

## Escoto alegórico

*Scotism in New Spain, reception, development and appropriation, XVI to XVIII centuries.*

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**This work is a translation of an extended research paper written in spanish, if you need further information please contact the author through his email address: gabriel.garcia01@upaep.mx**

Duns Scotus (c.1265-1308) was a Franciscan Friar whose works position him as the founder of one of the most influential currents of all the High Middle Ages: Scotism. His work immortalised him as “*The most Distinguished Teacher of the Franciscan School*”<sup>1</sup> due to his contributions in theology, logics, semantics and natural philosophy.

It is important to enounce the scotist contributions to the aforementioned areas; In theology Duns contributed with the “*de rerum principio*”<sup>2</sup> or the “first principle” as a way to prove God’s existence as the main engine of all. In logics his contribution of the “*genus exists*”<sup>3</sup> was a brilliant defence of logical realism by affirming that an object as a subject of proposition will always be true, as opposed to nominalism. In semantics his possible development of “world semantics”<sup>4</sup> was useful to prove the truth through linguistic scenarios. And for uses of this work his contributions to natural philosophy were unique to his times, in this aspect he proposed a natural philosophy determined by the Divine will thus explaining the necessity of God and the absence of morality on its acts.

Due to the radical approximation of Scotus to such matters Scotism was always confronted to Thomism. Historically the confrontation between Thomism and Scotism led to Dominican to defend radically the work of *the Angelical Doctor*<sup>5</sup> from the *Subtle Doctor*, who was mainly defended by franciscan friars. An example of this confrontation are the well-known “*Quaestiones Quodlibetales*” defended by Scotus himself in Paris<sup>6</sup>. All of this is the reason of why this confrontation was taken to the New World: specifically the New Spain, now the Mexican territory, we know this because we have notice of these confrontations in the

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<sup>1</sup> Pijoán, José O.F.M. “*Beato Juan Duns Scoto (1265-1308)*” Santoral Franciscano. In: <https://www.franciscanos.org/santoral/juanduns2.htm#:~:text=A%20Duns%20Escoto%20se%20le.de%20la%20doctrina%20escotista%2C%20etc>.

<sup>2</sup> See: Scotus, Duns. “*Tratado del primer principio*” Los Grandes Pensadores. Editorial Sarpe 1ra. Ed. Madrid, España. 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Dahlstrom, Daniel. *Signification and Logic: Scotus on Universals from a Logical Point of View*” in *Vivarium*, Vol. 18, No. 2. pp. 81-111. Brill. 1980. P. 94

<sup>4</sup> Wyatt, Nicole. “*Did duns scotus invent possible worlds semantics?*” in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* Volume 78, 2000 - Issue 2. Pp 192-212. Taylor and Francis. Reino Unido. Pp. 192.

<sup>5</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas

<sup>6</sup> See: Roberts, H. Francie et B. Noone Timothy. “*JOHN DUNS SCOTUS’ QUODLIBET A BRIEF STUDY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS AND AN EDITION OF QUESTION 16*” BRILL. 2007 En: [https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789047431688/Bej.9789004162884.i-793\\_005.xml?rskey=om1eq9&result=1](https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789047431688/Bej.9789004162884.i-793_005.xml?rskey=om1eq9&result=1)

historical archives of the country. In this work we pretend to search these archives in order to reconstruct the arrival of Scotism and its controversies in the New Spain.

Despite the relevance of Scotism it seems that the research for the Scotistic tradition in America is scarce, this is worrying since lacking research on Scotism in New Spain leaves a gap into the understanding of the Franciscan development in the region, a region where friars developed during more than three centuries. Having this ignorance on the matter leaves incomplete information on the construction of Mexican history of philosophical thought because leaves aside the natural philosophy of franciscans and their conceptions of natural law. In this work we limit the research of the Scotistic tradition in the New Spain through the historical territorial divisions of the “provincias franciscanas” or provinces which were:

- a) *The province of “El Santo Evangelio” founded in 1536*
- b) *The province of “San Francisco de Zacatecas” created in 1603*
- c) *The province of “San José de Yucatán” created in 1559*
- d) *The province of “San Pedro y San Pablo de Michoacán” created in 1565*
- e) *And the Province of “San Diego de México” created in 1599<sup>7</sup>*

Despite being five main provinces it is needed to say that not all of the provinces had a highly academically development, specifically the provinces of San Francisco de Zacatecas and San Pedro y San Pablo were scarce in this development. Indeed, Scotism influenced these regions but not in an academic way, instead in a religious and sacramental way. However the other provinces had an intense activity regarding the study and teaching of scotism, this activity can be divided in two main sections: The first one was the “internal” study of Scotism, this was the teaching of scotus through courses and treatises inside the monasteries of the order. The second division directs us to the “Real y Pontificia Universidad de México” the university, however the reconstruction of this division is quite hard because we do not have an specific course or treaty specifically designed to be taught there, thereby “la cátedra de Escoto” can only be studied to exemplify the political and administrative abuses of the Franciscans and members of the University regarding the position of Duns Scotus as a main character of the definition of the viceregal thought.

The hypothesis that we present to explain this strange ignorance regarding the scotistic tradition in the New Spain falls into two possible reasons:

1.- Just as Franciscans, detractors of scotism created a rhetorical discourse to positionate the Thomistic perspective as the *standard* of scholasticism, specifically the Dominicans were interested in disregarding the Scotistic perspectives; They even developed a “guide” to debate the followers of scotus, this guide was famously known in its time as “las controversias de Rada” or Rada controversies. These efforts were constantly made even while Scotus was alive, and continued until they achieved to make Scotism an inferior doctrine.

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<sup>7</sup> We omitted the provinces of “El Santísimo nombre de Jesús de Guatemala” (1565) and the one of “San Jorge de Nicaragua”(1575) because the development of Scotism was different in this regions. In addition we clarify that the province of “San Diego de México” was not a province with a defined territory but instead an administrative province in the centre of New Spain. In further knowing: González Tristán, Bosco. “*La Orden Franciscana en Nueva España y Filipinas (1577-1624)*” El Colegio de San Luis, A.C. San Luis Potosí, México. 2021. Pp. 74

2.- The second reason points to a contemporary problem where researchers of Scotism in the New Spain have only focused on the political controversies made in “La catedra de Escoto” while ignoring the development of the courses and bibliography that existed in the monasteries.

Yet, our goal is to construct the profile of the Franciscan Scotists regarding the natural law perspective and the legal conceptions that derive from the work of the subtle doctor. This is important because as we will see in this work Scotism profoundly shaped the way of acting of the friars, specifically during the debates of the soul of american inhabitants. Which were the conceptions regarding natural law? And how did they influence the way of acting during the conquest and development of the New Spain? Are the two main questions that we pretend to answer in this work. Answering these questions is necessary, not only because Scotus’ univocity<sup>8</sup> defined an unique sense of natural law but also because through it he developed a sense of “absolute freedom” for all the “viatoris<sup>9</sup>” in the world. All of these principles of Duns show that it is possible to signal a “Franciscan tradition of legal scotism” that later on would develop into the basis for the *postmodern jusnaturalism*<sup>10</sup>. In this sense it must be noted that Scotus argues that pilgrims should be the ones to determine the natural law.

In conclusion, tracing this tradition will help us to increase our understanding into the decisions, mistakes and misconceptions that Franciscans committed during the XVI to XVIII centuries and how it led them to be the most influential order in the social scheme of New Spain.

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<sup>8</sup> Horan, Daniel Fr. O.F.M. “*Postmodernity and Univocity*” Syndicate. 2017. Available in: <https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/postmodernity-and-univocity/>

<sup>9</sup> “Pilgrims”

<sup>10</sup> McAler, Graham. *Erich Przywara and Postmodern Natural Law*” University of Notre Dame. 2019.