

Duns Scotus and the Recognition of Divine Liberality

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The first part of this study is devoted to an exposition of a concept in Scotus that I have called "nature's fitting insufficiency." At the start I locate the principle in the first question of John Duns Scotus's Prologue to his *Ordinatio*, and then trace its presence in his prologues to both the earlier *Lectura* and the later *Reportatio* IA. Finally I examine Scotus's ample use of the principle in a question from his mature *Quodlibetal Questions*. The upshot of the first part is recognition of God's voluntary action englobing the natural world as it had come to be understood in the received philosophical tradition. The second part, which focuses directly on God's creative act, has two sections. It begins with a review of Scotus's account of God's production of creatures into intelligible existence, thereby constituting them as real possibilities in their own right. It then describes the logical stages the Divine Will moves through in willing this actual world into existence. In the end we see God's contingent voluntary action as an exercise of love, with an intelligibility not altogether beyond our recognition. What ties together the two main parts is the recognition of Divine Liberality.

Nature's Fitting Insufficiency

I

Toward the very end of the first question in the *Ordinatio* we find the following passage:

... it is not unfitting that a power should be naturally ordered to an object which it cannot attain naturally by natural causes, any more than it is for a power or faculty to be ordained by its very nature [for an act] and nevertheless be unable to produce this act by itself.¹

To put the point in stark terms, Scotus describes an *innate incompetence* at the basis of natural powers, even the most superior among them. The engines of nature, to use an image, cannot by nature pull off what by nature they are de-

¹ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 92 (ed. Vat. 1), 56-57: *Non est igitur inconveniens potentiam esse naturaliter ordinatam ad obiectum ad quod non potest naturaliter ex causis naturalibus attingere, sicut quaelibet ex se sola ordinatur et tamen non potest sola attingere.* With some adjustments of my own, I have used Allan B. Wolter's translation: "Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge: Prologue to the *Ordinatio* of John Duns Scotus (Translation)," *Franciscan Studies* 3-4 (1951): 231-72.

signed to do. Then, with no apparent intended irony or paradox, he characterizes this incompetence as “fitting” or “appropriate” (*non est ... inconveniens*). To speak so matter-of-factly about the “befittingness of nature’s incompetence” captures a quintessential characteristic of Duns Scotus’s thought. I think he here describes one of the true signs of Divine Liberality. In what follows I shall explore the notion in order to see its richness as an idea, and to suggest how embedded it is in the warp and woof of Duns Scotus’s thought.

Before examining the argument from which we have excerpted this paradigm passage, it is interesting to remark on Scotus’s usage of the word “*conveniens*,” which I have translated here as “fitting”. The word carries two intelligible notes. First of all, the term denotes possibility: it signifies that the existence of some state of affairs, typically expressed as the union of two terms in a proposition, is not self-contradictory. The contrary opposite of *conveniens* is *repugnans*, which signifies that elements in a putative state of affairs or the terms of a proposition repel one another. The juxtaposition of repugnant terms cannot be fashioned into a union of either thought or thing. One can say the words, but beyond the utterance one runs into only incoherence or contradiction.² But I believe the term also carries with it a second dimension of meaning. It signifies by way of connotation an aesthetic quality of “befittingness” or “consonance” or “suitability.” Certain things belong together, they fit together as an ordered whole. Their union is blessed, as it were, with a measure of completeness or harmony.³ With this twofold meaning of *conveniens* in mind, let us return to Scotus’s idea of “nature’s insufficiency” and examine what he finds so “fitting” about the state of affairs.

II

The opening question to the Prologue to the *Ordinatio* had asked whether there be any special doctrine, unattainable by the natural light of the intellect, with which man in the present state needs to be supernaturally inspired. After the question is asked, Scotus poses his three initial arguments on behalf of a negative answer. Central to all three arguments is an affirmation of the sufficiency of nature, nicely epitomized in Aristotle’s formulation: “Nature never makes anything without a purpose and never leaves out what is necessary” (*De Anima* 3.9; 432b21–22).⁴

² Calvin G. Normore’s discusses the logical significance of *repugnans* in “Scotus, Modality and Instants of Nature,” in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, and Mechthild Dreyer (Leiden-New York-Cologne: Brill, 1996), 162–65.

³ See Trent Pomplun’s “Notes on Scotist Aesthetics in Light of Gilbert Narcisse’s *Les Raisons de Dieu*,” *Franciscan Studies* 66 (2008): 247–68, for a discussion of the broader metaphysical and theological implications of Scotus’s notion of *convenientia*.

⁴ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 2 (ed. Vat. 1), 3: *Natura non deficit in necessariis* (“Nature leaves out nothing necessary”). In the parallel text of the earlier *Lect.*

A major assumption of the initial arguments for the negative—the case on behalf of nature’s sufficiency—a position which he will subsequently reject, holds that every faculty or power (in this case the human intellect) is naturally competent with respect to the perfecting objects to which it is ordered. If this universal statement were to hold true, then one would remove what would otherwise be excellent grounds for insisting on the need to be supernaturally inspired with the knowledge that beatifies. It is well known to Scotus’s readers that this initial argument in the first question of the Prologue introduces the view of the Philosophers and that the body of the question subsequently unfolds as an exchange between the Philosophers and the Theologians.⁵ It is perhaps unfortunate that a certain dramatic flair, worthy of the dialogue genre, is all but smothered by Scotus’s painstaking scholastic argumentation. Nevertheless, the conflict between the founding ideas or vision of philosophy and those of Christian theology that Scotus sets out at the very beginning of his *Ordinatio* generates its own brand of intellectual interest. No reader of Scotus’s day could fail to hear in his words echoes of the not-so-distant Paris disputations over radical Aristotelianism. As Scotus understands it, the Philosophers argue that within the system of nature, man is provided with powers innately competent for grasping that universal and highest intelligibility that suffices for his ultimate perfection, a perfection to which he is by nature ordained. In fact, the Philosophers’ doctrine requires within the system of nature a consonance and completion between *telos* and competence. That completion lies at the heart of the meaning of philosophy as it was received from the ancients. It is not enough to say that natural ends *can* be achieved by nature’s causes, one should understand that these ends in principle *will* be, and indeed *ought to* or *should* be so achieved, at least generally and for the most part. It is, as it were, the general “form” or actuality of the world. The reason for postulating the *telos* is of a piece with the reason for postulating agency. Their separation would be absurd, like trying to have a one-sided coin.

The targeted understanding of nature is unmistakably evident in the major premise one of the Philosophers’ early arguments: “Every natural passive faculty has some corresponding natural agent, for otherwise the passive facul-

prol., p. 1, q. un., n. 2 (ed. Vat. 16), 2, Scotus invokes the same principle, but in this instance he cites the formulation in Aristotle’s *De caelo* II, c. 8 (290a 29–31).

⁵ The basic outline of *Ord.* prol., p. 1, q. un. unfolds in seven main parts: it opens with [1] Initial Arguments on both sides of the question (nn. 1–4). The subsequent Body of the Question, which develops in the form of a controversy between the Philosophers and the Theologians, in the middle of which Scotus delivers his own solution, has a complex structure: [2] the opinion of the Philosophers, with four arguments on their behalf (nn. 4–11), [3] the Theologians’ refutation of the Philosophers’ opinion (nn. 12–53); [4] objection to the Theologian’s opinion (nn. 54–56), [5] Scotus’s own solution (nn. 57–65), [6] authoritative support on behalf of the Theologians’ refutations (nn. 66–71), and Scotus’s reply to the Philosophers’ four arguments (nn. 72–89). The question closes with [7] replies to the Initial Arguments (nn. 90–94).

ty would be without purpose, since nothing in the realm of nature could reduce it to act."⁶

In his reply, much later in the question (nn. 73–75), Scotus first distinguishes two senses of nature.⁷ In one sense the term “nature” signifies an *intrinsic* principle of motion or rest (as opposed to *extrinsic* principle). In its second sense, “nature” signifies a naturally active principle, as opposed to art or deliberate intention, where the basis of difference lies in the active principle’s mode of operation. It is the second sense of nature that is of particular interest here. If we understand nature as an active agent that operates with natural necessity, the above stated premise is false. Scotus makes the surprising assertion that, in some instances, “a nature because of its excellence is naturally ordained to receive a perfection so eminent that it could not be caused by an agent that is natural in the second sense.”⁸ In this claim Scotus introduces a category of perfection incommensurate with the Philosophers’ naturalism. He interjects into the analysis the real expectation of a measure of perfection that exceeds the highest actuality that can be effected by active potencies that operate with natural necessity. Simply put, there is no natural agent that corresponds to the sort of passive potency that is open to the highest perfection in the created order.

From within the framework of the Philosophers’ naturalism, wherein nature and its necessity constitute the ultimate horizon, Duns Scotus appears to furnish the world with unactualized and unactualizable potencies. Must it not be that nature is frustrated? Scotus is aware of the apparent implication.

The passive potency is not in vain, for even though it could not be reduced to act by a natural agent as the principal cause, still a natural agent can dispose it for such an act. And there is some agent in nature, i.e., in the universe as a whole, that can completely reduce it to act, namely the first or supernatural agent.⁹

Two points in this response deserve emphasis. The telic ordination of these passive potencies is not in vain because they correspond to “the first or supernatural agent” which can fully reduce them to the fullness of their perfected entity. And because this is so, there is a “whole,” a holistic coordination

⁶ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 7 (ed. Vat. 1), 5: [O]mni potentiae naturali passivae correspondet aliquod activum naturale, alioquin videretur potentia passiva esse frustra in natura si per nihil in natura posset reduci ad actum.

⁷ The remote source for the distinction is Aristotle, *Physics* II, chapters 1 and 5.

⁸ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 73 (ed. Vat. 1), 45: ... natura propter sui excellentiam ordinatur naturaliter ad recipiendum perfectionem ita eminentem, quae non possit subesse causalitati agentis naturalis secundo modo.

⁹ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 74 (ed. Vat. 1), 45: Potentia passiva non est frustra in natura, quia etsi per agens naturale non possit principaliter reduci ad actum, tamen potest per tale agens dispositio ad ipsum induci, et potest per aliquod agens in natura—id est in tota coordinatione essendi vel entium—puta per agens primum vel supernaturale complete reduci ad actum.

of beings, "larger" than that imagined by the Philosophers. The character of this new and larger whole remains to be seen.

III

In addition to the Prologue to the *Ordinatio* we find the principle of nature's befitting insufficiency in parallel texts of the *Lectura* (prol., p. 1, q. un.) and the *Reportatio Parisiensis* (prol., q. 3); it is also readily evident in *Quodlibetal Question 14*.

In the *Lectura* prol., p. 1, q. un., we find the principle neatly formulated in the unit devoted to the refutation of the arguments posed by the Philosophers.¹⁰ Just as we saw in the *Ordinatio*, here the chief rationale for Philosophers' arguments against the need for divinely inspired knowledge rests on their conviction that the dignity of nature consists in its capability for acquiring its own perfection.¹¹ According to the received view of Aristotle, this generous view of nature is especially manifest in the speculative wisdom naturally attainable through the causality of man's active and passive intellect in the encounter with being-as-being, its forms, principles, and causes. The Philosophers argue that to deny this sort of perfection within the workings of nature is to demean it.¹² Scotus replies as follows:

I say that if the summit of acquired wisdom were our ultimate perfection, the Philosopher would not find any deficiency in our intellect, because it would be able to acquire this perfection on its own And I posit along with the Philosopher himself that so much can be acquired by natural agencies. Yet in addition I posit more, namely, that there corresponds to it a more noble perfection, which is caused by a superior agent, and moreover, in this I dignify, not vilify, nature.¹³

¹⁰ Basic outline of the first question in the *Lectura*: The question opens with the conventional [1] Initial Arguments (nn. 1–4). Scotus then develops the body as a controversy between the Philosophers and Theologians: [2] Arguments for the opinion of the Philosophers (nn. 6–11) are followed by [3] the Theologians' Objections to the Philosophers' opinion (nn. 12–30); Scotus then proposes [4] his own Solution to the question (nn. 31–34), which is followed by [5] Replies to the Philosophers' arguments (nn. 35–48), and closes with [6] Replies to the Initial Arguments (nn. 49–51). The *Lectura's* initial arguments for the opposing position (nn. 1–3) are in all essential points the same as in the *Ordinatio* (nn. 1–3), its ultimate replies (nn. 49–51) are perfunctory and run only for 12 lines in the Vatican edition of the *Opera Omnia* (ed. Vat. 16, 21), by contrast with the 85 lines needed for the replies in the later work (nn. 90–94; ed. Vat. 1, 54–58).

¹¹ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Lect.* prol., p. 1, q. un., n. 6 (ed. Vat. 16), 3: *Prima controversia inter illos est quod philosophi negant omnem cognitionem supernaturalem, quia ponunt quod dignitas naturae est quod possit acquirere suam perfectionem; ideo nulla est cognitio supernaturalis hic necessaria, sed intellectus potest acquirere omnem cognitionem necessariam ex naturalibus.*

¹² Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Lect.* prol., p. 1, q. un., n. 7 (ed. Vat. 16), 3–4: *... natura vilificatur si non potest acquirere perfectionem suam.*

¹³ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Lect.* prol., p. 1, q. un., n. 37 (ed. Vat. 16), 16: *Dico quod si summum sapientiae acquisitae esset ultima perfectio nostra, Philosophus non diceret aliquid deficere intellec-*

This really is a beautiful passage, I think. First of all, Duns Scotus grants to the Philosophers the considerable achievement that epitomizes ancient philosophical understanding. He will follow philosophy to its limits. In this passage he shows no interest in or reason for hobbling, restricting, or diminishing its achievements as they are seen from within philosophy's own framework. He balks only where the Philosophers might say or assume: "and that's all there is." If there is "more" to be said, however, it does not fall within philosophy's purview. Moreover, if there is "more" to be said, and here I think Scotus is especially interesting, then that "more" does not demean or vilify philosophical truth; to the contrary, he thinks it dignifies it. It confirms Aristotle's perfected nature, as it were, and then raises it to a higher power.

In the Prologue to the *Examined Report of the Paris Lecture, Reportatio IA* the principle of nature's fitting insufficiency appears in the third of the Prologue's three questions, which asks "whether we can know all truths knowable about God from what is purely natural." The third of the initial arguments on behalf of the opposing view rehearses an argument Scotus had also used in the earlier prologues to the *Lectura* (the second initial argument, n. 2) and *Ordinatio* (the second initial argument, n. 2). The *Reportatio IA* version reads:

It is natural for sense perception to experience any sensation whatsoever, therefore the intellect could have any intellectual cognition. The antecedent is evident; the implication is proved through the Philosopher, in Bk. III of the *De anima*. Nature is not wanting in what is necessary. Hence if it is not deficient in imperfect things, all the less so is it deficient in perfect things, for this would detract from the nobility of the universe even more.¹⁴

The argument starts with the observation that the powers of sense cognition are active with regard to the entire realm of sensible things. If, then, nature so fashions it that no sensation falls outside the active reach of the most inferior of cognitive powers, it surely follows that nature intends that no cognition fall outside the effective range of its most superior cognitive powers. In his response to this argument, Scotus denies the implication. He maintains that the principle that what is true of a perfection in an inferior nature (sensation) is all the more so true of the perfection of a superior nature (intellection) is not properly applied to the case at hand. He traces the error to its assessment of

tui, quia potest acquirere istam perfectionem ex se Et ego pono quod tantum potest acquirere ex naturalibus, cum ipso Philosopho; et cum hoc pono plus, quod sibi correspondet perfectio nobilior, quae causatur a superiore agente; et ideo dignifico naturam et non vilifico.

¹⁴ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Rep. IA* prol., q. 3, n. 211, ed. Wolter and Bychkov, 74; John Duns Scotus, *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture. Reportatio IA*, ed. and trans. Allan B. Wolter and Oleg V. Bychkov (St Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004): *Sensus ex naturalibus potest attingere ad omnem sensationem, ergo intellectus ad omnem cognitionem intellectualem. Antecedens patet. Consequentia probatur per Philosophum, III De Anima: 'Natura non deficit in necessariis'. Ergo si non deficit in perfectis, multo minus deficit in perfectis quia magis esset contra nobilitatem ordinis universi.*

sensation: "I say that it is a matter of imperfection in sensitive potencies that through a natural agent they can acquire their total perfection."¹⁵ Indeed, it is only because it is "so small compared to the perfection of an intellective potency that the created causality extends to it sufficiently."¹⁶ In other words, the sort of systematic completeness or totality evident in the powers of sensation and their perfection is a mark of their imperfection. It signifies a much limited or inferior entity in the scale of created beings:

In the hierarchy of beings, intellect and will are of the highest sort. The measure of their superiority is the fact that they are ordered to a perfection which is greater than one that can be had from natural causes. In this I do not vilify nature but rather dignify it; for whatever you postulate, I do as well, but also something over and above, because [I posit] all perfection that can be acquired by natural causes, which you posit, and, above that, the cognition of God in particular, to which no creature extends itself in a causally active way.¹⁷

Two salient characteristics of the principle stand out in this formulation. First of all, Scotus grants to nature all the perfection conferred on it through natural causality by the philosophical tradition. But he then goes on to grant to it a measure of perfection that goes beyond nature's bounty. Secondly, and I think more interestingly, he characterizes the perfection of non-intellectual, non-volitional creatures as terminating at the limits of natural causality. In these cases, nature suffices for their perfection; it constitutes for these powers the complete totality. This totalizing in the union of *telos* and natural causality, however, is not a perfection.

In judging that nature's sufficiency is a measure of its imperfection Scotus seems to have effected a remarkable reversal. How can it be that the more excellent being is the being less self-sufficient in securing its perfection? From what point of view do we speak of "*nature's fitting insufficiency*"? It is surely not that of the received philosophical tradition.

IV

In his *Quaestiones quodlibetales* q. 14 Scotus asks whether the soul left to its natural perfection can know the Trinity of Persons in God.¹⁸ The substance of

¹⁵ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Rep.* IA prol., q. 3, n. 232, ed. Wolter and Bychkov, 82: *Dico quod imperfectionis est in potentiis sensitivis quod per agens naturale possunt totam perfectionem suam acquirere ...*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: ... est enim ita parva respectu perfectionis potentiae intellectivae quod ad eam se extendit causalitas creata sufficienter.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: ... ordinantur ad maiorem perfectionem quam possit haberi ex causis naturalibus. Nec in hoc vilifico naturam sed dignifico eam. Quia quidquid tu ponis, et ego, et amplius aliquid quia omnem perfectionem quam tu ponis quod possit acquirere ex naturalibus et ultra cognitionem Dei in speciali ad quam nulla creatura causaliter active se extendit.

¹⁸ In what follows the Latin text is taken from *Cuestiones Cuodlibetales. Obras del Doctor Sutil, Juan Duns Escoto. Edicion Bilingüe*, ed. Felix Alluntis (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cris-

this question is in part quite similar to the opening prologue questions that we have explored. The problem is generated by the juxtaposition of a doctrine of beatitude which requires a perfect immediate knowledge of the Triune God and a naturalistic Aristotelian theory of cognition. In setting up the question Scotus begins by distinguishing two ways of understanding what it means "for the soul to know an object." In one sense it means "that it can *receive* such knowledge," and in another sense "that it can *attain* such knowledge either on its own or by the cooperation of such causes as are adapted by nature to work with it in producing that effect."¹⁹ In the first sense, for instance, a stone is incapable of knowing anything: it simply lacks the capacity for receiving knowledge. By contrast, Scotus thinks "one can grant that every being endowed by nature with a possible intellect can know naturally everything knowable."²⁰ Man is indeed naturally *capax Dei* with respect to the *receptive* powers of his intellectual nature. With respect to his *active* powers and the natural causes with which it cooperates in cognition, however, it is otherwise. Nature proves insufficient for *attaining* particular knowledge of God.

The question is why it is that natural causality is insufficient. Scotus has two ways of explaining the limitation. He explains, for instance, that finite entity is the proper adequate intelligible object for created intellects: "Only 'finite being' is adequate ... since this is all that any created intellect can reach by virtue of causes which naturally move it."²¹ This reason might lead one to postulate some deficiency in the creature's knowing powers. We might, for instance, lament that if only the range of the intellect were more extensive or its intuitive and abstractive capacities were more penetrating, then we could engage the full intelligibility of infinite being in the blessed knowledge of God. It seems that something like this view is shared by those theologians who would facilitate human knowledge of the divine essence by a transformation or elevation of man's ordinary intellectual power by the light of glory thereby capacitating it for God as its primary object.²² Although we shall pass over the fascinating "ins and outs" of the dialectic over this issue (q.14, nn. 44-73), we can observe that what it all come down to is Scotus's fundamental explanation for the insufficiency of nature. The ultimate reason that natural causality fails to make the Divine Essence present is because God's essential intelligibility only shows itself to creatures freely.

tianos, 1968) and I have used the English translation by Felix Alluntis and Allan B. Wolter taken from John Duns Scotus, *God and Creatures. The Quodlibetal Questions* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1975), although in a few cases I have altered their translations.

¹⁹ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 5, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 316.

²⁰ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 6, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 316.

²¹ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 39, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 326.

²² See Scotus's treatment of the issue in *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, nn. 40-43, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 326-27.

The soul by its natural perfection, considering its nature in any state [that is, innocent, fallen, blessed], is unable to attain knowledge of God that is immediate and proper, even with the cooperation of all the causes that naturally move it to know. The same should be said of an angel. The reason is this. Any such intellection, namely, that which is *per se*, proper, and immediate, requires the presence of the object in all its proper intelligibility as object But only if God wills it, is he present to any created intellect in all the proper and essential meaning of divinity.²³

Here we gain some penetration into the deeper meaning of nature's insufficiency. Scotus is not primarily saying that natural agencies lack sufficient strength in the sense that were their causal power intensified and given greater range they might well attain immediate, essential, proper knowledge of God. The crucial point is that in this case, the intelligible object is not simply there and all that is wanting are the eyes to see it. In his relation to human and angelic intellects the Divine Essence is a voluntary object. Whenever created intellects receive particular knowledge of the Triune God the divine will acting freely governs the active causality at work.²⁴ Scotus cites a passage from St. Ambrose's commentary on the Gospel of Luke²⁵ that captures the point nicely: "Though it is not of his nature to be seen, it is within his power to be seen. If he wants it, he is seen; if he does not want it, he is not seen."²⁶

If men and angels fail to attain God within the order of nature, the failure is not ultimately rooted in some loss or privation. Loss and privation there may well be, but even if there were none, the natural insufficiency would persist. The presence of God's essential intelligibility is an immediate effect of Divine will acting freely. Men and women are simply not the kind of things that enter into the knowledge of the Divine Essence through natural causality, even when human powers operate without flaw.²⁷

²³ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Questiones Quodlibetales*, q. 14, n. 36, ed. Alluntis, 509: *Anima non potest attingere ad notitiam Dei propriam et immediatam ex perfectione sua naturali, etiam pro quocumque statu naturae, concurrentibus etiam quibuscumque causis naturaliter motivis ipsius animae ad cognoscendum; et item diceretur de angelo. Et ratio est, quia omnis talis intellectio, scilicet per se et propria et immediata, requirit ipsum obiectum sub propria ratione obiecti praesens ... Deus autem, sub propria ratione divinitatis, non est praesens alicui intellectui creato, nisi mere voluntarie.*

²⁴ At the end of a marvelous account of the various internal and external "movements" at work in Divine Trinity (q. 14, nn. 51–63), Duns Scotus concludes, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 63, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 332: "[Divine] motion in regard to what is external is subsequent to all contingent movement that is internal. All such external motion consequently is contingent and hence has God's will itself as its immediate principle. No created intellect, consequently, is moved in a natural fashion by the [divine] essence as essence. All knowledge of this essence, not caused by anything created, is caused immediately by the divine will."

²⁵ Ambrosius, *Expositio Evangelii Lucae* I, n. 24 (PL 15), 1543; (CCSL 14), 18.

²⁶ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 36, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 325.

²⁷ Allan B. Wolter put the point succinctly in "Duns Scotus on the Natural Desire for the Supernatural," in Allan B. Wolter, *The Philosophical Theology of Duns Scotus*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 125–47, at 137: "In no state

Scotus's *Quodlibet* q. 14 confirms what we have seen in the earlier texts from his Sentence commentaries: the incongruity or disproportion between (a) nature's *telos* or its openness to the form that perfects it and (b) nature's agency that produces or communicates that form. The incongruity, were it to manifest itself within the perspective of received Aristotelian philosophy, would strike one as a scandal against philosophy, or at the very least, a rational incoherence. But the interesting thing is that this incongruity is not a philosophical datum. Scotus seems to think that the Philosophers lack the basis for recognizing the gap between *telos* and competence:

The Philosopher, however, would say that this present state is simply natural to man, having experienced no other and having no cogent reason for concluding another state exists. He perhaps would go on to claim that the adequate object of the human intellect, even by its nature as a power, is simply what he perceived to be commensurate to it at present [i.e., the quiddity of sensible things].²⁸

In order to acknowledge the incongruity, one would have to have some reason for affirming the "more." One would have to recognize that the perfection to which one is ordained exceeds nature's perfecting active agencies. It would seem, then, that recognizing the gap would result in a sense of privation. However, the intellect's ordination, its fundamental inclination to its supernatural end, is not a "felt" desire; it is an ontological datum ("the way it works") rather than a psychological or emotional one. It does not manifest itself as yearning after the fashion a hunger or thirst. One knows when one is hungry or thirsty—these felt experiences signify privations and deficiencies of the natural organism. Because the Divine Essence is not the natural moving object in any state of existence—no more so in the heavenly state of blessedness than in either our original or fallen condition—it seems misleading to cast the situation in terms of nature's failure or deficiencies. Better to see that what is "more" than nature is a surplus, something given beyond what is due. If we recognize it, we see in it the face of Divine Liberality. Only if God were freely to reveal himself to us would we have grounds for affirming nature's insufficiency.²⁹ When it is God's freedom that is the basis for calling out na-

whatsoever is the divine essence of God a natural or adequate motivating object for any intellect other than his own. For any created intellect, be it the highest angel or the lowliest human, God's essence is a purely voluntary object."

²⁸ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Questiones Quodlibetales*, q. 14, n. 45, ed. Alluntis, 513: *Tamen Philosophus, qui statum istum diceret simpliciter naturalem homini, nec alium expertus erat, nec ratione cogente conclusit, diceret forte illud esse obiectum adaequatum intellectus humani simpliciter ex naturalibus potentiae, quod percepit sibi esse adaequatum pro statu isto.*

²⁹ Within the larger whole of Christian thought we affirm the knowledge and love of the Triune Divine Essence as man's end. But we cannot assume that the nature of our intellectual power, "understood of that proper and special aspect of which our nature is ordered to such an end, and in virtue of which it is capable of the highest grace and has God as its most perfect object"—we can not assume that this nature can be known

ture's insufficiency, we do not, as Scotus says, demean or vilify nature; rather we elevate or dignify it. Nature, and most especially angelic and human nature, is the sort of thing through which and to which God's Revelation is manifest. Which is a pretty remarkable kind of thing!

Divine Love's Reason

V

The discussion in the first part took as its point of departure what had been given or not given in nature. In this second part we shall target the origin of the world. Our focus object will be the reason or rationale of the divine act of creation. I would like to propose that Scotus gives us something like a "narrative form" for Divine Willing. The various doctrines that we historians of philosophy have identified as Duns Scotus's modal theory, his transcendental metaphysics, and his metaphysics of freedom provide a philosophical foundation for God's action. But they do not penetrate or unfold to view the intrinsic intelligibility of the actuality of divine willing itself. The action has its own "story," narrated as a marvelous unfolding of the life of Divine Love.³⁰ Duns Scotus's ingenious conceit of the *signa naturae* or "instants of nature"³¹ breaks

naturally by us. "For neither our soul nor our nature is known by us in our present state except under some general notion that can be abstracted from what the senses can perceive And to be ordained to this end, or to be able to possess grace or to have God as its most perfect object is not something that pertains to our nature under such a general notion." Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. prol.*, p. 1, q. un., n. 28 (ed. Vat. 1), 17.

³⁰ For a good part of the content of the "narration" I have digested the recent work listed below which I do not intend to amplify or amend in any significant way. I only hope to elicit from its digest a sense of the form of Divine Liberality manifest in what Scotus has to say about the act of creation: Simo Knuutila, "Duns Scotus and the Foundations of Logical Modalities," in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, 127–43; Calvin G. Normore, "Duns Scotus's Modal Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 126–61; idem, "Scotus, Modality, Instants of Nature and the Contingency of the Present," in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, 161–76; Ansgar Santogrossi, "Duns Scotus on Potency Opposed to Act in *Questions on the Metaphysics IX*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (1993): 55–76; *Duns Scotus on Divine Love. Texts and Commentary on Goodness and Freedom, God and Human*, ed. A. Vos, H. Veldhuis, E. Dekker, H. W. Den Bok, and A. J. Beck (Aldershot-Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Allan B. Wolter, "Scotus on the Origins of Possibility," in *Scotus and Ockham. Selected Essays* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), 129–43; idem, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), 146–53; idem, "The Unshredded Scotus: A Response to Thomas Williams," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 77 (2003): 315–56.

³¹ On the concept of instants of nature, see Normore, "Duns Scotus's Modal Theory," 133–34 and "Scotus, Modality, Instants of Nature," 169.

open into a multiplicity of stages or minor acts the single unified activity of divine life and allows us to witness the unfolding of the creative act.

VI

Creation emerges gratuitously from within the interior fullness of Trinitarian life.³² As Duns Scotus sees it, creation results from two basic movements interior to the Divine Mind.³³ In the first, the Divine Intellect knows his own essence, and in that knowledge produces creatures in intelligible existence (*esse obiectivum, esse intelligibile*). These identities—the natures or quiddities of creatures—enjoy a compatibility with real existence: they have, in other words, of themselves the status of real possibilities.³⁴ As part of their identity, they each enjoy their own measure of essential goodness.³⁵ Because of the inexhaustible variety of the kinds they represent, we might imagine them configured according to their intrinsic valences in inexhaustibly many models or ensembles, any one of which, if efficaciously willed, would become the created world.³⁶ But knowledge of the possibilities is not sufficient to account for the actuality of creation.

³² For the purposes of this account we shall skirt around the complexities of the interpersonal dynamics immanent to the Divine Trinity, and largely take for granted the simple knowing of the Divine Intellect and the Father's begetting of the Word and the simple loving of the Divine Will and the Love proceeding as the Holy Spirit, for which see Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Aldershot-Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), 131–222. Our concern is with God's turn to creation.

³³ I have reduced what in Scotus's more precise and complete account are four or five instants of nature; see Normore, "Scotus, Modality, Instants of Nature," 167–69, on the fuller "order of events" and its considerable philosophical significance.

³⁴ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. I, d. 43, q. un., n. 14* (ed. Vat. 6), 358: "God has such an object [a possible being] in virtue of the divine intellect, which produces it first in intelligible existence ... then the thing that in the first instant of nature has been produced by the divine intellect with such an existence, i.e., intelligible existence [as opposed to actual existence], has in the second instant of nature in virtue of itself [real] possible existence, because it does not formally reject being and of its own self it does formally reject having necessary existence derived from itself." English translation by Richard N. Bosley and Martin Tweedale in *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy. Selected Readings Presenting the Interactive Discourses among Major Figures* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 1997), 68–69. On the origin of possibility in Scotus and his distinction between logical and real possibility see the discussions of Wolter, "Scotus on the Origin of Possibility," Knuuttila, "Duns Scotus and the Foundations of Logical Modalities," and Normore, "Scotus, Modality, Instants of Nature."

³⁵ Wolter, "Unshredded Scotus," 330–31.

³⁶ The discussion of other possibilities serves two purposes. It brings home the idea that the intelligibility, the essential goodness, and the beauty of this world have an irresolvable foundation in the immanent activity of divine self-knowledge. These properties belong to things as originally constituted in their intelligible being, prior to God's effective will to actualize any given possibility. In the second place, we see these real possibil-

Since the knowledge of all these possibilities is a moment of the Divine Intellect's understanding of his own Infinite Essence, this knowledge occurs with natural necessity. What is not included in this knowledge, and cannot be included without compromising God's contingent relation to finite reality, is the actuality of the world.³⁷

Contingent movement, therefore, is subsequent to the whole order of necessary movements [immanent to the Divine Mind]. It is not possible that contingent movement proceeds from a principle of natural motion, since it is a characteristic of such to move in a necessary fashion. Hence the will must be postulated as the source of such movement. Such contingent movements have their own order. The first is internal, for if the will itself did not decide to will one of the two possibilities, nothing definite would take place in the world outside. Hence, his will first determines itself to will what will be; second, his intellect, seeing this infallible determination of the will, knows that this will be.³⁸

In Scotus's description of the ordered movements internal to the Divine Mind we see the confluence of Nature (that is, the intellect's natural necessity in knowing real possibilities in their valences of goodness and beauty) and Freedom (that is, of the will's self-determination in the face of unactualized real possibilities). The freedom of God's willing is founded on, though not at all reduced to, the natural necessities of his knowing.

ities posited as in and of themselves with no warrant for actual existence or non-existence.

³⁷ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 59, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 331: "[I]t is the divine essence itself that first moves the divine intelligence, insofar as this is present in all three persons [of the Trinity], to the simple awareness of every intelligible. It does not move the intelligence to a distinct knowledge of the truth of every proposition, however. For it would move it to know definitely one of the two possible statements about any future contingency, since a natural mover moves necessarily, it would follow that the divine intellect would know in a necessary fashion which of the two contradictory statements would be true" (*quidem essentia ipsa divina ... movet primo ad intellectionem simplicem omnis intelligibilis, et haec intelligentia, ut iam est in tribus suppositis; non autem movet ad distinctam notitiam veritatis cuiuscumque complexionis, quia si moveret determinate ad cognoscendum alteram partem in futuris contingentibus, cum naturale movens necessario moveat, sequitur quod intellectus divinus necessario intelligeret hanc partem contradictionis fore veram*). The main idea is that "there is nothing in the nature of a contingent event that requires it to be true." All that God knows in virtue of the first intelligible he "knows naturally and in a necessary way. Such are all the simple objects and necessary truths." *Quodlibetal Questions*, q. 14, n. 60, trans. Alluntis and Wolter, 331.

³⁸ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Questiones Quodlibetales*, q. 14, n. 62, ed. Alluntis, 520: *Completo igitur toto ordine motionis necessariae, sequitur motio contingens; illa non potest esse per principium naturalis motionis, quia illius non est nisi necessario movere; igitur oportet illius motionis principium ponere voluntatem. Et fit huiusmodi motio contingens ordinate, primo ad intra, quia nisi ipsa voluntas determinetur in se ad volendum alteram partem, nunquam determinabit aliquid ad extra. Primo, igitur, determinat se ad volendum hoc fore determinate; secundo, ex hoc intellectus videns istam determinationem voluntatis infallibilem, novit hoc esse futurum.*

The decisive point, however, is that creation involves God's choice between mutually exclusive real possibilities.³⁹

The reason for God's willing is in the divine will alone [I]f it be granted that objects—as shown to God by his intellect—have in them a certain measure of essential goodness according to which they deserve to please his will in a reasonable and orderly way, at least this much is certain: that God's good pleasure in giving them actual existence is something that stems exclusively from the divine will apart from any other determining reason on the part of the objects themselves.⁴⁰

Two points stand out. The first one claims that the Divine Will accepts the multitude of real possibilities in their essential goodness. Just as God's perfect self-knowledge contains the knowledge of all real possibilities, so also the love of his own goodness includes the love of the goodness present in these possibilities.⁴¹ He accepts them by his complacent love in accordance with "which they deserve to please his will in a reasonable and orderly way." However, the essential goodness of the secondary objects of Divine Love is no determining reason for the act of creation, which is the second point of the passage: the goodness or beauty of the real possibilities do not move God to the act of creation. "God's good pleasure in giving them actual existence is something that

³⁹ My formulation can be misleading. It speaks in terms of the choice of one from among a menu of options. Certainly this is how things often work in ordinary human experience. However, it can only be a figure of speech when applied to God. In the case of divine volition, what is certainly true is that with respect to whatever God effectively wills into actual existence, it could have been otherwise. The actual willed reality coexists simultaneously with the real possibility of its opposite. Allan Wolter often depicted Scotus's vision of God the creator as an artist who fashions the multitude of tesserae into a unique, beautiful mosaic. Even if the artist would insist that this configuration has in it an aesthetic necessity, he would agree that the little stones could have served to fashion a different image. It does not seem to be the case that an artist's creativity functions like the modern-day shopper who examines all the options and chooses "the best" among them. For the artist, the notion of a menu of options preceding the creative acts is more misleading than instructive.

⁴⁰ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord.* III, d. 32, q. un., n. 22, trans. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 157: [*R*]atio est in ipsa voluntate divina sola: quia enim ipsa acceptat aliqua in tali gradu, ideo ipsa sunt bona in tali gradu, non e converso. Vel si detur quod in eis—ut ostensa sunt ab intellectu—sit aliquis gradus bonitatis essentialis, secundum quem rationabiliter debent ordinate complacere voluntati, saltem hoc certum est quod beneplacencia eorum, quantum ad actualem existentiam, mere est ex voluntate divina, absque aliqua ratione determinate ex parte eorum. In order to avoid unnecessary confusion and controversy, in the English translation I have ellipsed a passage that reads, "For it is because he accepts other things in such and such a degree that they are good, and not vice versa (*quia enim ipsa acceptat aliqua in tali gradu, ideo ipsa sunt bona in tali gradu, non e converso*);" see Wolter, "Unshredded Scotus," esp. 329.

⁴¹ Wolter, "Scotus's Eschatology: Some Reflections," in *Scotus and Ockham*, 189, puts it thus: "the one voluntary act whereby the three divine persons enjoy the divine nature as the primary object of their charitable love, must also embrace in some similar fashion all possible creatures."

stems exclusively from the divine will." What determines the Divine Will is the Will itself—it is itself the immediate effective cause of actual existence. By accepting with his good pleasure a given nature, a given individual,⁴² a particular ensemble of natures and individuals—all with their measure of order and goodness—the Divine Will calls these especial real possibilities into actual existence.⁴³

VII

There appears to be a problem when we insist on the contingency of creation as we have been doing. After all, God's perfection is in no way lacking for its

⁴² Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. II*, d. 3, p. 1, q. 7, n. 251 (ed. Vat. 7), 513–14: "In the universe as a whole ... individuals are unqualifiedly intended by the First Being himself even as he intends something 'other than himself' not as an end, but as some other thing ordered to the end. Thus, for the sake of communicating his own goodness, as on account of his own blessedness, he produces many individuals of the same species. Among the highest of entities [namely, angels and humans], the individual is especially intended by God" (*In toto universo simpliciter individua intenduntur ab ipso Primo prout ipsum intendit aliquid 'aliud a se' non ut finem, sed ut aliquid aliud ad finem; unde propter bonitatem suam communicandam, ut propter suam beatitudinem, plura in eadem specie produxit. In principalissimis autem entibus est a Deo principaliter intentum individuum.*).

⁴³ This selective love (of good pleasure) of just those that, as it will turn out, shall make up the created world, is distinguished from the logically prior complacent love that embraces all possibilities. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 189–90: "Scotus distinguishes between God's benevolent and his complacent love. The former love extends only to those creatures he is pleased from all eternity to create at some future time, whereas his complacent love extends equally to all possibles, since they are viewed as consequences, as it were, of his infinitely fertile intellect." *Ord. III*, d. 32, q. un., n. 10 (ed. Vat. 10), 131: *Quaedam etiam diligit voluntate, et hoc volitione efficaci, puta illa quae aliquando producit in esse; quaedam volitione quadam simplicis complacentiae, non efficaci, quae tamen numquam producet in esse, quae tamen ostenduntur ab intellectu suo ut possibilia habere tantum bonitatem sicut illa quae diligit volitione efficaci.* See also *Ord. I*, d. 47, q. un., n. 4, trans. Vos, *Divine Love*, 179: "We call 'effective willing' that by which the will is not only pleased by the actuality of that which is willed, but also immediately actualizes it if it can" (*[D]icatur 'velle efficax' quo voluntati non tantum complacet esse voliti, sed si potest statim ponere volitum in esse, statim ponit*). *Ord. I*, d. 46, q. un., n. 5, trans. Vos, 167: "To will something with the will of good pleasure is to will it with a final determination, which can be posited because of his almighty will, willing to make an effect actual" (*[V]elle autem illud voluntate beneplaciti, est velle illud ultima determinatione quae potest poni ex parte ipsius voluntatis omnipotentis, volentis effectum in esse*). Vos explains (171, n. 1): "The term 'will of good pleasure ('voluntas beneplaciti') is common in medieval language. It does not refer to the desiring or deontic will (such as in the biblical statement 'He takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner'), but rather to the fulfilling or actualizing will ('thus it has been your good pleasure', Matth. 11:26)." Scotus starts by saying that there is a *specific* kind of divine willing of which it is true that it is always realized; he calls it the "will of good pleasure." Whatever God wills with this will, he wills with a final determination. That is to say, once all the factors and aspects have been considered, God says: "such and such will be the case, this is what I decide to do."

not embracing the existence of anything other than God himself.⁴⁴ How then are we to avoid the suspicion that the calling of all things into existence is a matter of indifference for God?

[God's] actual love of all is a consequence of the perfection of this act [namely, God's love of his own essence], since it tends in a perfect manner to its first object and to all for which this first object is the whole reason for the divine will and intellect acting at all. Now only the divine essence can be the primary reason for God's acting, because if something else were, his power would be denigrated.⁴⁵

On the face of it this is a remarkable claim: it is God's love of the Divine Essence that is the reason for the love by which he calls creatures into existence. It appears that in God's perfect act of self-love there is some sort of "carry-through" or "momentum" that gives reason for "something else." In other words, the circle of perfect and complete Trinitarian love constitutes a "reason" that informs or conditions his making of this world. These expressions can be misleading. If what we are looking for is some compelling motivation or some warrant that justifies God's efficacious love of creatures, we will not find it. There is no such "reason" or cause.⁴⁶

By broadening the notion of reason beyond efficient causality, however, Scotus observes that willing has its own rational order when it comes to planning an action that embraces a multiplicity of objects. The end or *telos* is first willed as the primary object; the will then targets any secondary object that immediately attains that end, and finally it wills those things subordinate or requisite to the attainment of the end.⁴⁷ The general pattern is familiar to any-

⁴⁴ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III*, d. 32, q. un., n. 19, trans. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 155: "[In God] there is one power to love, and there is one first object [namely, the divine essence], and he has one infinite act adequate to that power. But it is not necessary that this act regard all things as actualized, as if all were required to be loved [creatively] for the act to be perfect" (*[U]na est potentia et unum obiectum primum, et habet unum actum infinitum adaequatum sibi. Nec oportet istum actum esse omnium, quasi omnia requirantur ad perfectionem huius actus*).

⁴⁵ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III*, d. 32, q. un., n. 19, trans. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 155: [*S]ed solummodo ex perfectione huius actus consequitur hoc quod perfecte tendit in primum terminum; tendit etiam in omnia circa quae primum terminus est totalis ratio agendi. Tam autem intellectui divino quam voluntati sola essentia potest esse prima ratio agendi, quia si aliquid aliud potest esse prima ratio, vilesceat illa potentia.*

⁴⁶ We can apply to the situation at hand a remark made by Scotus in another context, *Ord. IV*, d. 46, q. 1, trans. Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 252-53: "God is no debtor in any unqualified sense save with respect to his own goodness, namely, that he love it. But where creatures are concerned he is debtor rather to his own liberality ..." (*non simpliciter est debitor nisi bonitati suae, ut diligat eam; creaturis autem est debitor ex liberalitate sua ...*).

⁴⁷ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III*, d. 32, q. un., n. 21, trans. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 155: "[E]very one who wills in a reasonable way, first wills the end and secondly that which immediately attains the end, and thirdly other things which are more remotely ordered to the attainment of his end" (*[N]am omnis rationabiliter volens, primo vult finem,*

one who deliberates before acting: a series of objects come into view sustained in an order of importance or dependence keyed to the ultimate achievement.

And so it is that God, who is most reasonable—not of course by different acts, but in one single act which is said to tend in different ways to different objects ordered in some way to one another—first wills the end, and in this his act is perfect, and his intellect is perfect and his will is happy. Secondly, he wills those things which are immediately ordered to him, predestining namely the elect to attain him immediately, and this as it were, by reflecting and *willing others to love with him the very object of his love* Hence, he first loves himself ordinarily and consequently not inordinately in an envious and jealous manner. Secondly he wills to have other co-lovers, and this is nothing else than *willing that others have his love in themselves* Thirdly, however, he wills those things which are necessary to attain his end, namely the gift of grace. Fourthly, he wills for their sake other things that are more remote, for instance, the sensible world—in order that it may serve them [Italics are my own.]⁴⁸

Scotus models the Divine will calling creation into existence as a single act targeting in an ordered sequence four distinct objects. (1) [*Self*] God wills his own beatitude (his act is perfect, his intellect is perfect, and his will is happy). (2) [*Co-lovers*] God predestines the elect who attain him immediately; (3) [*Grace*] God wills things necessary for his co-lovers to attain and sustain their love of God; (4) [*Sensible World*] God wills for the sake of his co-lovers things more remote that will serve them in their desire to love God.

The second stage, in which God wills for himself co-lovers, is especially noteworthy. The language he uses is interesting: “willing others to love with him the very object of his love” (*volendo alios condiligere idem obiectum secum*) and “willing that others have his love in themselves (*velle alios habere amorem suum in se*).”⁴⁹ We have the following sequence, which we shall call “the co-lover principle”:

et secundo immediate illud quod attingit finem, et tertio alia quae sunt remotius ordinate ad attingendum finem).

⁴⁸ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III, d. 32, q. un., n. 21*, trans. Wolter, *Franciscan Christology*, 155–77: *Sic etiam Deus rationalissime, licet non diversis actibus, unico tamen actu, in quantum ille diversimode tendit super obiecta ordinate, primo vult finem, et in hoc est actus suus perfectus et intellectus eius perfectus et voluntas eius beata; secundo vult illa quae immediate ordinantur in ipsum, praedestinando scilicet electos, qui scilicet immediate attingunt eum, et hoc quasi reflectendo, volendo alios condiligere idem obiectum secum ... qui enim primo se amat ordinate (et per consequens non inordinate, zelando vel invidendo); secundo vult alios habere condiligentes, et hoc est velle alios habere amorem suum in se ... tertio autem vult illa quae sunt necessaria ad attingendum hunc finem, scilicet bona gratiae; quarto vult—propter ista—alia quae sunt remotiora, puta hunc mundum sensibilem pro aliis ut serviant eis*

⁴⁹ I have intentionally put off the complications that would be introduced with a consideration of the notion of election and predestination. In the final analysis, the issue cannot be avoided. These notions, together with those of grace and merit, are ingredient in Scotus theories of Incarnation, Redemption and Eschatology. They also provide interesting occasions for discerning different facets of Divine Liberality. Nevertheless, I

[A] *diligere* (Lover loves the Beloved) → [B] *condiligere* (Lover wills others, whose love is pleasing to the Beloved, to love with him the Beloved)

The “carry-through” from *diligere* to *condiligere* is essential to Scotus’s concept of love.⁵⁰ In addition to the Divine Will directly targeting the Divine Essence as its object—that is, *God wills God*—there is a quasi reflective act: *God wills (another’s) willing of God*.⁵¹ “God’s creativity is nothing else than ‘willing that others have his love in themselves.’”⁵² One should not, however, mistake the point to mean that the Divine Trinity requires the love of creatures in order to perfect its own life of love. The “co-lover principle” is adequately satisfied within the interpersonal dynamics of the Trinity. Duns Scotus is not unfolding for us some necessity in the order of *ad extra* efficient causality, for God’s end is achieved without the existence of creatures. Instead, he is showing us the meaning or significance of creation. To grant that the contingent exercise of God’s free will has no determining reason outside of his own will is not to say that there is not in his will some founding rationale that will carry through into any perfect and ordinate volition. When therefore God, by his will of good pleasure, decides that there shall be a world, he wills a co-lover and ordains it to glory.

To do justice to God’s creative genius at this stage we ought to introduce Scotus’s doctrine of the Incarnation. For it is in fact Christ who is the “first born.” The human nature, which God wills as a co-lover in the second moment, is, as part of that intention, assumed by the Word.⁵³ Were we to follow out this notion we would see just why it is that this nature was assumed by the Divine Word. Among the several principles at work in these speculations, in addition, to the co-lover principle, it would be especially interesting to draw out how Scotus portrays God’s exquisite use of *convenientia* and *consonantia*.⁵⁴

pass over them and trust that the through-line in the doctrine of Creation which we are following will not be much distorted thereby.

⁵⁰ On Scotus’s indebtedness to Richard St. Victor for this concept see Vos, *Divine Love*, 66–67, 208, and William A. Frank, “*Sine Propria*: On Liberty and Christ, A Juxtaposition of Bernard Clairvaux and John Duns Scotus,” *Cîteaux. Commentarii Cistercienses* 42 (1991) [1992]: 470–87.

⁵¹ For an analysis of the idea of a reflective volition see Vos, *Duns Scotus on Divine Love*, 71–73, 82.

⁵² Wolter, “Scotus’s Eschatology,” in *Scotus and Ockham*, 193.

⁵³ Giovanni Lauriola, “L’origine della natura secondo Duns Scoto,” http://www.centrodunsscoto.it/articoli/Articoli_html/origine_natura_scoto.htm (accessed 17 July 2008).

⁵⁴ One measure of what is fitting is the manifestation of God’s liberality. Perhaps the following quotation explaining why it was human nature that the Word assumed will illustrate the point: “God would first intend that some nature, not the highest, should receive the highest glory, proving thereby he was not constrained to grant glory in the same measure as he bestowed natural perfection. Then secondly, as it were, he willed that this nature should subsist in the Person of the Word, so that the angel might not be subject to a [mere] man” (*Deus primo volens aliquam naturam non summum [scil. naturam humanam, inferiorem angelis] habere summum gloriam, ostendens quod non oportet eum conferre*

In the third stage of the creative act, God wills for his “first-born” creature the gift of grace as a means necessary for attaining its end. Grace, which for Scotus is identical with charity, is the disposition of the will to hold God dear.⁵⁵ What we have up to this point in the orderly sequence of willed objects is just one thing—*the love of God*: in himself—in a creature—with the aid of created grace.

One object remains, and with that, God has willed the totality of the universe. In the fourth moment God wills the sensible world, in all its complexity and wonder, in order to serve those whom he has willed as his co-lovers. As irrational creatures, these things do not themselves enter into the divine exchange of lover and beloved, yet they can serve this cause. For, as Scotus remarks, “I can love out of charity that a tree exists insofar as it enables me to love God more in himself.”⁵⁶

We began this section with a problem. If the actuality of Divine Being is expressed in the one infinite act of love, a love whose perfection is in no way lacking for its not embracing the existence of anything other than God himself, how are we to avoid the suspicion that the existence of all other things is a matter of indifference? Beyond essential goodness (an artifact of natural necessity) and mere facticity, what has been communicated in creation?

As to the meaning of existence, John Duns Scotus answer seems to be that to exist means, for rational creatures, to be loved by God precisely as one who loves God and whose love is pleasing to God—this is a far cry from indifference or mere facticity. For the vast material order of non-rational creatures, existence means service to the purposes of God’s glory as mediated through human beings.

Conclusion

If this be the truth about the reason of creation, and if one recognizes it as such, a fitting acknowledgement would be the poet’s or the religious man’s act of praise that says “Glory be to God.” If acts of praise indeed be fitting, then this praise is probably one on the surer manifestations of the presence of Divine Liberality. I do not give this final thought as a pious throw-off, for if what Scotus says is true, then acts of praise are a function of our being in the world made intelligible in the light of Revelation. In addition to features commonly acknowledged by both pagan philosopher and Christian theologian, Divine Revelation presents the actual world with an added dimension

gloriam secundum ordinem naturarum, et quasi secundo voluit illam naturam esse in persona Verbi (ut sic angelus non ponatur subesse homini). Ord. III, d. 7, q. 3, n. 69, trans. Wolter, Franciscan Christology, 151.

⁵⁵ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III, d. 28, q. un., n. 6* (ed. Vat. 10), 84.

⁵⁶ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord. III, d. 32, q. un., n. 24* (ed. Vat. 10), 138: [*P*]ossum enim ex caritate velle arborem esse et arborem mihi servire ad talem actum, in quantum talis actus iuvat me ad diligendum Deum in se.

for which the Christian believer is specially disposed to recognize. I take it that one of the deeper intentions in Duns Scotus's thought is the drive to bring forth, to manifest Revelation's added dimension. Philosophy's truth provides the foil, and Scotus engages the received tradition of philosophy less for the purposes of defeating, purifying, or assimilating it, and more for its usefulness as a foil to bring out the glory of Divine Liberality. When properly understood, philosophy's truth exercises its intrinsic authority, for which Scotus had great respect, and it establishes its measure of being, goodness, beauty against which one understands the "more" of Divine Liberality.