Ockham and Wodeham on Divine Deception
as a Skeptical Hypothesis*

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Both William of Ockham and Adam Wodeham\textsuperscript{1} granted that God can deceive us about the existence of external things. But, disagreeing on how God could bring this about, they disagreed on the import such a possibility has. As Wodeham viewed it, this possibility of divine deception has skeptical consequences, but as Ockham viewed it, it is epistemologically harmless. But was Ockham entitled to his view? I shall argue he was not.\textsuperscript{2}

1. The Apparent Infallibility of Perception

Ockham and Wodeham shared an understanding of intuitive cognition according to which intuitive cognition includes perception but does not coincide with it. Because, in this life, all our intuitive cognitions of external things are obtained through the senses, they are perceptions.\textsuperscript{3} But, by

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\textsuperscript{1} Adam Wodeham, it will be recalled, was a brilliant student of both William Ockham and Walter Chatton, who held Ockham in high esteem, defending him against Chatton's systematic criticisms. He thus sided with Ockham except when he found it impossible to do so, because of some internal inconsistency or unpalatable consequence. Because Wodeham understood Ockham so perfectly well and was such a vigorous thinker himself, the instances where he disagreed with his senior should be taken very seriously.

\textsuperscript{2} The works by Ockham I shall be drawing from are his \textit{Ordinatio} (abbreviated as ‘Ord.’), the second book of his \textit{Reportatio} (abbreviated as ‘Rep.’) and his \textit{Quodlibeta septem} (abbreviated as ‘Quod.’). The references are to the critical edition of Ockham’s theological works published by the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., in the series ‘\textit{Opera Theologica}’ (abbreviated as ‘OTh’), due to G. Gál, S. Brown, G. Etzkorn and F. Kelley for the \textit{Ordinatio} (1967-79), to G. Gál and R. Wood for the \textit{Reportatio} II (1981) and to J. Wey for the \textit{Quodlibeta septem} (1980). The work by Wodeham I shall be drawing from is his \textit{Lectura secunda in librum primum Sententiarum} (abbreviated as ‘LS’), edited by R. Wood assisted by G. Gál, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1990 (in 3 volumes).

\textsuperscript{3} Intuitive cognitions, including those obtained through the senses, are acts of immediate acquaintance with a thing. An intuitive cognition can be called a perception, there-
introspection, we can also have intuitive cognitions of some of our own thoughts and these intuitive cognitions do not involve the senses and are not, therefore, perceptions. Ockham, however, believed us to have two souls, a sensitive and an intellectual soul, whereas Wodeham believed us to have just one soul, an intellectual soul. Accordingly, Ockham held that introspective intuitive cognitions are formed directly in the intellectual soul or mind, whereas perceptions are formed in the sensory soul, as sensory intuitive cognitions. Because, on his view, beliefs are formed only in the mind, not in the sensory soul, it follows, he further believed, that perceptions need be replicated as intellective intuitive cognitions in the mind before they can play a role in belief formation. Wodeham, on the other hand, held the simpler theory that the perceptions we, as human beings, are capable of having, exist immediately in our intellectual soul, where they can themselves play a direct role in belief formation. Because this difference in doctrine plays no role in the issue to be discussed here, I shall disregard it and treat Wodeham’s theory as if it were common to both authors. On this theory, there are just two sorts of intuitive cognitions, namely introspective intuitive cognitions and perceptions. Only those intuitive cognitions which are perceptions will, however, be considered here.

Many of our perceptions are misleading, as both authors recognized. In sensory illusion, we perceive a thing to have a property it does not have, as for example I perceive the ignited end of a stick in rapid circular motion to form a circle of fire. Our perception of the thing is misleading...