

**‘All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted’: A Scotistic Examination of God’s
Freedom, Divine Foreknowledge and the Arbitrary Use of Power**

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Abstract: Following an *Open* conception of Divine Foreknowledge, that holds that man is endowed with genuine freedom and so the future is not definitely determined, it will be claimed that human freedom does not limit the divine power, but rather enhances it and presents us with a barrier against arbitrary use of that power. This reading will be implemented to reconcile a well-known quarrel between two important interpreters of Duns Scotus, Allan B. Wolter and Thomas Williams, each of whom supports a different interpretation of the way God acts according to right reason.

Duns Scotus perceives that the ultimate *raison d'être* of the incarnation lies in God himself, and consequently, creation serves God’s desires. This presents a frightening picture of a God who acts as he pleases. Such a God, who created the world for his own reasons, seems to have no obligation towards creation itself and its creatures. Appalled by such a possibility, some interpreters found refuge in Scotus’s words that ‘whatever God made, you may be sure he made it in accordance with *right reason*,’¹ whereas others rejected any attempt to subjugate God to any kind of objectified necessitation: ‘right actions are right simply because God has freely and contingently commanded them, and wrong actions are wrong simply because God has freely and contingently forbidden them.’² The question arises that, if we cannot introduce any objectified truth or good to limit power, perhaps it is possible to find

Abbreviations: *Lect.* = *Ioannis Duns Scoti, Lectura: Prologue, I-III, ed. Commissio Scotistica, vol. XVII-XXI, Opera Omnia* (Città del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, XVII:1966, XVIII:1982, XIX:1993, XX:2003, XXI:2004). *Ord.* = *Ordinatio, Prologue, I-IV, ed. Commissio Scotistica, vol. I-XIV, Opera omnia* (Città del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, I:1950, II:1950, III:1954, IV:1956, V:1959, VI:1963, VII:1973, VIII:2001, IX:2006, X:2007, XI:2008, XII:2010, XIII:2011, XIV:2013). *Quodl.* = *Quaestiones Quodlibetales [God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions (1975)], trans. Felix Alluntis and Allan Wolter, vol. 12, Ioannis Duns Scoti Doctoris Subtilis Ordinis Minorum Opera omnia* (Lyons: Wadding, 1639). *QM.* = *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, Libri I-IX, vol. 3-4, Opera Philosophica* (Franciscan Institute Publ. St. Bonaventure University, 1997). *Rep. I-A* = John Duns Scot, *Reportatio I-A, Prologue, d. 1-48: Latin text and English translation*, trans. Allan B. Wolter and O. V. Bychkov, vol. 1-2 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2004, 2008).

¹ *Rep. I-A*, d. 44, q. 2.

² Thomas Williams, "A Most Methodical Lover?: On Scotus's Arbitrary Creator," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38, no. 2 (2005): 193-95.

something within the essence of power that might restrict it? Following an *Open* conception of Divine Foreknowledge, that holds that man is endowed with genuine freedom and so the future is not definitely determined, it will be claimed that human freedom does not limit the divine power (section 1), it both enhances it and presents us with a barrier against arbitrary use of that power (section 2). This new reading will be implemented at the end of the study to reconcile a well-known quarrel between two important interpreters of Scotus, Allan B. Wolter and Thomas Williams, each of whom supports a different interpretation of the way God acts according to right reason (section 3).

Theodical thought considers God to be absolutely perfect in every respect. In line with the Augustinian-Anselmian intellectual heritage, God is considered to be all-powerful, all-knowing, absolutely free and good in the most perfect sense. Needless to say, this generates an array of problems and tensions. For example, can an absolutely free and all-powerful God truly execute his power and freedom if he is bound to be good, i.e., not to act in a reprehensible manner, or does it imply that, if God is the most perfect artisan, who planned his creation in the most detailed manner, Man is deprived of choosing freely? These problems and others are truly ancient and resulted in much ridicule of the theology of the perfect being most famous of which is Voltaire's *Candide*. This paper obviously cannot address all the issues and sub-issues that subscribe to perfect being theology. Instead, it will present a short perspective to reconsider the relationship between power, divine foreknowledge and freedom that relies primarily on the role of the will, and it is my hope that the outcome will serve to further examine and answer difficulties that accompany perfect being theology.

Typically, the crux of the problem is an outcome of the fact that perfect being theology attributes to God all the pure perfections in the most perfect way. Pure perfections are 'whatever it is in every respect better to be than not to be,'³ e.g., it is always better to have goodness than not to have goodness, it is always better to have the capacity to think than not to be capable of thinking, and, in contrast, it is not always better to be taller rather than shorter. Without further elaborating on this vicious problem, it can be summed up thus: By demanding that the Supreme Being be perfect in all positive respects, one is forced to assert that God is nothing like us and so to hold that he is indeed good, all-knowing, all-powerful and so forth in the most perfect sense, and that these tensions are somehow resolved.

³ Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion: with the replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 29.

One way to resolve the problem is to say that we need to accept the fact that God is simply not supremely perfect in every respect, so he may indeed be supremely good but limited in his potency, or absolutely free but not as good as we thought him to be, etc. Yet another way is to sacrifice, for example, Man's freedom, in order to defend God's perfect attributes, in this case his freedom and omnipotence. Both options leave theology crippled: In the first we are left with a God whose goodness, freedom and power are utterly different than ours. The second leaves us with an imperfect God so that we need to prioritize and sacrifice one divine attribute to protect the perfection of the other. The last leaves us with damaged humans that are deprived of essential human attributes such as freedom so this results in questionable moral responsibility. Another possibility, that circumvents these impasses, is to accept that the deity is omniscient and omnipotent, but to qualify what is meant by omniscience and omnipotence. As I see it, an open conception of God that qualifies the use of the notions of omniscience and omnipotence, offers both a viable solution to the seeming contradiction between God's perfect attributes and human freedom, and a solution to whether God acts arbitrarily according to *his* right reason.

Since the problem of the arbitrary use of power is a general problem, I would like to say a few words about why the paper remains generally within the domain of Scotus's thought taken more generally. In contemporary discourse, particularly after Auschwitz, there is a tendency to reject the "classical" theological conception of God. For example, there are many who have claimed that there is a need to abandon the historical account that Christ's divine nature is incapable of suffering, because this 'rob[s] the incarnation of most of its religious and moral value.'⁴ In a former study I developed Scotus's 'classical' thought to suggest a solution to this problem that accords with post-Auschwitz theological awareness.⁵ The current study takes that approach further, contending that Scotus's thought is in perfectly harmony with the post-Auschwitz's tendency to accept an *Open* conception of God which also resolves the problem of arbitrary use of power and its relation to values and justice – perhaps the most fundamental problem of our era. Furthermore, by adhering closely to the theological system that spawned this problem, the solution exploits a wide range of Scotistic doctrines, and offers a new holistic perspective to re-evaluate Scotus's conception of freedom as well as providing solutions to disputes that are prevalent among scholars of Scotus.

⁴ Bertrand Brasnett, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (S.P.C.K, 1928), 34.

⁵ Liran Shia Gordon, *Incarnating the Impassible God: A Scotistic Transcendental Account of the Passions of the Soul*, forthcoming.

1. Omniscience, Time and *omniscience*

In the following I will present the *open theists* view briefly as well as a modified account of Scotus's view on divine foreknowledge. Two things should be noted in advance. 1. The discussion of the open view of divine foreknowledge is presented only insofar as it supports the general objective of this study. Consequently, the study will only focus on key points and will not delve into the vast discussion of this position but rather discuss it in a very limited manner. 2. Scotus's position as expressed in his early writings contradicts an *open* interpretation of divine foreknowledge. However, in the vein of other themes of Scotus, particularly his conception of freedom and time, I will argue, as do many other important scholars of Scotus, that there are good reasons not to take Scotus's early positions as his final conclusive opinion on the matter.

John Sanders, a prominent proponent of the open view, explains that '[i]f God foreordains all things, then God is not a risk taker. If God does not control every detail that occurs, then God takes risks.'⁶ Sanders lists five risk models of providence; here I will mention only the last three that are relevant to this study.⁷ 1. The *knowledge-of-all-possibilities* model contends that God knows in advance 'all possible actions that creatures with libertarian freedom may take' and consequently can foresee his responses in advance. 2. Molina's *middle knowledge* model holds that since God understands perfectly what "makes us tick", he can arrange the world in a manner that permits us to choose freely and yet still adhere to God's plan.⁸ 3. *Presentism* contends that there is no knowledge about the future, and consequently 'it cannot be an imperfection not to know what is not in itself knowable - i.e., the future, the not yet real, at least in its free or not yet determined aspects.'⁹ Though Duns Scotus's conception of time seems to support the presentism risk model, it will be claimed that taken together with his doctrine of the Primacy of Christ, the *knowledge-of-all-possibilities* risk model is a better

⁶ John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (InterVarsity Press, 1998), 199-200.

⁷ On the different possible risk taking models see *ibid.*, 195-200. A similar discussion, though with different terminology, is carried in William Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 134-35; James K Beilby and Paul R Eddy, *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (InterVarsity Press, 2009).

⁸ For further reading on modern proponents of Molina's view see e.g. Thomas P Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Cornell University Press, 1998); William L Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1987).

⁹ W Norris Clarke, *God, Knowable and Unknowable* (New York: Fordham University, 1973), 65.

fit with the general Scotistic structure. Through applying this model to Scotus's thought, a solution to the problem of arbitrary use of power will be offered.

However, Scotus seems to argue for a closed conception of God's foreknowledge of future events, since he claims that God has immutable, infallible and determinate knowledge of the future.¹⁰ According to what Scotus conceives as the most plausible explanation, 'the divine intellect sees the truth of a proposition ... made and worked by the will,'¹¹ i.e., the divine intellect sees in an a priori manner the determination of his will; though contingent, this leaves us with a closed future. This, as others have pointed out,¹² seems to contradict Scotus's conception of time as well as Scotus's conception of freedom, the hallmark of Scotistic thought. Some have even claimed, for example Allan Wolter, that the fact that this treatment is missing from Scotus's mature *Ordinatio*, suggests that it is possible that he was not satisfied with it.¹³ Since I consider Scotus's treatment of time and his conception of freedom as more solid and central to his thought than his early treatment of divine foreknowledge, Scotus's claim of a definite knowledge of the future will not be accepted and will be qualified to meet the *Open* reading of Scotus.¹⁴

In a previous study I discussed the relation between God's eternity and time and specifically contrasted the views of Aquinas and Duns Scotus.¹⁵ Just as the center of a circle views its circumference simultaneously, so Aquinas sees God's eternity as viewing all events simultaneously in a one big Now of all past-present-future events. Like Aquinas, Scotus maintains that the relation between the *Now* of eternity and the fleeting *now* is

¹⁰ See *Lect. I*, d. 39, n. 17 (XVII: 484) as well as *Rep. I-A*, d. 38, n. 35 (II: 457). For further reading on Scotus' actual position see John Duns Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom: John Duns Scotus Lectura I 39*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, trans. Anthonie Jaczn Vos, et al., The New Synthese Historical Library (Dordrecht ; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994); Allan B Wolter, "Scotus' Paris Lectures on God's Knowledge of Future Events," in *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press 1990); Eef Dekker, "Does Duns Scotus Need Molina? On Divine Foreknowledge and Co-causality," in *John Duns Scotus (1265/6-1308). Renewal of philosophy. Acts of the third symposium organized by the Dutch society for medieval philosophy medium aevum (May 23 and 24, 1996), elementa* (Amsterdam : Atlanta Rodopi, 1998).

¹¹ *Lect. I*, d. 39, n. 65 (XVII: 501). Translation from Duns Scotus, *Contingency and Freedom*, 146.

¹² See for example William Lane Craig, "John Duns Scotus on God's Foreknowledge and Future Contingents," *Franciscan studies* 47 (1987); Dekker, "Does Duns Scotus Need Molina?."

¹³ Wolter, "Scotus' Paris Lectures on God's Knowledge of Future Events," 286.

¹⁴ Sebastian Day, after stating that the task of the historian of philosophy 'is not to construct but to re-construct to re-present as faithfully as possible the mind of the author he is expounding,' explains that Scotus falls among the kind of writers whose work remained incomplete, whose chronology is not completely known and whose work contains contradictions, "apparent or real". See Sebastian J Day, *Intuitive Cognition: A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics* (Franciscan Institute, 1947), 44-45.

¹⁵ See Liran Shia Gordon, "On the Co-Nowness of Time and Eternity: a Scotistic Perspective," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* (2016).

analogous to the relation between the center of the circle and its circumference whereby the first is eternal insofar as it is immobile, and the latter is present for an instant. However, unlike Aquinas he maintains that the difference between their natures does not imply that the whole of time is given to God (or the center) simultaneously in an instant.¹⁶ Following Scotus's idea that God co-causes in every creature's act,¹⁷ it was argued that foreknowledge of the future is impossible since 'that which does not exist, cannot coexist with anything.'¹⁸ That study on time reduced Scotus's co-causation theory to a theory of co-willing. In such co-willing God co-wills in an a priori manner whereby creatures act in consonance with freedom in an a posteriori manner. One important claim that follows from this speculation, that seems to support the *presentism* risk model, is that the notion of divine a priori knowledge of the future is groundless:

[A]ny question regarding the truth value of future contingents, based upon the claim that the truth value of propositions are immutable, is untenable. This is because existential truths presuppose a posteriori determination act, i.e., their pastness.¹⁹

Whereas essential truths are true in regard to all possible worlds and are known in an a priori manner, *truths of existence* are true in an a posteriori manner to a specific contingent world and a specific setting. These truths fall under the category of the will insofar as their determination as true is contingent and could have being otherwise.²⁰ Since the distinction between past-present-future refers to the order of existence, it follows that the truthfulness of whether something will exist or not must fall under the final determination of the will. This contingent knowledge can now be differentiated into (1) contingent and determined and (2) contingent and undetermined. Aquinas argues for the first alternative, teaching that God contingently determined all events that ground divine foreknowledge. But such

¹⁶ See Scotus refutation in *Lect.* I, d. 39, nn. 23-30 (XVII: 486-88).

¹⁷ See for example *Ord.* II, dd. 34-37, q. 5, nn. 117-18 (VIII: 416-17) and *Ord.* I, d. 3, n. 496 (III:293-94). See also William A Frank, "Duns Scotus on autonomous freedom and divine co-causality," *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 2 (1992): 154-55; Wolter, "Scotus' Paris Lectures on God's Knowledge of Future Events," 322-23.

¹⁸ 'co-existing with any place (in any "now") unless the place is in existence. ... for the same reason eternity will not be the reason for co-existing with anything except with what is existent: and this is what is argued, that "that which does not exist, cannot coexist with anything", because "to co-exist" speaks of a real relation, but a relation is not real whose foundation is not real.' *Ord.* I, dd. 38-39, Appendix A, *Opinio Secunda*, [9] (VI:409).

¹⁹ Gordon, "On the Co-Nowness of Time and Eternity," 40. Craig reaches a similar conclusion: 'Space-time is not for him a timelessly existing "block"—future space-time positions not only do not now exist; they do not exist, period. ... it follows that God cannot have knowledge of future contingents.' Craig, "John Duns Scotus on God's Foreknowledge and Future Contingents," 102.

²⁰ For further discussion on *Truths of the Existence* see Liran Shia Gordon, "On Truth, the Truth of Existence, and the Existence of Truth: A Dialogue with the Thought of Duns Scotus," *Philosophy & Theology* 27, no. 2 (2015).

foreknowledge is obviously attained by sacrificing humans' genuine freedom. In my qualified interpretation of Scotus, I support the second alternative according to which existence is determined only in an a posteriori manner, and consequently an a priori knowledge of the future is simply impossible.²¹

I hold that Molina's *middle knowledge* view,²² according to which God can see, with certainty, creatures' free decisions, contradicts the very essence of Scotus's conception of freedom that holds that free action, by definition, can elicit opposite effects without necessity.²³ I will call Aquinas's all-future-knowing capacity *Omniscient*. Although such divine foreknowledge is impossible, as *presentism* argues, I claim that God does hold all-knowing power in terms of what is knowable, and, that, I will call *omniscient*. In contrast to Aquinas, it can be said that if God's power and thinking capacities are the most perfect, it follows that although the future is by definition unknowable, which makes him not *Omniscient*, he can have perfect knowledge of all possible future outcomes. God is *omniscient* in a qualified sense insofar as he has disjunctive divine knowledge of all possible futures. Thus, as opposed to the impossible sense of *Omniscient*, we can speak of God as all-knowing insofar as he knows essential knowledge, actual knowledge of what actually came about, and disjunctive contingent knowledge of all possible sets of events. Like Richard Creel and Peter Geach I hold that God's disjunctive knowledge of all possible sets of events, that he

²¹ Scotus's opposition to Aquinas's view can be exemplified in his consideration of the manner by which Christ understands. The main problem Scotus highlights is that innate intelligible species, which Aquinas uses to explain Christ's understanding, do not represent things in their existence, and so one needs an alternative kind of cognition to attain contingent knowledge of things. This he calls intuitive cognition that grasps 'a thing insofar as it is present in its own existence.' *Lect. II, d. 3, p. 3, q. 1, n. 285 (XVI:338-39). Ord. III, d. 14, n. 113 (IX:468-69)*. Furthermore, and without elaborating, this seems to answer Scotus's problem of divine immutability and support the rejection Scotus's view of divine foreknowledge presented in *Lect. I, d. 39*.

²² Luis De Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 168-70. David Basinger presents different views that reject definite knowledge of future outcomes, what he calls nonparadox indeterminists. As I see it, Molina's doctrine of *middle knowledge*, promoted primarily by Craig, holds that God knows the manner each creatures will act as a free agent in every situation and so, though creatures act freely, God has perfect divine foreknowledge. Craig writes: 'Since [a God with middle knowledge] knows what any free creature would do in any situation, he can, by creating the appropriate situations, bring it about that creatures will achieve his ends and purposes and that they will do so freely.... In his infinite intelligence, God is able to plan a world in which his designs are achieved by creatures acting freely.' Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*, 135. I consider this view nonsensical. Either one has freedom and then one by definition acts in a contingent manner, or not. Scotus holds that there is one case whereby something, though it acts according to freedom, acts out of necessity, and that is the spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Son. But this necessitation is a product of the infinity of the divine essence and its power. Here, in the case of creaturely affairs, such free necessitation is utterly groundless. See David Basinger, "Divine Control and Human Freedom: Is Middle Knowledge the Answer?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993): 57-59.

²³ *Quaest Metaphys.*, Bk. IX, ch. 15, nn. 21-22 (4:680).

considered in advance, prevents any *essential* risk-taking on God's part, for God can navigate the world in any direction in which he preordained it regardless of man's choices. This does not limit Man's freedom, it simply means that Man's choices do not have power over God's goals.²⁴ There is thus nothing in Man's freedom that limits God's freedom, unless God only allows the world to be exactly what he wants it to be. But then there would be no reason to endow Man with freedom. The Jewish tradition summarizes this outcome in a famous phrase: 'All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted.'²⁵

This reading puts much more emphasis on the divine will and the creatures' wills. The fact that God's knowledge of the future is only disjunctive turns him into an active agent who constantly steers the future to wherever he destined it. This seems to contradict the words of Scotus who explains in his discussion regarding the Primacy of Christ that:

I say that the incarnation of Christ was not foreseen as something occasioned [by sin], but that it was foreseen by God from all eternity and immediately as a good more proximate to the end. ... Hence this is the order followed in God's prevision. *First*, God understood himself as the highest good. In the *second* instant he understood all creatures. In the *third* [instant] he predestined some to glory and grace, and concerning some he had a negative act by not predestining. In the *fourth* [instant] he foresaw that all these would fall in Adam. In the *fifth* [instant] he preordained and foresaw the remedy—how they would be redeemed through the Passion of his Son, so that, like all the elect, Christ in the flesh was foreseen and predestined to grace and glory before Christ's Passion was foreseen as a medicine against the fall, just as a physician wills the health of a man before he wills the medicine to cure him.²⁶

This paragraph seems to support a position that is known as *consequent necessity* which contradicts my reading. Feinberg explains *consequent necessity* as follows:

²⁴ Peter Geach presents a similar view, picturing God as a master chess player whose 'knowledge of the game already embraces all the possible variant lines of play.' See Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil: the Stanton Lectures 1971-2* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 58. A similar view can be found in Richard E Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An essay in philosophical theology* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 20-21. See also Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 196-97. William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), v; "An Open Theist Theodicy of Natural Evil," in *Molinism: the contemporary debate*, ed. Ken Perszyk (Oxford University Press, 2011); Sanders, *The God Who Risks*.

²⁵ Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot), 3.15

²⁶ *Ord.* III (suppl.), d. 19; cod. Assisi com. 137, fol. 161v; ed. Vivès (Parisiis, 1894) XIV, 714. Translated by Juniper B Carol, *Why Jesus Christ? Thomistic, Scotistic and Conciliatory Perspectives* (Manassas, Virginia: Trinity Communications, 1986), 124-25.

[O]nce certain choices are made (by God or whomever) certain things follow as a consequence. But before these choices are made, no inherent necessity dictates what must be chosen. For example, it was not absolutely necessary that Adam sin in the sense that there was no other Adam God could have created. Consequently, it was not absolutely necessary that God decide to send Christ as redeemer. However, once having made the choice to create Adam as sinning, it was necessary for God to send Christ as redeemer.²⁷

Though Scotus words seem to support Feinberg's view, I hold that the same paragraph can be read in a manner that supports the *knowledge-of-all-possibilities* risk model. This same paragraph can be read not as a prescription of the specific world that God intended to create but rather as the description of a specific set of possibilities which brings together God's intentions, Man's choices, and God's reactions. But this is but a subset of the infinite possible outcomes that were conceived beforehand by God and which happen to characterize our world:

1. Divine Necessitation: God understands himself as the highest good.²⁸
2. Logical Limitation: God understands all creatures, i.e., he reflects not just the creatures as ideas in his mind but all the possible sets that do not include logical contradictions.
3. Divine Limitation:
 - a. Within this set of possible sets he observes those whom he elects to glory and grace.
 - b. To the rest, whom he did not elect to glory and grace, God 'had a negative act by not predestining.'²⁹
4. Human Choice: Within that set he discerns the possibility of the Fall.
5. God's Reaction to Human Choice: Within that Fall he discerns the possibility that Christ, who was predestined to be incarnated, regardless of which set comes about, will be crucified and so will pay for the sin of Adam.

²⁷ John Feinberg, "God Ordains all things," in *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom*, ed. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 23-24.

²⁸ See e.g. *Ord.* I, d. 10, nn. 47-49 (IV:359-361).

²⁹ In tertio praedestinavit aliquos ad gloriam et gratiam, et circa aliquos habuit actum negativum, non praedestinando.

However, we could easily think of a different possible subset whereby:

4*. Man did not Fall

and consequently

5*. God did not send Christ to be sacrificed on the Cross.

While (3a) holds that God predestined some to be elected to glory and grace, (3b) holds that others were not predestined for glory and grace by a negative act. (3b) seems to support the open future interpretation since it maintains that God willingly determined the rest of humanity not to be predestined. This reading could reconcile Scotus's open conception of time with what seems to be a closed conception of the future. As we recall, Scotus explains God's infallible and determinate knowledge of the future by saying that 'the divine intellect sees the truth of a proposition ... made and worked by the will.'³⁰ Scotus's subtle distinction between those whom God 'predestined ... to glory and grace' and those on whom 'he performed a negative act by not predestining' (et circa aliquos habuit actum negativum, non praedestinando), offers an interpretation of some future events that were willingly determined not to be determined. This qualified reading, I believe, also avoids the problem of immutability.³¹ However (3b) can also be interpreted to support the contrary view that their predestination takes place at a lower level of God's plan. Also, it should be noted why (3) comes before (4). Scotus makes it perfectly clear that in the order of intension, according to which the order of creation is derived, Christ, and afterward the elects, are intended and predestined before all else.³² As a result, God sanctions the subset where Christ is incarnated, afterward he limits the possibilities for those where the elects are to receive glory and grace, and only afterward subdivides in his mind those worlds where man has fallen and those

³⁰ *Lect. I*, d. 39, n. 65 (XVII:501).

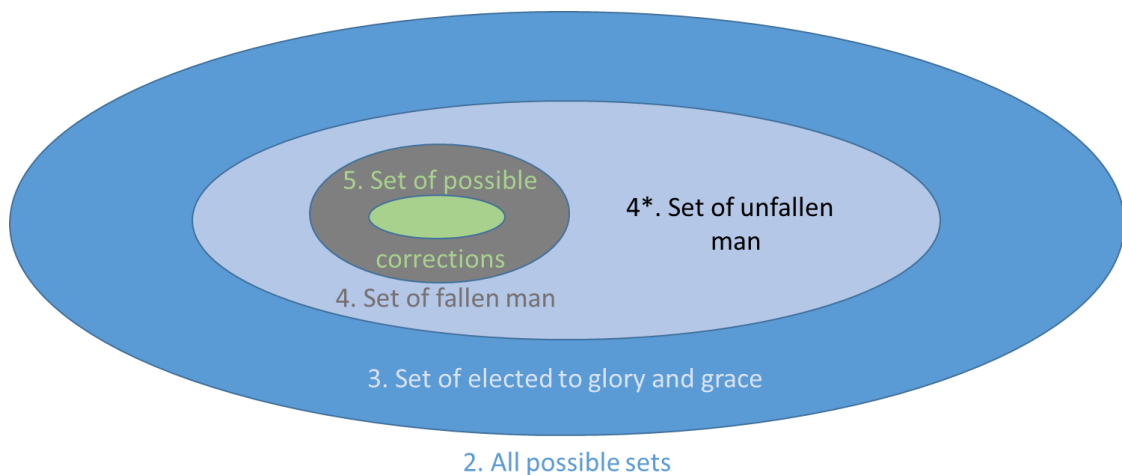
³¹ Scotus explains that it cannot be that God attains new knowledge, for this contradicts divine foreknowledge 'because there is nothing in him that is new - otherwise he would be changed.' *Rep. I*, d. 38, n. 36 (2008:457). As I showed in my treatment of divine impassibility, it is possible to maintain that God can have passions and yet this does not imply that this passion compels him to act; in a similar way it can be claimed that, in determinedly not determining, any future and contingent determination does not imply a real change in God. Following a similar line of argument by Aquinas, who explains in ST 1.19.7 that '[t]he will of God is altogether immutable. But notice in this connection that changing one's will is different from willing a change in things,' Morris explains that 'there would be no change in God's intentions, just a change with regard to which of his immemorial intentions he would in fact enact. And this would be wholly due to their conditional form, not to any change of mind on God's part.' See Thomas V. Morris, "Properties, Modalities, and God," *The Philosophical Review* 93, no. 1 (1984): 48.

³² '[H]e who wills in an orderly manner would seem to intend first the glory of the one he wishes to be near the end, and thus he wills glory for this soul [of Christ] before he wills glory for any other soul.' *Ord. III*, d. 7, q. 3, n. 58 (IX:284-85). Translated by Carol, *Why Jesus Christ?*, 122-23.

where he has not. In his discussion regarding the primacy of Christ, Scotus explains that Christ's crucifixion is only perceived as a possible reaction if man were to Fall:³³

I declare, however, that the Fall was not the cause of Christ's predestination. In fact, even if no man or angel had fallen, nor any man but Christ were to be created, Christ would still have been predestined this way... . If the Fall were the reason for Christ's predestination, it would follow that the greatest work of God [the Incarnation] was mostly occasioned, because the glory of all is not as great in intensity as was the glory of Christ; and it seems very unreasonable that God would have left so great a work [i.e., the Incarnation] undone on account of a good deed performed by Adam, for example, if he had not sinned.³⁴

Thus we can conclude that God did not know that Christ would be sent to the Cross, for he did not know that man would Fall, and all that this signifies. But he could envision such a possibility coming about. As such, what at first seemed to be a preordained plan is simply one of the contingencies that God saw but could not know that it would happen. However, once Adam willingly ate the forbidden fruit, God simply executed the predetermined plan in place if such a scenario were to take place, i.e., the crucifixion of Christ. The following diagram exemplifies both how hierarchical stipulation limits the set of possibilities and yet permits freedom of choice:



³³ And in this respect, to answer theological concerns, the immaculate conception of Mary, though predestined, is contingent on different historical outcomes, and so is responsive to whether or not Adam's sin was to happen and be transmitted.

³⁴ *Opus Parisiense*, Lib. III, d. 7, q. 4; ed. Balic, 13-15. Translated by Carol in *Why Jesus Christ*, 126.

By ordering his priorities God can “foresee” how to work out whatever will happen. By so doing God can, on the one hand, preserve the free nature of creation while at the same time plan, as an active God, steer the world so that the freedom of the creatures and the contingent nature of creation does not jeopardize the purpose of creation.

As for God's knowledge, he is not *Omniscient* insofar as knowing which outcome will take place, but he is *omniscient* insofar as he knows all possible outcomes and the measures he needs to take to steer the world towards whatever goals it was predestined to carry out. Insofar as God's freedom is concerned, he attains whatever goals he intended to attain in his creation. With regard to God's omnipotence, no event forces him to act against his will for he has foreseen all possible events and through his continuous acts of will, he makes sure that only sanctioned world scenarios are permitted. That is to say that all possibilities that do actually come about are in accordance with God's will and power. When God sent his beloved son to redeem Man, this did not happen in a manner that forced God to act but rather as part of a contingency plan that he foresaw and sanctioned in advance as a possible action plan.

It can be said that the capacity to keep diverse infinite sets of possibilities for whatever God intends only intensifies the meaning of omnipotence. For a lecturer who can only deliver one lecture, and who requires a very specific kind of audience and setting, is much less powerful than a flexible lecturer who can adjust his lecture perfectly to accommodate an audience and setting that has not been predetermined, but nonetheless perfectly gets across the important point he set in advance. And finally, insofar as man's freedom is concerned, this retains man's capacity to shape history in an utterly contingent and yet limited manner. Moreover, and as we will see later, such an ever-active will of God has some interesting implications for our understanding of God's goodness. Using the hierarchical viewpoint, we can see that the freedom that God grants creatures does not limit his omnipotence in any respect, on the contrary, it intensifies it. For while my freedom is limited by your freedom, our freedom not only does not limit God's freedom, it intensifies his omnipotence.

2. Whatever God Made

It is at this point that we can start to address the problem of arbitrary use of power. The solution presented above for divine foreknowledge sheds new light on Scotus's notorious

alteration of the distinction between *potentia dei absoluta* and *potentia dei ordinata*.³⁵ Whereas, prior to Scotus, the distinction was understood to differentiate between this world as it was actually ordained versus the set of possible worlds out of which God picked this one,³⁶ Scotus merged it with a legal distinction between a rightful act according to the ordained settings, and the power to act absolutely, i.e., to transcend the ordained law and to act according to what does not hold a contradiction.³⁷ Let us observe Scotus's formulation:

In every agent acting intelligently and voluntarily that can act in conformity with an upright or just law but does not have to do so of necessity, one can distinguish between its ordained power and its absolute power. The reason is that either it can act in conformity with some right and just law, and then it is acting according to its ordained power ... or else it can act beyond or against such a law, and in this case its absolute power exceeds its ordained power. And therefore it is not only in God, but in every free agent that can either act in accord with the dictates of a just law or go

³⁵ For further reading on this well studied topic see: Carl Feckes, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Gabriel Biel und ihre Stellung innerhalb der nominalistischen Schule* (Aschendorff, 1925); Heinrich Grzondziel, *Die Entwicklung der Unterscheidung zwischen der potentia Dei absoluta und der potentia Dei ordinata von Augustin bis Alexander von Hales* (Druckerei Rosinsky, 1926); Paul Vignaux, *Justification et prédestination au XIVe siècle : Duns Scot, Pierre d'Auriol, Guillaume d'Occam, Grégoire de Rimini* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1934); Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); William J Courtenay, "The Dialectic of Omnipotence in the High and Late Middle Ages," in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tamar Rudavsky (Springer, 1985); *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (1990); Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1986); Hester Goodenough Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology at Oxford, 1300-1350*, vol. 81, *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2004); Gijsbert Van Den Brink, *Almighty God: A Study of the Doctrine of Divine Omnipotence*, vol. 7 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993); Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (University of California Press, 1993); Eugenio Randi, "La vergine e il papa: Potentia Dei absoluta e plenitudo potestatis papale nel XIV secolo," *History of Political Thought* 5 (1984); E Randi, "A Scotist Way of Distinguishing between God's Absolute and Ordained Powers," in *From Ockham to Wyclif ed. A. Hudson and M. Wilks* (New York: Oxford, 1987).

³⁶ The traditional view can be exemplified in Aquinas: 'For even as the divine goodness is made manifest through these things that are and through this order of things, so could it be made manifest through other creatures and another order. Therefore the divine will without prejudice to his goodness, justice and wisdom, can extend to other things besides those which he has made. ... It is clear then that God absolutely can do otherwise than he has done. Since, however, he cannot make contradictories to be true at the same time, it can be said ex suppositione that God cannot make other things besides those he has made.' *De Potentia Dei*, q. 1, a. 5. Internet Version. Translated by the English Dominican Fathers Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952, reprint of 1932

³⁷ *Ord. I, d. 44, n. 7 (VI:366)*: 'For God can do anything that is not self-contradictory or act in any way that does not include a contradiction (and there are many such ways he could act); and then he is said to be acting according to his absolute power.' More on the development of the legal usage of the distinction see Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition*, ch. 2.

beyond or against that law, that one distinguishes between absolute and ordained power; therefore, the jurists say that someone can act *de facto*, that is, according to his absolute power, or *de jure*, that is, according to his ordained legal power.³⁸

Prima facie, it seems that Scotus opened the floodgates to the ultimate capricious God who acts as he pleases and changes the rules whenever he likes and for whatever reasons suit him. Moreover, he applied it univocally to both God and Man. It is for this reason that many point the finger at Scotus, holding his new formulation as responsible for the collapse of the synthesis between Christian theology and Graeco-Arab philosophy.³⁹ In the following I will attempt not only to argue that such a distinction is required to support God's *omniscience* but also that this distinction is required to maintain Scotus's claim that rationality itself is perfected only at the level of the will.⁴⁰

Scotus was very much aware of the seeming capriciousness of the byproduct of his alteration and so he immediately qualified it. Scotus explained that acting in an absolute manner does not mean acting as one pleases but rather in a manner that reinstates a new order and in accordance with one's power to replace the law with an alternative one. In *Ordinatio* I, d. 44 Scotus writes:

But when that upright law—according to which an agent must act in order to act ordinately—is not in the power of that agent, then its absolute power cannot exceed its ordained power in regard to any object without it acting disorderly or inordinately. ... But whenever the law and its rectitude are in the power of the agent, so that the law is right only because it has been established, then the agent can freely order things otherwise than this right law dictates and still can act orderly, because he can establish another right or just law according to which he may act orderly. (nn. 4-5) ... And

³⁸ *Ord.* I, d. 44, n. 3, (VI:363-64). Wolter's translation from *Will and Morality*, 254-55, taken from Courtenay's *Volition and Capacity*. Similar and less elaborated version can be found in the same place at his *Lectura*.

³⁹ See for example the unfavorable opinion in Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition*.

⁴⁰ What constitutes a natural act is that 'when the agent and patient meet in the way appropriate to the potency in question, the one must act and the other be acted upon.' (*Quodl.* q. 16, n. 13 (383)) A free action can elicit opposite effects without necessity whenever there is no impediment between the agent and that which it acts upon since it 'has of itself the ability to elicit contrary actions as regards the same thing.' (*QM IX*, ch.15, n. 73 (IV:698)). For more on that See Cruz González-Ayesta, "Scotus's Interpretation of Metaphysics 9.2: On the Distinction between Nature and Will," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 81 (2009): 218. Ayesta first outlines the different senses Scotus uses nature in his writings. See *Ord.* IV, d. 43, q. 4, n. 2; *Rep.* I, d. 10, q. 3, n. 54 (I: 403-04); *Quodl.*, q. 16, n. 13 (382-84); *QM IX*, q. 15, nn. 21-22 (IV:680-81); See also Tobias Hoffmann, "The Distinction between Nature and Will in Duns Scotus," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-âge* 66 (1999).

therefore such an agent can act otherwise, so that he establishes another upright law.

(n. 8)

The ability to legislate, postpone or alter a law is not given absolutely but rather is equivalent to the degree of power one holds in this ordained world. Thus, one who is governed cannot alter the laws that govern him. Similarly, a ruler who has the ordained right to legislate, does not have the right to alter divine laws. God, as the creator of all, has, by definition, the capacity to act absolutely. Man's capacity to act absolutely does not limit God's power since his capacity to act absolutely is limited to his power, and Man's power, by definition, is subjected to God who can act absolutely in a far wider manner. Consequently, whatever men's absolute power allows them to do, this does not jeopardize God's ability to attain his goals.

Returning to our picture of a creator God who is not *Omniscient* but only *omniscient* and who creates a contingent world with creatures who enjoy freedom, the distinction between *potentia dei absoluta* and *potentia dei ordinata* becomes not only an essential tool to redirect the world toward God's intended goal but brings this distinction into accord with Scotus's contention that rationality reaches its perfection only at the level of the will. Whereas the common analysis pictures God as a monarch who reacts and legislates new law in response to whatever happens, and so might or might not be capricious, the *omniscient* God that was presented above pictures a skillful God who masters freedom to such a degree that it allows him to govern a creation which is free and at the same time does not limit his power or will. Acting absolutely does not represent capriciousness but rather the application of a rational contingency plan. God might not have known in advance that the world would have come to this state, but as supremely rational and all-powerful, he has foreseen it as a possibility and come up with the most rational measure to steer the world to whatever goals he intended for it in advance.

I believe this approach puts us in a better position to reconcile the dispute regarding Scotus's words that 'whatever God made, you may be sure he made it in accordance with *right reason*.'⁴¹ Scholars such as Wolter⁴² and Ingham⁴³ insist that Scotus's statement makes it clear that God is not a capricious God but that there are basic moral and non-arbitrary

⁴¹ *Rep.* I, d. 44, q. 2

⁴² Allan B. Wolter, "The Unshredded Scotus: A Response to Thomas Williams," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (2003).

⁴³ Mary Elizabeth Ingham, "Scotus and the Moral Order," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (1993).

features which express the integrative and harmonious coherence of moral acts.⁴⁴ Other scholars such as Williams reject the objective character of *right reason* and accuse them of supporting a Thomistic interpretation of Scotus.⁴⁵ Williams claims that, for Scotus, ‘right actions are right simply because God has freely and contingently commanded them, and wrong actions are wrong simply because God has freely and contingently forbidden them.’⁴⁶ Williams is right with regard to the goals and reasons for God creating the world. God created the world for himself and his will is its groundless ground. However, when one takes seriously the idea that God created the world for a reason, it is irrational to think that he regulates the world capriciously. It is more reasonable to think of such an *omniscient* God as one who regulates and interferes in a manner that simply steers the world towards these predetermined goals. *Right reason* simply expresses the appropriate premeditated action which is required in specific settings. In the case of an *omniscient* God, an act in accordance with *right reason* simply effects, in the most suitable manner, the corrections that are needed to steer the world towards whatever goals God predestined for it. These corrections, though preconsidered in advance, are implemented only in accordance with the specific outcome that results from the fact that Man can choose freely. I believe this fits well with Scotus's explanation of *right reason* in *Quodlibet* 18:

The moral goodness of an act consists in its having all that the agent's *right reason* declares must pertain to the act or the agent in acting. ... It is clear then how many conditions right reason sets down, for according to the description given above, to be perfectly good, an act must be faultless on all counts. Hence Dionysius⁴⁷ declares: “Good requires that everything about the act be right, whereas evil stems from any single defect.” “Everything,” he explains, includes all the circumstances.⁴⁸

It is interesting to compare this interpretation of *right reason* with Leibniz's theory of the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz's God compares and measures all possible worlds and consequently picks the one world which is the best. Without elaborating what makes one

⁴⁴ ‘[J]ust as beauty is not some absolute quality in a beautiful body, but a combination of all that is in harmony with such a body (such as size, figure, and color), and a combination of all aspects (that pertain to all that is agreeable to such a body and are in harmony with one another), so the moral goodness of an act is a kind of decoration it has, including a combination of due proportion to all to which it should be proportioned (such as potency, object, end, time, place and manner), and this especially as right reason dictates.’ *Ord.* I, d. 17, n. 62 (V:163-164). In *Will and Morality*. See also Ingham, 137.

⁴⁵ Williams, “A Most Methodical Lover?,” 193-95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Ps. Dionysius, *De div. nomin.*, c.4, 30: PG 3, 806; *Dionysiaca* 1, 298-99.

⁴⁸ *Quodl.* 18.8, 18.16 (400, 404)

world better than another, typically depicted as a sort of maximum between simplicity and reality,⁴⁹ such a picture reduces freedom to that one moment when God, as it were, chooses the best world. The picture I presented of God as a perpetual co-causer/willer of reality considers freedom in the most radical sense. Nothing is determined at any moment for creatures to continuously and freely co-steer the world. This presents the *omniscient* God with the need not only to compare all the worlds to one another before creation and to pick just one of them, but rather to consider in an a priori manner every fork at every moment of every possible set in order to conclude what is the best manner to act in any circumstances.⁵⁰ But whereas Leibniz's God knew perfectly well that he picked the best world, God does not know whether his local action will necessarily bring about the best result for he only can project what the most plausible outcome will be. For man might afterwards pick an implausible course of action that could put God's former action (*a1*) in a less favorable light and to which an alternative action (*a2*) turns out to be more suitable. But God could not have known that and his action is taken not according to what will happen but rather according to what is the most reasonable to do. In any case, this should not bother us much for the *omniscient* God has already taken into account such a possibility and the appropriate alteration that is required in such a case.

This view also protects us from *Euthyphro's* second horn as it is paraphrased for our needs: 'does God love and command what is good because it is good, or is it good because God loves and commands it?'⁵¹ For while God's goals of creation remain hidden to our reason, and though the circumstances of each scenario are totally different, the algorithm which *right reason* uses must be the same, for otherwise right reason would turn into right reasons that would face God with the reverse of a *Buridan's Ass* dilemma: he would starve to death not because he did not have a sufficient reason to turn to the left or to the right, but rather because he had too many sufficient reasons that he could not pick the right one. While right reason does not determine its end, it is rational with regard to the algorithm it applies which measures how good the different alternatives are with respect to the plausibility that such a

⁴⁹ E.g. in his chapter on "The Maximization of Perfection and Harmony" (ch. 2), Donald Rutherford explains that 'in bringing into existence the best of all possible worlds, God is first and foremost motivated to create that world which contains the greatest metaphysical goodness, in the sense of the greatest perfection or "quantity of essence".' Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25.

⁵⁰ This requires a computation capacity which is intensively uncountable infinite.

⁵¹ See for instance John Haldane, "Voluntarism and Realism in Medieval Ethics," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 15, no. 1 (1989): 39.

course would bring us closer to the desired goals and other circumstantial reasons. Though numerous numbers of measuring functions can be brought in, for example, in which one gives more points to having red eyes and others to those who have yellow teeth, all must give an accounting to one principle of measuring which is grounded in the essence of quantity. Thus, whether God would prefer in advance a measure that under specific setting prefers yellow teeth, once he created the world, he would have to stick with the same algorithm for all possible sets, for otherwise would we return to the opposite Buridan's Ass problem. God, acting in an absolute manner, may change the laws; however this does not represent arbitrariness but rather a rational and well-calculated attempt to attain predetermined goals. One may say 'but what about the ultimate Good that God desires?' and I would reply: So long as God's preferences for his goals do not sabotage the possibility of having a stable algorithm which dictates *right reason*, then let God choose whatever he wants. The fact that the change is a product of rational and unchangeable algorithmic calculations, in which the principle of measuring is invariant, pretty much removes the sting and brings comfort and stability as against fear of groundless changes. To summarize our state in the world, as creatures who do not know what God wants yet do know that a solid rationality governs God's action in the world, the following can be said: Let the child eat whatever he wants so long I can have my meal.

3. Response to Thomas Williams

In my efforts to evade Euthyphro's second horn, I would like to conclude this study by confronting several disturbing outcomes that result from Thomas Williams' powerful analysis of Duns Scotus's volition theory. In contrast to Wolter's interpretation, Williams claims that God is like an utterly unrestricted legislator who determines right and wrong utterly freely and so the act of the will cannot be rationalized in any external manner.⁵² Supporting his claim, he quotes Scotus who said that 'there is no cause why the will willed, except that the will is the will, just as there is no cause why heat heats, except that heat is heat. There is no prior cause.'⁵³ Here are three consequences of Williams' arguments that I will try to tackle:

⁵² Williams address the rational that support Wolter's claim in Thomas Williams, "The Unmitigated Scotus," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 80, no. 2 (1998): 178-79.

⁵³ *Ord. I, d. 8, p. 2, n. 299 (IV:324-25)*

1. Whereas as we humans try to adjust and adequate our inner desires externally to the divine will, God's will has no external measure, it *is* the measure. For that reason, Williams holds that while humans possess two kinds of will, the *affectio commodi* (affection for advantage) which represents the primary self-interested desire of the will and the *affectio iustitiae* (affection for justice) which is 'the first regulator of the *affectio commodi*,'⁵⁴ it seems that God does not have *affectio iustitiae*, he simply does as he pleases. According to Williams' reading 'God would turn out to have an *affectio commodi*, not an *affectio iustitiae*.'⁵⁵ Williams illustrates this outcome in the following wonderful example:

Suppose I am a rather high-minded, Platonistically-inclined philosopher. My sole allegiance is to philosophy; as I see it, my only obligation is to seek out and make known the truth with all the fervor I can command. So I have no obligations to my students as such. ... Suppose further that I can carry out this obligation no matter how I treat my students. Strictly speaking, then, I have no duties to my students; I cannot be unjust to them, since I owe them nothing.⁵⁶

2. As against Wolter's position, whose position is supported in Scotus's words that 'Whatever God made, you may be sure he made it in accordance with right reason,'⁵⁷ Williams quotes another place that supports his claim that right reason is determined solely by God's will:

A free appetite ... is right... in virtue of the fact that it wills what God wills it to will. Hence, those two *affectiones*, the *affectio commodi* and the *affectio iustitiae*, are regulated by a superior rule, which is the divine will, and neither of them is the rule for the other. And because the *affectio commodi* on its own is perhaps immoderate, the other [that is, the *affectio iustitiae*] is bound to moderate it, because it is bound to

⁵⁴ *Ord.* II, d. 6, q. 2, nn. 49-51 (VIII:49-51). For further reading see Peter King, "Scotus's Rejection of Anselm," in *Johannes Duns Scotus 1308-2008: investigations into his philosophy Quadruple Congress*, ed. Hannes Möhle, et al. (Münster; St. Bonaventure, NY: Aschendorff Verlag; Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010), 368-70.

⁵⁵ Williams, "A Most Methodical Lover?," 175.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176, 186.

⁵⁷ *Rep.* I, d. 44, q. 2

be under a superior rule, and that rule ... wills that the *affectio commodi* be moderated by the other.⁵⁸

3. According to Williams, who holds that right reason is utterly unregulated and determined solely by God, and that the *affectio iustitiae* is not a cognitive faculty, it follows that man has no rational means to know what is right and what is wrong. Instead, Williams holds that though we do not know what is right and what is wrong, the *affectio iustitiae* brings us into an 'immediate, non-discursive awareness that certain actions are right or wrong.'⁵⁹

To the second: I hold that the same passage justifies our reading as well for there is no doubt that God's will, by setting his objectives first, regulates the manner in which a right reason deduces its decisions. Yet right reason is not regulated solely by God's primary desires but also by a rational and immutable algorithm which is grounded in an invariant measuring principle. Thus, though right reason ultimately serves predetermined goals that are solely determined by God, right reason functions and corresponds to its surroundings in a manner which is not arbitrary at all.

To the first: Contrary to Williams' claim, that God does not have *affectio iustitiae*, the account I presented in this study implies the contrary. As we recall, Williams pictures God as a professor of philosophy who is totally committed to the principle of *seeking the truth* and has no obligations toward his students. However, it seems that God acts in a manner which is very similar to the way the *affectio iustitiae* acts in us. For just as the *affectio iustitiae* is the inclination and awareness that drives us to regulate our will in order to conform to God's will, the study presented a God who takes our will into consideration. Whereas Aquinas's or Leibniz's God does not take our will seriously when he calculates his world, the Scotistic divine knowledge presupposes the most attenuated God who fully respects our wills. This, as we have seen, results in a most accurate kind of right reasoning which takes our will into account in the most respectful manner – by not depriving us of our genuine freedom.

⁵⁸ *Rep.* II, d. 6, q. 2, n. 10. Quoting from Thomas Williams, "From Metaethics to Action Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 346.

⁵⁹ Thomas Williams, "How Scotus Separates Morality from Happiness," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1995): 438. Some will conclude, like Michael Bergmann, that such a position leads us into an epistemic blindness both as to what is good and what is evil and thus that any attempt to make this world better is futile. See Michael Bergmann, "Might-Counterfactuals, Transworld Untrustworthiness and Plantinga's Free Will Defence," *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (1999); Hasker, "An Open Theist Theodicy of Natural Evil," 286-87.

To the third: Though I accept Williams's claim that *affectio iustitiae* does not grant us any knowledge of God's will, this does not mean we are utterly in the dark and can attain such knowledge solely through divine revelation. Following the presented solution, the fact that God does not act arbitrarily and accepting that he endowed us with free will, results in a most reasonable and attentive algorithm that reacts and governs the unfolding of history. This, to which unfortunately I cannot add much more, contradicts Williams' grounds according to which we have no rational avenue to distinguish between right and wrong.

Williams could simply reject my claims arguing that my solution presupposes that God is attentive to creatures' will. My response is that this, of course, cannot be proven, for the specific settings of the solution I used have tried to bring into harmony the problem of divine foreknowledge and freedom of the will. As I see it, Williams' example of the philosophy professor over-amplifies God's freedom and power at the expense of those of the creatures who are utterly diminished. This might work very well for some, but I think that Scotus, the univocal thinker, would not be happy to adopt a philosophy which treats God's and creatures' wills in such different manners. Moreover, I think that my lecturer example shows that the attentive God results in a more powerful God than that of Williams who supposedly amplified God on account of his creatures, and since power is a pure perfection, it is better to follow my solution than another which leaves us with a weaker God.

Concluding Remark

In his article regarding Euthyphro's dilemma, Norman Kretzmann distinguishes between *Theological Objectivism*, which supports the first horn, and *Theological Subjectivism* which supports the second. Kretzmann, who rejects the second horn of the dilemma on moral grounds, raises the difficulty that if we adopt Theological Objectivism, God becomes not the *law-giver* but rather the *law-transmitter*. But if that is the case it follows that

the answer to the question “What does God have to do with morality?” is “Nothing essential.” Of course, nothing essential need not be nothing at all. The person who

first taught you arithmetic certainly has something to do with arithmetic, but nothing essential; there would be arithmetic even if that person had never existed.⁶⁰

The solution suggested presents an answer to this problem in the following way: the laws are subjective insofar as they are derived from God's subjective predestination of the world. However they are also objective insofar as they are derived from an immutable rational and attentive algorithm. The laws, though they can be changed, are both subjective and objective and thus evade Kretzmann's problem for they express both God's desire and objectified goodness that is derived from the rationality of *right reason*.

Kretzmann's observation that Theological Objectivism turns God the law-giver into God the law-transmitter, can be applied when we evaluate Leibniz's theodicy according to which God creates the best of all possible worlds. It can be said that such a formulation, if taken alone, limits God's will and turns him into a technocrat and a bureaucratic creator: he is only the executor of creation but becomes essentially indifferent to it. Such an indifferent and bureaucratic consideration turns God from a creation-giver into a creation-transmitter. This bureaucratic approach fundamentally contradicts the Scotistic understanding of creation as a free intentional and artistic act.

⁶⁰ Norman Kretzmann, "Abraham, Isaac, and Euthyphro: God and the basis of morality," in *Philosophy of Religion, The Big Questions, Malden*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 423.