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Selected bibliography on the Ontology of John Duns Scotus

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"En 1928, étudiant en philosophie, je me voyais assigner comme dissertation une synthèse de la métaphysique scotiste. Je remis un essai sur l'être, la distinction formelle, les universaux et la nature commune. Je ne sais ce qu'il me faut admirer le plus des deux: ma présomption juvénile ou le charisme prophétique de mon professeur. C'est ce noviciat scotiste qui me vaut de vous parler, un demi-siècle plus tard, de la première école scotiste, dans cette université où l'esprit subtil d'un frère mineur d'Écosse lui a donné naissance.

Je me suis initié au scotisme dans la *Philosophie du Bx Jean Duns Scot* d'Ephrem Longpré, et dans *l'Avicenne et le point de départ de Duns Scot* d'E. Gilson, deux médiévistes qui faisaient alors une tournée de conférences à Montréal. Quelques années plus tard, je voulus déposer un sujet de thèse sur l'être, objet de l'intelligence et de la métaphysique selon Duns Scot. Quand le professeur eut compris que je me proposais de critiquer mes deux guides, il m'avisait de changer le sujet, parce qu'aucun jury ne me donnerait raison contre ces deux médiévistes chevronnés, même s'ils n'étaient pas d'accord entre eux. Autant valait changer tout de suite. Je me rabattis sur la théorie de la connaissance chez Duns Scot pour finir par *La connaissance de l'individuel au moyen âge*. La publication de l'ouvrage aux Presses universitaires de France et la préface magistrale de Paul Vignaux me valurent de passer pour son élève. Je me sens donc à l'aise parmi vous que l'amitié réunit autour d'un vénérable maître, avec qui j'ai partagé pendant vingt ans l'enseignement de la pensée franciscaine à l'Institut d'études médiévales de l'université de Montréal.

I. La naissance du scotisme.

Je me suis intéressé de bonne heure à l'école scotiste, en raison de l'imbroglio que j'y découvris au sujet de la connaissance du singulier et dont je trouvai la clef en dépistant parmi les incunables de la bibliothèque un livre, fait de textes de Scot, dont l'auteur était Antoine André. Je compris que, pour remonter jusqu'à Scot à partir des scotistes, il me fallait passer par sa médiation. Il y a quelques années, en faisant la recension du volume VII de *l'Ordinatio* de Scot, je manifestai quelque réticence sur l'efficacité du recours au commentaire littéral d'Antoine André sur la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote, publié sous son nom en 1482, mais édité de nouveau sous le titre *d'Expositio*, en 1501, par Maurice du Port l'attribuant cette fois à Scot, parce que, selon les éditeurs de *l'Ordinatio*, le disciple n'aurait, en somme, que repris à son compte un commentaire du Docteur Subtil. J'avais consigné le résultat de ma première étude dans mon livre sur la connaissance du singulier, mais puisque cela était passé inaperçu, il fallait reprendre le problème du crédit à accorder à Antoine André comme témoin et interprète de Scot, là où Aristote entre en jeu. J'y reviendrai dans la dernière partie de cette communication.

En parlant de l'école primitive, je veux me limiter à un point de vue. J'ai essayé de comprendre dans quel esprit et selon quelles méthodes les disciples de Scot ont transmis ce trésor de doctrines émanées des lèvres de leur Maître autant que de ses écrits. Cela me paraît une condition préalable pour rejoindre à travers eux le message original de Scot dans sa verdeur primitive, et comprendre ce qui fait du Docteur Subtil un des grands penseurs de l'histoire." pp. 9-10

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"The thesis of this article is that Scotus makes a special contribution with his theory of intuition, not for giving new answers to the questions asked, for example, by Aquinas, but for asking different questions; and that the significance of this contribution cannot be appreciated until one sees why, with respect to the questions asked by Aquinas, Scotus is in (substantial) agreement with the Aristotelian analysis. The author tries, in an informal way, (1) to point out some confusions that have led to a misunderstanding of Scotus's (or anyone else's) defense of an Aristotelian account of abstraction, and (2) to isolate the phenomena that makes Scotus's theory of intuition suggestive."

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"Of singular importance to the medieval theory of transcendentals was the position of John Duns Scotus that there could be a concept of being univocally common, not only to substance and accidents, but even to God and creatures. Scotus's doctrine of univocal transcendental concepts violated the accepted view that, owing to its generality, no transcendental notion could be univocal. The major difficulty facing Scotus's doctrine of univocity was to explain how a real, as opposed to a purely logical, concept could be abstracted from what agreed in nothing real, in this case, God and creatures. The present article examines Scotus's solution to this difficulty and its interpretation in four of his noted fourteenth-century followers. It is shown that the balance Scotus's solution achieved between the competing demands of the real diversity between God and creatures, on the one side, and the conceptual unity of transcendental being, on the other, is taken in opposed directions by his interpreters. Either the real diversity of God and creatures is given priority, so that the concept of being becomes a purely logical notion, or the real unity of the concept of being is stressed, so that some sort of real community is posited between God and creatures."

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"It has been widely accepted in the literature that Scotus was the first to advance the so-called 'synchronic' view of contingency, where something is contingent if, at the very moment when it occurs, there is a real possibility for its opposite. This is usually contrasted with a 'statistical' construction of contingency, found in Aristotle and scholastics before Scotus, according to which something is contingent if its opposite can be actually realized at some other time. The present article examines

the background to Scotus's treatment of this theory of synchronic contingency and traces its proximate origin to Peter Olivi."

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"The degree of realism that Duns Scotus understood his formal distinction to have implied is a matter of dispute going back to the fourteenth century. Both modern and medieval commentators alike have seen Scotus's later, Parisian treatment of the formal distinction as less realist in the sense that it would deny any extramentally separate formalities or realities. This less realist reading depends in large part on a question known to scholars only in the highly corrupt edition of Luke Wadding, where it is printed as the first of the otherwise spurious *Quaestiones miscellaneae de formalitatibus*. The present study examines this question in detail. Cited by Scotus's contemporaries as the *Quaestio logica Scoti*, we establish that it was a special disputation held by Scotus at Paris in response to criticisms of his use of the formal distinction in God, identify its known manuscripts, and provide an analysis based upon a corrected text, showing in particular the total unreliability of the Wadding edition. Our analysis shows that the *Logica Scoti* does not absolutely prohibit an assertion of formalities as correlates of the formal distinction, even in the divine Person, so long as their non-identity is properly qualified. That is, the positing of formalities does not of itself entail an unqualified or absolute distinction."

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73. ———. 1998. "Duns Scotus on Metaphysical Potency and Possibility." *Franciscan Studies* no. 56:265-289.
74. Martinich, Aloysius P. 1977. "Scotus and Anselm on the Existence of God." *Franciscan Studies* no. 37:139-152.
75. McKeon, Richard. 1965. "The Relation of Logic to Metaphysics in the Philosophy of Duns Scotus." *Monist* no. 49:519-550.
- "In the development of logical theory from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth century, the "new logic" was distinguished from the "old logic" when the last four books of Aristotle's "Organon" were translated, and the "modern logic" was distinguished from the "ancient logic" when the principles of demonstration were found in rhetorical or dialectical topics or sophistical paradoxes rather than in analytical causes. The "old logic" and the "new logic" continued to be used to designate two sets of problems, and William of Ockham wrote treatises on both. "Moderns" was not a synonym for "nominalists" in the Fourteenth century, and the innovations in logic of that century were made by both "ancients" and "moderns." According to Duns Scotus the problems of the old logic are problems of the interpretation of sentences and the definition of simple terms from that interpretation; the problems of the new logic are problems of the analysis of inference and the interpretation of sentences from that analysis."
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84. Perler, Dominik. 1993. "Duns Scotus on Signification." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* no. 3:97-120.
- "In both versions of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Scotus alludes to a great controversy among his contemporaries over the question of whether a spoken word signifies a thing or a concept. He does not give a detailed account of this controversy, but confines himself to saying, "in short, I grant that what is properly signified by a spoken word is a thing." This brief statement may seem trivial at first sight, but it turns out to be innovative when it is assessed against the background of medieval Aristotelian semantic theory. From Boethius onwards, the overwhelming majority of the commentators on *De interpretatione* held that it is a concept and not a thing that is primarily and directly signified by a spoken word. In this paper, I intend to examine the reasons that led Scotus to criticize and revise the dominant theory. Such an examination can scarcely be restricted to a logico-semantic analysis. An adequate understanding of the relationship between a sign and its significate not only necessitates an examination of the question of *how* this relationship is established, but also a discussion of the question of *what* exactly the sign and the significate are-what kind of entities they are. Therefore, the following analysis aims at investigating not only the semantic aspects of Scotus's theory of signification, but also its ontological commitments." (notes omitted).
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87. ———. 2000. "Species, Concept, and Thing: Theories of Signification in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* no. 8:21-52.
88. ———. 2001. "Signification of Names in Duns Scotus and Some of His Contemporaries." *Vivarium* no. 39:20-51.
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94. ———. 1974. *An Anonymous Question on the Unity of the Concept of Being (Attributed to Scotus)*. Roma: L.I.E.F.
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- "This study compares the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus on the issue of being and individuality. Its primary aim is to contrast Scotus's individuating principle, *haecceitas*, with Aquinas's actualizing principle, *esse*, attending both to their rather striking similarities as well as to their significant differences. The article's conclusion is that, while Scotus's crowning principle, *haecceitas*, is the unique entity internal to each thing, rendering the nature complete and singular as nature, Aquinas's crowning principle, *esse*, actualizes the nature without individualizing it. This is not to imply that Scotus overlooked the importance of a thing's being, any more than Aquinas overlooked the importance of a being's singularity. It does mean, however, that the primal integrating focus and the resulting philosophical synthesis of these two seminal thinkers of the Middle Ages did significantly differ. The conclusion of the paper might be stated thus: what most distinguishes their respective philosophies is that, while Scotus's primary concern was with the existing individual, Aquinas's was with the existing individual."
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"The names of certain of the great scholastic thinkers of the middle ages-St. Anselm, Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, Henry of Ghent, and the rest-are familiar not only to students of philosophy and theology but also in varying degrees to the educated public. Abelard is known for his *Historia calamitatum* and as a figure in romantic literature, if not for his work in ethics and the theory of knowledge. Like Zeno's paradoxes and the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum," a passage in St. Anselm has become the subject of unending discussion. Certain of St. Bonaventure's books have been translated and find readers. But with the exception of St. Thomas Aquinas first-hand knowledge of the writings of the medieval masters is not a common thing.

For reasons that have varied throughout the modern era John Duns Scotus has not always received the general recognition that what he was and what he did should have brought to him. However, inadequate understanding and even hostility are being displaced by something better. Appropriately, this change is due in large measure to the research and writings of his fellow Franciscans, but the books and articles of many other scholars have aided them in their labors. As a result, the record of Scotus' life has been made fuller and clearer, what he actually taught on various subjects has been brought to light, and translations of his writings begin to appear. But the most important thing of all is the essential work of the *Commissio Scotistica* on the canon and the critical edition of his writings, which proceeds year by year in spite of the inherent difficulties of the task and those caused by the turmoil of our era. To all such labors the present volume, a cooperative effort of European, American, and Canadian scholars, is added as a further monument raised in honor of John Duns Scotus on the seventh centennial of his birth." (from the Foreword).

99. Shircel, Cyril L. 1942. *The Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Philosophy of John Duns Scotus*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press.

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102. ———. 1997. "La Solution Scotiste Au Problème De L'individuation, Avec Une Conjecture Sur Ses Sources Immédiates." In *Perspectives Arabes Et Médiévales Sur La Tradition Scientifique Et Philosophique Grecque*, edited by Hasnawi, Ahmad, Elamrani-Jamal, Abdelali and Aouad, Maroun, 505-521. Leuven: Peeters.
103. ———. 2005. *Duns Scot. La Métaphysique De La Singularité*. Paris: Vrin.
104. Spruyt, Joke. 2003. "The Semantics of Complex Expressions in John Duns Scotus, Peter Abelard and John Buridan." In *Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias in the Latin Middle Ages. Essays on the Commentary Tradition*, edited by Braakhuis, Henk A.G. and Kneepkens, Corneille Henri, 275-303. Turnhout: Brepols.
105. Sylwanovicz, Michael. 1996. *Contingent Causality and the Foundations of Duns Scotus' Metaphysics*. Leiden: Brill.
106. Traina, Mariano. 1965. "La Dialettica in Giovanni Duns Scoto." In *Arts Libéraux Et Philosophie Au Moyen Age*, 923-938. Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales.
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108. ———. 1993. "Duns Scotus' Doctrine on Universals and the Aphrodisian Tradition." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* no. 67:77-93.
109. ———, ed. 1999. *Scotus Vs. Ockham - a Medieval Dispute over Universals. Vol. I: Texts*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Texts translated into English with commentary by Martin M. Tweedale.

"This work is meant to make accessible to students of philosophy and later medieval thought the key texts in one of the most crucial philosophical debates of that period. The concentration is on Scotus's positive doctrine since it is difficult and has not received the detailed attention it deserves. Ockham's polemic against Scotus raises a host of objections to the internal coherence of Scotus's reworking of the traditional line. Some of these are ones it seems to me Scotus could have countered quite easily; others would have required some revisions, but ones that are basically within the spirit of the doctrine. Some, however, are very difficult indeed, and I shall leave to the commentary and its introductory essay the exposition of my own view on whether Scotus's position can survive intact. There is also a positive side to Ockham's views about universals, and that is only partially covered in what

follows. The texts that show how Ockham envisioned preserving all the essentials of Aristotelian science even after real universals have been excised, are presented and discussed, and the very real issue of whether Ockham's effort here could possibly succeed is broached but not definitely resolved one way or the other."

110. ———. 1999. *Scotus Vs. Ockham - a Medieval Dispute over Universals. Vol. II: Commentary*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.

"The commentary which composes the greater part of this volume attempts not only to explain the texts translated in the first volume and to understand the positions adopted by the protagonists in this debate, but also to assess the cogency of the various arguments put forward. After all that work is done, however, there remains the task of drawing attention to the crucial issues that have emerged and arriving at some understanding of the debate as a whole and the relative merits of the positions put forward. It is this task that this introductory essay undertakes. Perhaps it would be better read after a thorough study of the commentary, but I am inclined to think that some awareness of the general issues and positions taken by Scotus and Ockham helps in making one's way through the individual texts and their often elaborate argumentation. In explaining these issues and positions I have made free use of philosophical ideas of our own day, at least to the extent that this is not grossly anachronistic."

111. Vos, Antonie. 1985. "On the Philosophy of the Young Duns Scotus. Some Semantical and Logical Aspects." In *Mediaeval Semantics and Metaphysics. Studies Dedicated to L. M. De Rijk, Ph. D. On the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, edited by Bos, Egbert Peter, 195-216. Nijmegen: Ingenium Publishers.

112. ———. 2006. *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

113. Wengert, R.G. 1965. "The Development of the Doctrine of the Formal Distinction in the *Lectura Prima* of John Duns Scotus." *Monist* no. 49:571-587.

"This article is a discussion of the vocabulary and arguments in Scotus' "Prima Lectura" which seeks to show the close relationship between the doctrine of "formal distinction" and the notion of "ultimate abstraction". The paper also suggests that in the "Prima lectura" One is in at the birth of the fully developed notion of "formal distinction" in Scotus' own thought."

114. Williams, Thomas, ed. 2003. *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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115. Wolter, Allan Bernard. 1946. *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press.

116. ———. 1962. "The Realism of Scotus." *Journal of Philosophy* no. 59:725-735.

"The realist-nominalist controversy in the fourteenth century owes its origin to Duns Scotus and William Ockham, the two men whom C. S. Peirce in his Harvard lectures on British logicians praised as "decidedly the greatest speculative minds of the middle ages, as well as two of the profoundest metaphysicians that ever lived." Scotus's reputation as a realist, even if his realism be what neo-scholastics call "moderate" and Peirce "halting," rests on his conception of how the specific nature of anything exists in individuals of any given kind."

117. ———. 1990. *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

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"Over the last four decades, Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M., has done more than anyone else to make the philosophical theology of John Duns Scotus accessible to the English-speaking world, by preparing English translations of primary sources as well as interpretative Essays introducing readers to Scotus' central ideas.

These tasks have been both hindered and made more urgent by the painfully slow progress of the new Vatican edition of Scotus' writings (volume I containing the Prologue of Scotus' Oxford commentary on the Sentences appeared in 1950; as of 1988, only nine volumes have been published, and the critical edition of the Oxford commentary is not yet complete). Although useful, the seventeenth-century Wadding edition is unreliable both in its attributions and readings. Difficult issues of authenticity, dating, and the interrelation of Scotus' works remain. Thus, beginning with his dissertation, Wolter formed the habit of reverting to the manuscripts to produce his own provisional editions, consulting with Vatican editors on the Scotus Commission where possible.

Wolter's career as a Scotus translator began in 1947, when Paul Weiss requested some material for the first volume of his new journal *Review of Metaphysics*. Remarking on Scotus' notoriously tangled Latin, Wolter described the work of translating it as "a special vocation" and vowed never to do it again. Necessity is a sign of calling, however, and Wolter began translating topical selections for summer-school students at the Franciscan Institute in the early fifties. Many of these were published, with Wolter's Latin editions on the facing pages, in *Duns Scotus: Philosophical Writings: A Selection* (first published by Thomas Nelson, 1962, and English only in Bobbs-Merrill's *Library of Liberal Arts* series, 1962;

reprinted by Hackett, 1987). Over the years, Wolter has made many more of Scotus' works available, always preferring the format of publishing the English and Latin together: principally, *John Duns Scotus: God and Creatures*, the *Quodlibetal Questions* (with Felix Alluntis); *John Duns Scotus. A Treatise on God as First Principle. A Latin Text with English Translation of the De Primo Principio*; and *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*. By now, Wolter has given us enough for a reasonably comprehensive and balanced course on Scotus.

Duns Scotus is not called "the Subtle Doctor" for nothing, however. Diving into his highly technical philosophical corpus without benefit of an interpretive guide is heroic at best. Yet, when Wolter began, reliable guides were unavailable. While not without value, the secondary literature was on the whole confused and confusing, and/or marred by polemical distortion. Together with Wolter's pioneering first book on Scotus, his published dissertation *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (finished in one semester of intensive interaction with Philotheus Boehner), Wolter's interpretive *Essays* over the last forty years supply us with our needed map. Collected here from many (often inaccessible) journals and books, they are a paradigm of method and a treasure of illuminating insights. Wolter's consistent response to interpretive puzzlement has been to return to the primary sources and to offer readings as detailed and philosophically subtle as the texts themselves. Thus, in the early days, when Scotus' ideas were "known" and criticized mostly from hearsay, Wolter refuted misguided attacks with careful analyses of the texts (see chapters 10 and 11 below). Throughout, Wolter's own philosophical penetration of the material has enabled him to make clear what seems in Scotus complex and confusing (e.g., regarding the formal distinction, chapter 1, and Scotus' theory of universals, chapter 2). Again, Wolter's identification of Scotus' doctrine of the will as the key to his ethics resolves old and false puzzles (see chapters 7-9). At the same time, Wolter's sensitivity to philological issues and to the historical development of Scotus' thought has enabled him to illuminate Scotus' notion of intuitive cognition (see chapter 5) as well as his account of Divine foreknowledge (see chapter 13). All of the *Essays* reflect Wolter's philosophical and historical curiosity and a reasoned and reasonable open-mindedness. Paying Scotus the respect due a great philosopher, Wolter was glad to return to old topics because he always learned something new (e.g., his treatment of formal distinction in chapter 1 makes new points not found in his dissertation). Wolter's interests in analytic philosophy surface as he relates Scotus' semantics and metaphysics to twentieth-century analytic thought (see chapters 3 and 12)." (from the Foreword)

118. ———. 1993. "Reflections on the Life and Works of Scotus." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* no. 67:1-36.
119. ———. 1993. "Scotus on the Divine Origin of Possibility." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* no. 67:95-107.
120. ———. 2003. *Scotus and Ockham. Selected Essays*. St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute.
121. Wood, Rega. 1987. "Scotus's Argument for the Existence of God." *Franciscan Studies* no. 47:257-277.