100: 86-91.
- 2 For a comprehensive examination of the various topics dealt with in this work, see LUIGI CAMPI, *Introduction*, in JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, edited by Luigi Campi, Oxford, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2017, pp. XI-CXLIX: XC-CXXXV. On the contents and structure of the two books of the *Summa de ente*, see *ivi*, pp. XI-XXXVI, and the relevant bibliography.

With the usual caution employed in the *De scientia dei*, Wyclif approaches this issue primarily through dialogue with Thomas Aquinas, whom he regularly cites in this work to support his arguments. Wyclif's approach is already clearly articulated in the second chapter, where the question is discussed within the context of the contingent, yet not accidental, nature of God's knowledge of entities *ad extra*. Following the Augustinian adage, Wyclif firstly emphasises the eternity of God's relative knowledge, to which every entity or event – past or future – is equally present:

Tercio, patet idem de racione. Nam deus novit multa contingencia antequam fiant; et non est ratio quare aliquanto tempore antequam fiant quin per idem eternaliter; ergo aliqua prescit eternaliter. Unde Augustinus, 15^o *De Trinitate*, 33^o: «Non aliter deus scivit creata, quam creanda [...]». Ex isto patent tria. Primum, quod deus ex immensitate eternitatis sue assistentis omni tempore preterito vel futuro habet eternam scienciam de quocunque. Unde paulo ante dicit Augustinus: «non enim nescivit que fuerat creaturus». Secundo, patet quod relacio rationis inter scienciam dei et scitum non habet fundamentum distinctum a divina essencia. Et tercio, patet quod omnia futura necesse est contingere in suis temporibus³.

This is the relative *scientia visionis*⁴, through which God intuitively and immutably knows things, all simultaneously present to Him *in magno tempore sempiterno* and coming into existence *ad extra* in their respective times. Such knowledge would be accidental only if – an error Wyclif confesses to having made in his youth – linguistic expressions were restricted to the instantaneous present, thus misunderstanding Boethius and Augustine regarding God's eternal *assistentia* to events

³ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 17-18.

⁴ In his tract, Wyclif recalls the scholastic distinction between two kinds of divine knowledge: the knowledge of vision and the knowledge of simple understanding. The former is described as a contingent cognition of a creature according to its existential being *ad extra*, while the latter, variously referred to as *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, *scientia simplicis apprehensionis*, or *scientia simplicis notitiae*, is described as the absolutely necessary cognition of the intelligible being of a creature.

within time⁵. If this were the case, as Thomas reiterates⁶, God's knowledge would be changeable and subject to variations, making it more imperfect than human knowledge⁷.

Since God cannot acquire new knowledge, it is necessary to clarify how He knows contingent entities and events, which can be represented by contradictory statements: it must be demonstrated that their *incipere* or *desinere* causes no changes in God's knowledge nor indeterminacy regarding the truth of future statements:

Non ergo est possibile quod deus incipiat aut desinat quicquam scire ex inceptione vel desicione ipsius scibilis. Confirmatur per hoc quod claudit contradiccionem aliquod esse instans pro quo utraque pars contradiccionis sit nescita a deo, quia tunc verum esset a deo ignotum; set nulla negacio potest incipere vel desinere esse; ergo omnem affirmacionem vel negacionem quam deus scit semper scit⁸.

⁵ Cfr. JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 19.

⁶ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae prima pars*, ed. Leonina, Roma, Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1888, vol. IV, I, q. 14, a. 13, p. 186b.

⁷ See JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 20: «cum sciencia successiva non potest sciens nisi successive cognoscere – quod secundum illam viam eque vere competet deo sicut mobili competit successive moveri. Sicut ergo nemo ponit quod deus de eodem scibili primo et principaliter habet duplicem scienciam, sic non est ponendum quod de aliquo tempore habeat unam scienciam permanentem per totum illud tempus, et aliam partibiliter generatam et partibiliter corruptam proportionaliter ad tempus. Et habito ergo quod sciencia qua deus scit successivum sit proportionaliter successiva, sequitur primo quod sciencia illa divina sit inperfectior quam humana de talibus, quia homo sufficit de motu et tempore capere aliquas partes preteritas et futuras simul, ut supra ostensum est; set deus iuxta adversarios non potest hoc; ergo et cetera. Ideo consequenter dicerent quod deus non videt aliquod successivum, set solum indivisibile illius, quod est fatuum dicere, cum deus habet actualem memoriam omnium preteritorum et actualem prescienciam omnium futurorum; ergo si homo ex collacione talium virtutum sufficit semel in noticiam talis successivi secundum se totum, multo magis deus».

⁸ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 20-21.

Aware of the complexity involved, Wyclif maintains that God eternally knows both the truth of statements describing states of affairs realised *ad extra* and that of the negation of their contradictory statements. Thus, of that which does not occur in reality, God knows only the *esse intelligibile*; yet, of that which comes into existence at the due time, God eternally knows also the *esse existere*, without therefore implying that every contingent entity must always exist; it is sufficient to acknowledge that it exists *aliquando* – a thesis repeatedly affirmed by Wyclif: *res ad extra*, although eternally known by God, are knowable as such only during the period in which they exist⁹.

Although shared substantially, this conception was sometimes inadequately expressed by Bradwardine, who – by limiting linguistic expressions to the present tense¹⁰ – erroneously claimed that God «scivit multa que iam nescit sine sui mutacione»¹¹. Wyclif criticises two ex-

9 JOHN WYCLIF, *De intellectione dei*, in *De ente librorum duorum*, edited by Michael H. Dziiewicki, London, Trübner & Co., 1909, p. 63: «Ymmo ens communicatur omni existenti in alico tempore preterito vel futuro, et hoc absolute necessario, quamvis contingeret secundum *esse existere*. [...] quia sicut deus semper scit omnia, quamvis non semper omnia sint scibilia, sic ens semper communicat se omnibus in quocunque tempore existentibus, quamvis ipsa non participant ente, nisi in tempore sue existencie».

10 Cfr. JOHN WYCLIF, *De ente praedicamentali*, edited by Rudolf Beer, London, Trübner & Co., 1891, p. 197 («incarcerantes verba de presente»); JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 108 («incarcerantibus verba quelibet de presenti»).

11 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 29: «Quoad allegatum de Doctore Profundo, non dubium advertenti quin ista sit plane sua sententia, etsi videatur in verbis aliquibus discrepare: quandoque enim loquitur extendendo verba de presenti, sicut auctores quos allegando consequitur, et quandoque restringit verba talia more poletici, ut ille sit sensus 'nunc deus scit hoc existere', id est 'deus scit hoc existere in hoc instanti'. Et iuxta hoc discrepat in tribus a recta logica antiquorum. Primo, in hoc quod dicit deum multa nescire existere que quondam scivit existere, ut quondam scivit Christum pati et nunc, ut dicit, nescit Christum pati. Secundo, in hoc quod ponit deum nichil preter seipsum scire existere, posito quod destruatut tota universitas creata. Et tercio, in hoc quod ponit proposiciones contradictorias alterari de veritate in falsitatem, et econtra, ipsis significantibus pro significabili contingenti. Tota illa discrepantia verbalis stat in isto, quod quandoque intelligit tales proposiciones 'deus cognoscit Christum pati' ad illum sensum 'deus cogno-

amples presented by Bradwardine in support of this thesis. The first compares God to a fixed eye watching the flow of a river, seeing, without undergoing any change, the parts that are at each moment present to His gaze. Such an example incorrectly limits God's *intuitus* to successive instants of time; according to Wyclif, instead, «oportet ymaginari deum esse quasi unam potenciam visivam active videntem et multiplicatam ad omnem punctum fluvii, tam ante quam retro»¹². The second example compares God's knowledge to dominion, extending over new creatures without altering God¹³. Wyclif clarifies that although God's dominion and knowledge are both relations of reason, they differ significantly: dominion depends upon the actual existence of creatures, whereas knowledge does not require their existence *ad extra*; indeed, God's knowledge itself causes their actual existence. Otherwise, God would acquire new knowledge, moved by the object known¹⁴ – a hy-

scit Christum pati nunc', et quandoque intelligit talem propositionem, quam auctores concedunt concorditer, 'deus semper scit Christum pati', id est 'semper scit Christum pati in tempore suo'; et hoc eternaliter est verum, etsi omnes creature adnichilentur, sicut et fuit verum ante mundi constitutionem. Ideo, ut sepe dixi, non est color evidencie aput quemcunque recte noscentem terminos 'si deus semper scit hoc existere, tunc hoc semper existit', quia satis est quod hoc aliquando existat».

- 12 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 30-31; cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae prima pars*, cit., I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 3, p. 187a-b.
- 13 On God's dominion, which cannot be "eternal", otherwise there would be at least one eternal creature serving Him, but can be said to be "at all times", because, once time was created, there has always been at least one creature subjected to Him, see at least AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, *De civitate Dei*, edited by Bernhard Dombart and Alfons Kalb, Turnhout, Brepols (CCSL 48), 1955, XII, xvi, pp. 370-372.
- 14 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 32: «Quoad exemplum secundum Doctoris, patet [...] quod diversitas est inter scire dei et dominium dei. Nam scire dei non requirit suum scitum pro omni mensura temporis vel nature quo ponitur idem scire, sicut nec scire hominis, quod est actus inmanens; accio dei ad extra, gubernacio, dominium, et cetera que consequuntur scire et velle dei, ipsa sunt temporalia et accidentaliter insunt deo. Ideo videtur michi [...] quod non sequitur, etsi deus potest adquirere dominium vel talem relacionem rationis sine sui mocione, quod potest adquirere scienciam – id est quod potest quicquam incipere scire sine mocione».

pothesis already rejected by Wyclif in criticising Bradwardine's assertion that «intellecta movent non proprie set methaphorice intellectum divinum»¹⁵.

Bradwardine's attempt to claim that – *quodammodo* – God knows contingent events differently according to whether they are past, present, or future is situated within the longstanding debate about the content of articles of faith. Initiated by Augustine, this question concerns the identity between what the *antiqui* – the righteous of Israel, with faith in the future coming of the Messiah – believed, and what the *moderni* believe, whose faith relates to events already occurred. Augustine resolved the issue by claiming that, despite the different verb tenses in the statements of the *antiqui* and *moderni*, their content remained identical¹⁶. As reconstructed by Gabriel Nuchelmans, medieval reflection sought to justify this Augustinian thesis: to illustrate how the unchanging identity of the content of the articles of faith is compatible with the varying meanings that the statements, as their linguistic formulations in different epochs, seem to have, some authors identified the object of faith in the events or things themselves (the birth and passion of Christ), while others located it in the *dicta* or *nomina*, conceived as *incomplexa* devoid of temporal connotation, in contrast to the past, present and future *enuntiabilia* that express them¹⁷. The same set of problems arose regarding God's knowledge of contingent beings or states of affairs that come into existence at different times. It is with-

¹⁵ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁶ AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, edited by Rabdobus Willems, Turnhout, Brepols, 1990², (CCSL 36), XLV, ix, p. 392: «Ante adventu Domini nostri Iesu Christi, quo humilis venit in carne, praecesserunt iusti, sic in eum credentes venturum, quomodo nos credimus in eum qui venit. Tempora variata sunt, non fides. Quia et ipsa verba pro tempore variantur, cum varie declinantur; alium sonum habet: venturus est; alium sonum habet: venit; mutatus est sonus, venturus est, et venit; eadem tamen fides utrosque coniungit, et eos qui venturum esse, et eos qui eum venisse crediderunt».

¹⁷ Cfr. GABRIEL NUCHELMANS, *Theories of the Proposition. Ancient and Medieval Conception of the Bearers of Truth and Falsity*, Amsterdam-London, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1973, pp. 177-189.

in this context, therefore, that Bradwardine states that God distinctly represents the passion of Christ according to the temporal moment of the event (*Christum passurum, Christum pati, Christum passum*)¹⁸. Wyclif is aware that Bradwardine intends to refer to Aquinas, who had criticised the *nominales*¹⁹ for holding a position incompatible with Aristotle («*eadem enim oratio vera et falsa videtur esse, velut si vera si oratio sedere aliquem, surgente ipso falsa erit eadem hec*»²⁰). Indeed, Thomas asserted that God can know different *enuntiabilia* without compromising the invariability of His knowledge, as God does not operate through composition and division as humans do²¹.

18 THOMAS BRADWARDINE, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium et de virtute causarum ad suos Mertonenses*, edited by Henry Savile, London, Ex Officina Nortoniana Apud Ioannem Billium, 1618, I, xxiv, pp. 243-244: «Quamobrem essentia Dei, seu voluntas quae eadem est, sicut primo ostendebat intellectui divino Christum passurum, ita omni eodem modo post ostendit sibi Christum pati, et nunc ostendit Christum passum fuisse, ideoque Deum scire haec tria, imo potius hoc unum tripliciter nominatum est idem scire et eodem modo omnino». Cfr. JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 45.

19 A number of arguments against the *antiqui nominales* were also put forward by Bonaventure, as documented by GABRIEL NUCHELMANS, *Theories of the Proposition. Ancient and Medieval Conception of the Bearers of Truth and Falsity*, cit., p. 183.

20 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 45: «Et talem scienciam recitat sanctus Thomas [...] sub hiis verbis: 'Antiqui dixerunt idem enunciabile esse Christum nasci, esse nasciturum, et esse natum, quia eadem res significatur per hec tria, scilicet nativitas Christi'. Set illam sentenciam in pugnat Doctor dupliciter. Primo, per hoc quod diversitas parcium oracionis diversitatem enunciabilium causat. Secundo, quia iuxta illud sequitur quod propositio semel vera maneret continue sic vera, quod est contra Aristotelem, ponentem propositionem veram contingentem mutari a veritate in falsitatem propter mutationem rei extra». Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae prima pars*, cit., I, q. 14, a. 15, ad 3, p. 195b.

21 THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae prima pars*, cit., I, q. 14, a. 15, p. 195b: «et ideo concedendum est quod haec non est vera, *quidquid aliquid Deus scivit, scit*, si ad enuntiabilia refereatur. [...] Esset autem ex hoc scientia Dei variabilis, si enuntiabilia cognosceret per modum enuntiabilium, componendo et dividendo, sicut accidit in intellectu nostro». Cfr. ibi, q. 14, a. 14, p. 195a-b: «Sed, sicut scit materialia immaterialiter, et composita simpliciter, ita scit enuntiabilia non per modum enuntiabilium, quasi scilicet in intellectu eius sit compositio vel divisio enuntiabilium; sed unumquodque cognoscit per simplicem intelligentiam, intelligendo

However, Wyclif is wary of arguments that metaphorically introduce a God's discursiveness to preserve the mutability of contingent statements' truth²². He instead urges not to restrict «verba de presenti ad unicum instans», reiterating that all events are eternally co-present to God's *scientia visionis* in their *esse existere*, though they actually occur *ad extra* only *aliquando* – at the due time. Therefore, God eternally knows the truth of propositions regarding Christ's suffering during the passion, as well as the truth of propositions that negate this before and after the event. The perfect immutability of God's knowledge is thus assured²³, the three states of affairs described by the corresponding propositions are all eternally present to God²⁴. Wyclif expresses this as follows:

Deus aliquando scit Christum pati, aliquando scit ipsum esse passurum et aliquando scit ipsum esse passum; ergo impossibile est ipsum incipere vel desinere scire passionem Christi, aut eius futuricionem vel pretericionem, et per consequens semper scit illa tria. Et cum impossibile sit deum quicquam scire nisi quod natura divina semper ostendit simul, sequitur quod natura divina semper ostendit simul passionem Christi et eius pretericionem, nec

essentiam uniuscuiusque. [...] Sed species intellectus divini, scilicet eius essentia, sufficit ad demonstrandum omnia. Unde, intelligendo essentiam suam, cognoscit essentias omnium, et quaecunque eis accidere possunt».

²² JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 47.

²³ Ivi, pp. 106-107: «non sequitur 'deus nunc scit hoc esse, ergo hoc est nunc', set satis est quod hoc sit in tempore suo. Ideo sciencia dei eterna respectu existencie rei requirit rem illam existere aliquando, set non quandocunque est illa sciencia. Illud tamen non concipiet quis debite, nisi ampliaverit verba de presenti ad esse preteritum et futurum. Probabile ergo videtur quod finis, qui non existit continue cum suo terminato, causat illud terminatum; et sic penes rationes distinctas talium finium distinguntur sciencie terminate ad illa, ut alia est sciencia qua scio unum tempus futurum, et alia qua scio aliud, quamvis existencia temporis non causet continue illam diversitatem».

²⁴ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 47: «Cum enim secundum Apostolum non sunt 'est et non', set semper 'est vel non', non est possibile naturam divinam ostendere Christum pati, et post vel ante ostendere Christum non pati, set semper ostendit Christum ante passionem suam non pati, in passione sua pati, et post passionem suam non pati, cum hoc semper sit verum».

non et eius futuricionem. Et illa ratio videtur dare fidem; ideo videtur michi necessarium quod, si natura divina ostendit Christum pati, semper ostendit Christum pati, et sic de quacunque ostensione²⁵.

According to Wyclif, the differentiation within God's knowledge depends on its objects, which differ solely *secundum rationem*; the *futuricio* and *praeteritio* of a given event, though formally distinct from its actual occurrence, are essentially identical to it²⁶ – as Bradwardine also acknowledges²⁷. In the tenth chapter of the *De scientia Dei*, referring to Thomas²⁸, Wyclif clarifies that God's knowledge of future contingents

²⁵ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 46. Possibly, Wyclif has in mind Peter Lombard's view: see PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, edited by Patres Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Grottaferrata, Quaracchi, t. 1, 1971, I, d. 41, 3, p. 293; cfr. GABRIEL NUCHELMANS, *Theories of the Proposition. Ancient and Medieval Conception of the Bearers of Truth and Falsity*, cit., p. 186.

²⁶ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 44: «Nam omnes tales sciencie proportionally distinguntur, ut distinguntur sua obiecta; set obiecta illa recitata [scil. contingens fore, esse, fuisse] distinguntur; ergo et sciencie. Minor patet ex hoc, quod patet: rem esse est veritas actualis existencie et rem fuisse est veritas rationis incipiens a parte ante et eterna a parte post; econtra autem: rem fore est eternum a parte ante et desinibile a parte post; ergo cum talis distincio sit inter hec tria, sequitur quod proportionalis sit distincio inter sciencias quibus illa sciuntur. [...] Et preterea tales veritates eterne distinguntur secundum rationem, quamvis non secundum existenciam, quia veritas de presenti nata est habere existenciam temporalem, set non sic altera illarum contingens, eo quod, si non est tempus, tunc non est fuisse vel fore».

²⁷ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 46-47: «Et quoad discrepantiam doctorum, videtur quod Doctor Profundus intelligit illa tria que distinguntur secundum rationem non distingui essentialiter, set in predicacione secundum essenciam esse naturam divinam». Cfr. THOMAS BRADWARDINE, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium*, cit., I, 14, pp. 209-214; JOHN A. ROBSON, *Wyclif and the Oxford Schools. The Relation of the 'Summa de ente' to Scholastic Debates at Oxford in the Later Fourteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 182, n. 1.

²⁸ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 113. Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Perisiensis*, edited by Pierre Mandonnet, Paris, Lethielleux, 1929, vol. I, I, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, sol., p. 317a; ivi, d. 41, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1, p. 339b; ivi, d. 44, q. 1, a. 4, sol. p. 356b; THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra gentiles*, Roma, Typis Riccardi Garroni, 1918-1930, I, 66, pp. 184-185; ivi, I, 67, pp. 190-191.

is determined by God's eternity, which encompasses all times²⁹: «determinatio sciencie dei respectu futurorum contingencium est ex hoc quod simplex eternitas dei assistit cum tempore preterito et futuro»³⁰.

This position does not contradict the indeterminate character of future statements for humans – according to the “traditional” interpretation of Aristotle's *De interpretatione*³¹ – since these events are eternally present to God and determinedly known by Him as true, analogously to human knowledge of past events. This view is confirmed by the authority of the philosophers and by various scriptural testimonies, such

THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae prima pars*, cit., I, q. 14, a. 13, resp., p. 186b. See JOHN F. WIPPEL, *Divine Knowledge, Divine Power, and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent*, in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Tamar Rudavsky, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1985, pp. 213-241: 213-18; WILLIAM L. CRAIG, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, Leiden, Brill., 1988, pp. 103-107.

²⁹ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 113: «omnis noticia dei est eterna a parte ante et a parte post, et per consequens deus aliquando determinate scit quicquid scit; set non est possibile quod eadem sciencia dei sit nunc determinata et nunc indeterminata; ergo relinquitur quod semper sit determinata. Consequencia sumpta patet ex hoc quod sequitur 'si aliquid fuit futurum, ipsum erit'; set postquam futurum fuerit preteritum tam deus quam creatura scit determinate quod ipsum fuit futurum; ergo cum scit consequenciam esse bonam, sequitur quod postquam res fuerit scit determinate quod illa res erit. Et illa deduccio sicut condicionales apparentes impossibiles habent manifestum colorem penes eos qui ampliant verba de presenti».

³⁰ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 113.

³¹ The so-called traditional reading of Aristotle's treatment of future contingents, according to which the principle of bivalence is suspended for statements about future contingencies, has been supported by: JOHN L. ACKRILL, *Aristotle's Categories and De interpretatione*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963; MARTHA KNEALE, WILLIAM KNEALE, *The Development of Logic*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, pp. 46-47; WILLIAM L. CRAIG, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*, cit., pp. 1-58. Other interpreters have argued that Aristotle denies the necessity of singular future contingent statements, but does not reject the idea that they have a determinate truth value; see: GERTRUDE E.M. ANSCOMBE, *Aristotle and the Sea Battle*, in «Mind», 65, 1956, pp. 1-15, COLIN STRANG, *Aristotle and the Sea Battle*, in «Mind», 69, 1960, pp. 447-465, JAAKKO HINTIKKA, *Time and Necessity. Studies in Aristotle's Theory of Modality*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973.

as 2 Cor, 1, 19 («non fuit [scil. in Deo] est et non, set est in illo fuit»), commented upon by Wyclif as follows:

Notatur quod omnia – eciam nobis futura – sunt deo presencia, cum dicitur «est apud eum» per verba de presenti; et cum more loquendi prophetico subiungit verbum de preterito, dicens «est» apud eum fuit», innuit omnem veritatem eciam de futuro esse a deo determinate cognitam, sicut a nobis veritates de preterito cognoscuntur. Patet ergo deum determinate scire futura, eo quod determinate proposuit illa; et constat quod deus non potest mutare propositum suum, quia omnis talis mutacio procedit ex indeliberacione, tum eciam quia, si deus mutat propositum, tunc proposuit et voluit facere quod non inpletur. Consequens contradiccio³².

This quoted passage not only emphasises that future contingent events (as well as past and present events) are all simultaneously encompassed within God's eternal knowledge, but also introduces the theme of the determination of God's will, which, in conjunction with His knowledge, is the cause of their external actualisation in due time³³. Not all contingent events occur in the same manner: some happen exceptionally, deviating from the normal course of nature (*contingens in pluribus*), others by chance or fortune (*contingens in paucioribus*), and still others as outcomes of the free choice of a created agent (*contingens ad utrumlibet*). Although human knowledge of these events is merely conjectural, God knows and wills them with equal certainty and determination³⁴. The differing frequency of these events depends

³² JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 114-115.

³³ God's purpose is in no way resistible, unless God permits it; however, such permission is foreseen and willed by God, and His purpose thus remains unimpeded. In this regard, see JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 114.

³⁴ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 115: «Item, secundum sententiam communem philosophorum, multa sunt futura contingencia determinate vera, ut quod sol orietur cras, quia cras erit, et cetera; set omnia contingencia futura sunt eque contingencia quoad deum; ergo omnia contingencia futura sunt determinate vera. Maior patet ex hoc quod contingencium est aliquod contingens natum et aliquod contingens ad utrumlibet [...]. Et minor patet ex hoc quod non est dare gradus

exclusively on their proximate cause, known to humans only partially; with respect to God, every contingent event (inasmuch as *scitum* or *volitum*) is one of the two extremes of a rational relation, with God Himself (inasmuch as *sciens* or *volens*) as the other extreme, and thus invariably determined³⁵.

If God did not have eternally determined knowledge for every pair of contradictories, He could not even determine His own will and cause anything *ad extra*:

Si deus esset indifferens ad utramque partem illius contradiccionis de futuro – cum impossibile sit ex contingencia equali causanciam procedere [...] – sequitur quod neutram partem contradiccionis deus causaret; quod est impossibile, quia tunc contradictoria essent simul falsa. Si ergo deus unam partem contradiccionis noscit sciencia visionis et alteram sciencia simplicis noticie, patet quod deus est determinatus ad unam partem determinacione eterna, nec potest hoc verti in dubium illi, qui nisi modicum sapit de divina sciencia³⁶.

in libertate contradiccionis quoad deum, cum omnia que contingenter vult, eque libere contingenter vult; et per consequens eque libere sicut potest facere quod ego generabo filium, eque libere potest facere quod non amplius erit tempus secundum generacionem et corrupcionem lunarium. Ideo non esset ratio maior determinacionis respectu unius veritatis contingentis de futuro quam cuiuscunque, nisi quod deus plus vellet vel determinaret se respectu unius quam respectu alterius; set hoc non sapit, cum voluntas dei respectu talium non suscipit magis aut minus».

³⁵ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 116: «Similiter quelibet determinacio divine sciencie non superaddit divinam scienciam; set respectu omnium futurorum deus habet scienciam; ergo et determinacionem sciencie. Confirmatur sic: omnis sciencia vel voluntas contingens in deo non est nisi relacio rationis que eo ipso ponitur, quo extrema sunt posita; ergo cum determinacio divine sciencie sit contingens, sequitur per idem quod sit relacio rationis que eo ipso ponitur, quo extrema sunt posita; set extrema illius sunt deus et veritas sua; ergo eo ipso quod ipsa ponuntur, ponitur et determinacio divine sciencie. Non enim posset determinacio divine sciencie suscipere magis et minus nisi vel racione dei vel racione veritatis; et cum in deo non sit variacio fingenda, relinquitur quod ex parte veritatis sit illa variacio, quod est impossibile».

³⁶ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 116-117.

From here, Wyclif revisits the issue of the priority between God's knowledge and will, widely debated and also addressed by Bradwardine in his *De causa Dei*, where the *Doctor Profundus* had adopted a position inspired by John Duns Scotus, according to which the certainty of God's knowledge of future contingents depends upon the prior determination of God's will with respect to their existence³⁷. This suggests to Wyclif the need to critically revisit the position taken by Scotus³⁸, in order to reaffirm his own opposing view. Scotus had rejected the Platonic-Augustinian approach, whereby the determination of God's knowledge of contingent beings or state of affairs depends upon the representation of their exemplar ideas. This entails the assumption that, through the ideas, God not only knows the essential properties of each being, but also all the proximate and remote causes, as well as

37 Cfr. THOMAS BRADWARDINE, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium*, cit., pp. 220-223. See JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 117: «[deus] determinate scit hoc fore, quocunque contingentia assignato. Et [Doctor Profundus] tenet finaliter quod voluntas dei, qua determinat se ad causandum tale futurum, est causa quare determinate scit quodcunque futurum».

38 Wyclif presents part of the discussion, similar in structure and argumentation, found in d. 39 of the first book of Scotus's *Ordinatio* on the first book of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Scotus had subjected his analysis to repeated revisions. The editors have not considered the text of d. 39 transmitted by the manuscript tradition of the *Ordinatio* to be the definitive version, and there has been debate as to whether it is an original work of Scotus or a text prepared by one of Scotus's collaborators who had access to his working materials. See, in this regard, JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio. Liber primus*, edited by Commissio Scotistica, Vatican City, Et Typographia Polyglotta, 1963, vol. VI, pp. 26*-30*; JOACHIM R. SÖDER, *Kontingenz und Wissen: Die Lehre von den Futura Contingentia bei Johannes Duns Scotus*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1999, pp. 8-10; GLORIA FROST, *John Duns Scotus on God's Knowledge of Sins: A Test-Case for God's Knowledge of Contingents*, in «Journal of the History of Philosophy», 48/1, 2010, pp. 15-34. On Scotus's view on divine knowledge of future contingents, see at least WILLIAM L. CRAIG, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*, cit., pp. 127-145; CALVIN G. NORMORE, *Scotus, Modality, Instans of Nature*, in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, edited by Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood and Mechthild Dreye, Dordrecht, Springer, 1996, pp. 161-174; SIMO KNUUTTILA, *Duns Scotus' Criticism of the 'Statistical' Interpretation of Modality*, in *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, edited by Jan P. Beckmann, in «Miscellanea Mediaevalia», 13, 1981, vol. I, pp. 441-450.

all the conditions required for their external instantiation in due time. This approach is not without difficulties³⁹: God's knowledge of the ideas is, in fact, absolutely necessary and naturally precedes the determination of His will; therefore, the representation of the ideas is indifferent to the existence of creatures, which is caused by the subsequent determination of the will, otherwise it would be necessary. Moreover, the ideas represent to the divine intellect not only the contingents, but *aeque naturaliter et perfecte* all the possibles; now, if God's knowledge of the contingents were certain by virtue of the representation provided by their ideas, it would follow that God has determined knowledge of all the possibles as well, and therefore each of them – like the contingents – would necessarily be actualised externally⁴⁰. Furthermore, it is unclear how God can know in the ideas the moment when each individual instantiation of them takes place⁴¹.

The second opinion criticised by Scotus is the Boethian one, shared by Aquinas and by Wyclif himself, according to which God determinately knows contingent things through His own eternity, in which all

³⁹ That God has determined knowledge of the intelligible being that creatures have in their ideas is beyond doubt for Wyclif, but this pertains to the *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, which is absolutely necessary, not the *scientia visionis*. See JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 118.

⁴⁰ On the contrary, Wyclif argues in several of his works, including the *De scientia Dei* that God knows more things through the knowledge of simple understanding than through the knowledge of vision, and that He can do far more things through absolute power than through ordained power. Ultimately, he concludes that there are many more things provided with *esse intelligibile* than there are provided with existential being *ad extra*. Cfr. LUIGI CAMPI, *Was the Early Wyclif a Determinist? Concerning an Unnoticed Level in His Taxonomy of Being*, in «Vivarium», 52/1, 2014, pp. 102-146: 124-128.

⁴¹ See JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio. Liber primus*, cit., I, d. 39, q. 5, p. 406. Cfr. JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 118, where he expands on Scotus's view as follows: «Ideo credo quod illa via sic intellexit quod ydee perfectius representant divino intellectui quodcunque futurum existere in tempore suo quam aliquod intuitum a nobis representatur esse presens nobis; cum ergo nos scimus determinate presentia intuitu, multo magis deus determinate scit omnia futura».

temporal events are simultaneously present. To Scotus's objections⁴² (for example, that future events would thus become coeternal with God – and, therefore, uncreated), Wyclif replies by appealing to God's relative knowledge, considering correct to assert that its certainty is brought about by the eternal presence of its objects⁴³, although undoubtedly the *scientia quae est deus* is the cause – and not reciprocally caused – of the existence of all created beings and their *coassistencia relativa*. Thus, it is reasonable to regard the presence of contingent objects in divine knowledge as a sign of its determination, while also maintaining, along with Scotus, that this presence (and, consequently, their existence) derives from the certainty of divine science and the divine will to create them⁴⁴.

Finally, Wyclif briefly mentions the third view discussed by Scotus, according to which the determination of God's knowledge is caused by the necessity of its object – at least *de necessitate consequentiae*, according to Boethius and Thomas. Scotus, however, argues that God's knowledge of contingents is itself contingent, determined by the free will of God. Wyclif presents Scotus's doctrine as follows: in the first instant of nature, the divine essence represents to the divine intellect both parts of a contradiction in their intelligible being («ut neutra, et

⁴² JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 119-120. Cfr. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio. Liber primus*, cit., I, d. 39, q. 5, pp. 409-411.

⁴³ Cfr. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio. Liber primus*, cit., I, d. 39, q. 5, pp. 406-407.

⁴⁴ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 120-121: «Ad tercium, diceret aliquis quod assistencia eternitatis cuilibet temporali non est causa determinacionis divine sciencie, cum illa sciencia prius sit determinata quam scitum existat, et per consequens prius quam est assistencia eternitatis ad existenciam illius sciti. Verumptamen illa extensiva assistencia dei est signum infallibile inductivum ad assumptum quod deus scit determinate quodlibet futurum. Et ita potest salvari utraque opinio: prima quod talis assistencia sit signum certitudinis divine sciencie; et secunda Doctoris, equivocantis quod illa assistencia non est causa certitudinis divine sciencie, set formaliter consequens ad illam certitudinem. Verumptamen cum divina sciencia relativa causatur ex rebus scitis iuxta predicta, et assistencia dei etiam causatur ab eisdem scitis, videtur quod neutra harum relacionum rationis causatur a reliqua, quamvis actus quo deus scit, cum sit deus, causat illam coassistenciam relativam».

non ut facienda»); in the second instant of nature, the divine intellect presents both to the divine will, which eternally determines itself toward one of the two. Then, the divine intellect apprehends the determination of the will, and this cognition is certain, as God unfailingly knows the determination of His will toward the production of a contingent individual or state of affairs. However, Scotus maintains that, while such an individual or state of affairs exists, it is still possible that in the same instant it could have not existed, since God could have chosen otherwise⁴⁵.

Wyclif cautiously clarifies that all opinions expressed by the masters agree if correctly understood, but he expresses reservations regarding Scotus's thesis, which – though subtle (!) and Catholic⁴⁶ – appears to introduce a form of discursivity between God's will and knowledge, as if they were really distinct, placing the will as the cause determining knowledge. Adopting instead the Thomist perspective, Wyclif reaffirms the importance of God's immutable eternity as the foundation of the certainty and infallibility of His knowledge, recalling the difference between human and God's knowledge and distinguishing the *scientia quae est deus* from the *scientia dei relativa*:

Causa autem, quare creatura non semper scit determinate omne cui assistit pro tempore futuro et deus semper determinate scit omne cui assistit pro quocunque tempore, est quia creatura ultra suam existenciam et posicionem veritatis requirit ad scienciam illius veritatis actum credendi elicatum absque formidine; ad quem requiritur evidencia veritatis vel doctrina informantis, que non eo ipso ponitur, quo ponitur existenciam creature cum veritate. [...] Sciencia autem dei non ponit actum talem elicatum, set est relacio eo ipso posita eternaliter, quo scibile ponitur pro aliqua mensura temporis. Ideo cum

⁴⁵ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 121-122. Cfr. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio. Liber primus*, cit., d. 39, q. 5, pp. 428-449. Cfr. WILLIAM L. CRAIG, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*, cit., pp. 133-134; SIMO KNUUTTILA, *Duns Scotus' Criticism of the 'Statistical' Interpretation of Modality*, cit.; ANDREAS J. BECK, *Divine Psychology and Modalities: Scotus' Theory of the Neutral Propositions*, in *John Duns Scotus (1265/1266-1308). Renewal of Philosophy*, edited by Egbert P. Bos, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1998.

⁴⁶ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 122.

deus non potest quicquam adicere vel ambigere, oportet quod omne scibile sciat semper determinate eo ipso quod scibile est [...] Ex hoc ergo quod intellectus divinus intuetur voluntatem divinam immobilem et infrustrabilem eternaliter determinatam ad effectum aliquem, scit nimirum determinate illum effectum esse in tempore suo. Nec in sic sciendo discurrit vel conponit, set illum ordinem veritatum simplicissime cognoscit; set oportet intelligere, ut prius, voluntatem aut intellectum divinum non illam nudam relacionem rationis, set divinam naturam sic volentem; et sic correspondentur de causacione determinacionis, sicut dictum est de causacione sciencie⁴⁷.

The cause of relative knowledge and volition, and of their determination, is God's nature, in whose simplicity knowledge and will are indistinct: in knowing, God wills (and causes), and in willing, He knows⁴⁸. Nevertheless, when considered in their relative sense, God's faculties are distinct according to reason and ordered according to nature; thus, priority of God's knowledge over the will must be acknowledged: «videtur divinam scienciam naturaliter precedere eius voluntatem, cum sequitur: 'si deus vult aliquod contingens, tunc scit illud'; et econtra non oportet, cum multas deformitates scit deus que non vult beneplacite»⁴⁹.

In the last two chapters of the *De scientia Dei*, Wyclif formulates some fundamental conclusions. Firstly, he denies – against Scotus – that there is ever an instant when God is *neuter vel indifferens* towards pairs of contradictory events: God eternally has *scientia visionis* of the one that comes to pass *ad extra* and *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* of the other, which does not. God wills what is present to His intuition as existing in *tempore suo*, while He does not will what He knows only in its *esse intelligibile*⁵⁰. Thus, there is no need to suspend the principle of

⁴⁷ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 123-124.

⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁹ Ivi, 117. Cfr. ivi, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Ivi, p. 125: «Prima, quod respectu nullius partis contradiccionis est deus neuter vel indifferens. Probatur: respectu cuiuscunque positivi determinat se deus eternaliter ad unam contradiccionis partem, eternaliter ordinando non existenciam relique [...]. Confirmatur ex hoc quod omne verum est scitum a deo et quodammodo

bivalence for future contingent statements, since their truth is always determined as such for God⁵¹ – though not for human beings.

Wyclif partially accepts Scotus's claim by recognising that the *voluntas quae est deus* is the *prima ratio contingentiae*, being the cause of every caused truth. Although contingent events depend on secondary causes, their primary *contingentia ad utrumlibet* derives from the free determination of God's will⁵².

Contingency, as Wyclif has clarified in previous logical works, does not imply the real possibility of the contrary in God's perspective⁵³; God's contingency is a *necessitas ex suppositione*: once the eternal antecedent of God's determination is set, contingent events infallibly occur

volitum vel in se vel in suo consequente; et falsum, cum non sit, non est a deo volitum; ex quo sequitur quod deus non est respectu alterius partis contradiccionis neuter vel indifferens».

51 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 125: «Secundo, sequitur quod omne verum est determinate verum. Nam omne quod deus scit est determinate verum; omne verum deus scit; ergo omne verum est determinate verum. Maior patet ex hoc quod omne quod deus scit, determinate scit [...]. Nec est fallacia secundum quid quando sic arguitur 'hoc est determinate verum quoad deum, ergo est determinate verum', cum omnis determinacio dei sit determinacio simpliciter quam nulla res potest infringere. Ex isto patet quod hic est fallacia secundum quid et simpliciter 'hoc est indeterminatum quoad causam secundam, ergo hoc est indeterminatum'. Illa ergo vocantur abusive 'indeterminate vera', que quoad nostram intencionem vel noticiam sunt non determinata».

52 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 125-126: «prima ratio contingencie stat in libertate voluntatis divine. Patet ex hoc quod cuiuslibet veritatis causate deus est causa prima [...]; ergo cum omnis contingencia sit veritas causata, sequitur quod deus est prima ratio cuiuscunque contingencie, et non nisi per voluntatem suam summe liberam; ergo et cetera. Ex isto patet quod nichil est contingens quoad causam secundam nisi quod prius est contingens quoad deum. Nulla enim causa secunda potest agere vel non agere nisi ex prima determinacione dei, ut causa principalis quare hoc contingens aliquando est et aliquando non est voluntas dei. Unde notabiliter errant qui ponunt maiorem necessitatem in contingentibus quoad causas secundas liberas quam quoad causam primam, in qua est formaliter ratio contingencie, cum sit de ordine universitatis et per consequens de dei beneplacito si aliquid sit tale, ut contingencia ad utrumlibet».

53 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 126-127. Cfr. ID., *De logica*, edited by Michael H. Dziewicki, London, Trübner & Co, 1893, vol. I, p. 26.

*ad extra*⁵⁴. This necessity remains compatible with God's freedom, as God could have determined His own knowledge and will differently⁵⁵.

Thus, Wyclif distances himself from the *communis opinio* of modern Pelagians, criticised by Bradwardine, according to which freedom is assured merely by future contingency⁵⁶. Instead, he distinguishes between absolutely necessary truths and contingent truths, both eternal and immutably present to God⁵⁷: the former always exist and cannot fail to exist; the latter could have not existed but are nevertheless eternal and without beginning or end, eternally present to God's vision. Everything God knows through knowledge of vision and wills to create remains contingent, regardless of its realisation *ad extra*, which happens infallibly by hypothetical necessity:

54 For broader considerations on the topic and references to the historiographical debate, see LUIGI CAMPI, *Was the Early Wyclif a Determinist?*, cit.

55 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 127-128: «sit a veritas que non sit necessitas, ut puta talis 'ego non disputo' vel quecunque libuerit; contra: 'si deus scit me disputare, ego disputo'; set antecedens est verum eterne ingenerabile et incorruptibile, ut patet ex dictis; ergo consequens est necessarium ex suppositione. Consequencia probatur. Totum antecedens patet ex dictis. Nam claudit contradiccionem verum esse quod deus non eternaliter scieret, cum nichil potest incipere vel desinere cognoscere. Nec est color, si consequencia sit bona et antecedens est eternum vel pro data mensura verum, quod contingens sit eternum vel pro eadem mensura verum. Nec est color, si data propositio nunc sit vera, quod nunc sit ita sicut illa primarie significat, quia satis est quod pro aliqua parte temporis eterni sit ita sicut illa nunc primarie significat – ut illa propositio 'ego sum', in casu quo semper maneret sic significans, semper esset vera, quia semper significaret sicut est, quamvis non semper significasset sicut semper est; sic illa propositio nunc formata 'dies iudicii est' nunc est vera, quia ita est ex parte rei quod dies iudicii est, quamvis non nunc».

56 JEAN-FRANÇOIS GENEST, *Prédétermination et liberté créée à Oxford au XIVe siècle. Buckingham contre Bradwardine*, Paris, Vrin Genest, 1992, pp. 34-60. Cfr. THOMAS BRADWARDINE, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium*, cit., pp. 208-14; 689-90.

57 JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 127: «Sexto, sequitur quod omne verum sit necessarium et omne falsum simpliciter sit impossibile modo suo. Pro cuius intellectu, notandum quod aliquod est necessarium absolute, quod non potest non esse [...]; aliquod autem est necessarium ex suppositione, quod est veritas contingens cuius est causa completa, quam claudit contradiccionem incipere vel corrumpi».

Palam sequitur quod hominem vel mundum fuisse est tam contingens, sicut alia veritas de futuro; et per consequens hominem esse, mundum esse, et talia vocata ‘necessaria’ sunt summe contingencia. Patet ex hoc quod quandoque – scilicet ante mundi constitutionem – fuit contingens ad utrumlibet mundum vel tempus fore, et omne quod fuit possibile semper est eque possibile [...]; ergo adhuc est eque contingens⁵⁸.

Wyclif maintains that God has determined knowledge not only of contingent truths necessarily realised *ad extra* in time but also of chance or fortuitous events. In the wake of Aristotle, chance and fortune are accidental causes that can be integrated into a framework of final causality, for even apparently random events occur according to the determined knowledge and will of God. Now, although some events occur beyond natural intent or beyond the purpose of a rational agent, this does not allow us to conclude that they happen *praeter propositum dei et determinatam scientiam*. For God, indeed, knows with certainty and wills infallibly the ordered series of causes of all worldly events, which sometimes happen, as it is said, *a casu vel a fortuna*⁵⁹. Boethius teaches that God’s providence concerning contingent events, including the one caused by accidental causes, does not compromise human freedom, which would only be annulled by some God’s coercion of human decisions – a hypothesis Wyclif explicitly rejects⁶⁰.

The philosophers’ error – probably, the “modern” advocates of the *famosa opinio*⁶¹ – consists in defining something as necessary or contingent according to human certainty – an approach initially shared by Wyclif himself⁶²:

Alias, quoniam restrinxi verba de presenti et distruxi illa ex opposito, vocavi ‘determinate verum’ quod est verum pro aliquo instanti pro quo necesse

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ JOHN WYCLIF, *De logica*, cit., p. 172.

⁶⁰ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 118.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, p. 119.

⁶² Cfr. JOHN WYCLIF, *De logica*, cit., pp. 165-170.

est ipsum esse vel fuisse, ut est omnis veritas contingens de presenti vel de preterito independens a futuro; 'indeterminate verum' quod est verum pro aliquo instanti pro quo non est necessarium ipsum esse vel fuisse, ut sunt futuriciones contingencium. 'Contingens ad utrumlibet' vocavi 'contingens indeterminatum', et 'contingens natum' 'contingens determinatum'. 'Contingens semper' vocavi 'contingens natum, cuius est causa effectiva quoad hoc non inpedibilis naturaliter ordinata', ut solem oriri cras, eclipses et coniuncctiones cum talibus que fiunt in mundo sublunari. 'Contingens in maiori' vocavi 'contingens natum, cuius est causa quoad hoc inpedibilis naturaliter ordinata', ut effectus naturales. 'Contingens in minori' vocavi 'contingens natum non habens causam effectivam sibi naturaliter ordinatam', ut sunt preternaturalia⁶³.

From God's perspective, all these events are equally necessary *ex suppositione*⁶⁴ and determined⁶⁵. Theologians must therefore avoid

⁶³ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 133-134.

⁶⁴ Ivi, pp. 147-148: «Ideo, etsi moderni ignari sensuum antiquorum negant necessitates contingentes, non eo magis sunt negande [...] Equivocacio ergo de necessario detecta sanat controversias scribencium, ut aliquod est necessarium quod oportet absolute ex se esse, ut deum esse; secundum est necessarium quod oportet absolute ex alio esse, ut nichil simul esse et non esse; tertium est necessarium per accidens vel ex suppositione, quod dividitur in tria: primum quod oportet ex suppositione esse eternum, ut volicio dicitur respectu existere contingentis; secundum quod oportet ex suppositione esse in omni tempore, ut mundum esse; et tertium quod oportet ex suppositione aliquando esse et aliquando non esse, ut me currere et quotlibet talia».

⁶⁵ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 130: «Unde si philosophus sciret intuitive in verbo eternaliter ordinate quod dies iudicii erit vel quodlibet aliud contigens futurum, diceret hoc esse eque determinatum et necessarium, sicut aliquod contingens significabile; set latet nos noticia talium antequam fiant; ideo dicimus talia esse indeterminate vera – suple: quoad nostram noticiam vel causanciam cause secunde. Multos enim effectos producet causa secunda ad quos nondum est determinata, quamvis deus non potest respectu alicuius significabilis esse indeterminatus. Dimittendo ergo aspectum ad fluxum temporis et considerando propositum et determinacionem dei, patet quod omnia contingencia pari gradu currunt quoad necessitatem vel determinacionem, quamvis sit gradus plurium contingencium quoad eorum duracionem, quoad potestatem incepcionis vel desinicionis cum quibuslibet proprietatibus a nobis ut plurimum ignoratis»; cfr. ivi, p. 146.

the philosophers' mistake⁶⁶ and recognise that contingent events, imperfectly known to humans⁶⁷, are certain for God. Concerning future contingents *ad utrumlibet*, God has *scientia visionis* of the member that occurs and *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* of the other, which remains unrealised *ad extra*, but is caused and known in a determined manner in its intelligible being. Therefore, in God's case, it is more correct to speak of *determinatio ad utrumlibet*⁶⁸.

Following Bradwardine, one can thus affirm that «Prima ergo et summa contingencia ad utrumlibet est in volicione dei qua vult semper quod sit contingens, et ex hinc derivatur ad effectus contingentes»⁶⁹. Wyclif accepts this indication, though maintaining the primacy of God's knowledge over the will: God eternally knows both necessary and contingent events, without varying degrees of determination⁷⁰, and His purpose cannot be frustrated.

⁶⁶ For Wyclif's critique of the shortcomings of contemporary theology and his "post-disciplinary" approach, see LUIGI CAMPI, «Puri philosophi non est theologizare»: Reflections on Method in John Wyclif's and his Bohemian Followers' Discussion of the Eternity of the World, in *Wycliffism and Hussitism. Methods of Thinking, Writing, and Persuasion*, c. 1360 – c. 1460, edited by Kantik Ghosh and Pavel Soukup, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021, pp. 117-137.

⁶⁷ JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., p. 137: «sic ergo est certitudo nobis evidencior de nobis preterito, quam de nobis futuro, quamvis non sit in re maior. Ideo de futuris consiliamur dum sunt futura, et non de preteritis dum sunt nobis preterita».

⁶⁸ Ivi, pp. 131-132: 131: «Theologus ergo debet relinquere verba philosophorum de distincione contingencium et ponere sensum eorum, quod illud vocant contingens ad utrumlibet, quod eque convenit evenire sicut eius oppositum, ipsis ignorantibus determinacionem ad utramque partem – cuiusmodi sunt multe veritates de futuro».

⁶⁹ Ivi, p. 134. Cfr. THOMAS BRADWARDINE, *De causa Dei contra Pelagium*, cit., pp. 651-653.

⁷⁰ It is therefore necessary to offer a new classification of contingents, without falling into the errors of the inexperienced and clumsy, who ignore the eternal presence of all things in the divine intuition. See JOHN WYCLIF, *De scientia Dei*, cit., pp. 135-136: «Unde evacuando ea que sunt parvuli, tam quoad sapere quam quoad loqui, decet theologum loqui ut ille vir qui vidit in Verbo archana futura deo presencia, et distinguere contingens proporcionaliter ad distincionem parvulorum balbutientium, licet aliis verbis et alia sententia. Est enim aliquod contingens eternum

This conception opens up further doctrinal implications, including soteriological issues and questions concerning the dialectic between *potentia ordinata* and *potentia absoluta*⁷¹.

Riassunto Nel suo *De scientia Dei*, Wyclif cerca di conciliare la conoscenza immutabile e semplice di Dio con l'autentica contingenza della creazione. Contro posizioni che compromettono o la perfezione divina o la libertà delle creature, egli propone una teoria della *scientia visionis* secondo cui tutti gli enti o stati di cose temporali sono eternamente presenti all'intelletto divino nel loro proprio *esse existere*. Rifiutando ogni concezione che comporti forme di successione o discorsività per la scienza divina, Wyclif sostiene che Dio conosca in modo eterno e determinato il membro vero di ogni coppia di contraddittori, conoscendo al contempo l'alternativa non realizzata attraverso la *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*. Tutte le verità contingenti sono necessarie *ex suppositione*, sulla base dell'eterna decisione divina di portarle all'esistenza, ma rimangono contingenti in sé, poiché Dio avrebbe potuto volere altrimenti. Wyclif sostituisce così la *contingentia ad utrumlibet* con la *determinatio ad utrumlibet*, collocando il fondamento ultimo della contingenza non nell'indeterminatezza creaturale ma nella sovrana libertà di Dio.

et aliquod temporale, et utrumque membrorum in tria dividitur. Nam aliquod est contingens eternum solum a parte ante, ut me esse generandum; aliquod solum a parte post, ut me fuisse; et aliquod utrumque, ut deum scire, velle et ordinare me esse, cum quotlibet istis similibus que omnia sunt contingencia, quia possibile est ipsa non esse, quamvis de facto sint. Contingens autem temporale est triplex. Nam aliquod est semper, ut mundum et tempus esse; et aliquod in maiori parte, ut quemlibet hominem esse; cum enim hominem esse incepit post mundum et durabit in eternum, patet quod in minori parte temporis non est. Alia autem sunt contingencia in minori, ut quodlibet contingens temporale inclusum quoad utrumque terminum infra tempus, et in talibus sunt quotlibet genera: alia sunt instantanea, alia tempore durabilia secundum magis aut minus, ut deus ordinavit suas periodus».

⁷¹ Cfr. LUIGI CAMPI, «Numquid gloriabitur securis contra eum, qui secat in ea? Primato della grazia divina e contributo umano al processo di giustificazione in una pagina di John Wyclif, in «Saepe mihi cogitanti...». Studi di filosofia tardo-antica, medievale e umanistica offerti a Giulio d'Onofrio, edited by Armando Bisogno et al., Roma, Città Nuova, 2023, pp. 513-528.

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Abstract In his *De scientia Dei*, Wyclif seeks to reconcile God's immutable, simple knowledge with the genuine contingency of creation. Against views compromising either divine perfection or creaturely freedom, he advances a theory of *scientia visionis* in which all temporal beings or states of affairs are eternally present to God's knowledge in their *esse existere*. In rejecting any temporally successive or discursive conception of divine knowledge, he insists that God eternally and determinately knows the true member of every pair of contradictories, whilst knowing the unrealised alternative through *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* of their *esse intelligibile*. All contingent truths are necessary *ex suppositione*, given God's eternal decree, yet remain contingent in themselves, for God could have willed otherwise. Wyclif thus replaces *contingentia ad utrumlibet* with *determinatio ad utrumlibet*, locating contingency's ultimate ground not in creaturely indeterminacy but in God's sovereign freedom.