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THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY IN DUNS SCOTUS AND HIS FRANCISCAN PREDECESSORS

The current commemorative volume is a collection of essays focused mainly around Duns Scotus's project of philosophical theology. A present-day scientifically-minded reader might feel very much aloof among such discussions of theological matters by way of proofs, arguments and evidence: the way of discourse currently reserved for the domain of science. How do we situate such an understanding of theology and can it still be relevant and make sense to us now? In order to answer this question we need to look, first, at how theology is understood at present, second, at its status as regards what is now called the sciences, and third, at how Scotus and his immediate predecessors actually understood the nature of theology.

THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

It becomes clear that a radical if not chaotic pluralism of paradigms on what constitutes theology as a discipline ... is likely to occur.

(D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 58)

The real difficulty lies in the fact that physics is a kind of metaphysics; physics describes "reality." But we do not know what "reality" is; we know it only by means of the physical description!

(Albert Einstein to Erwin Schrödinger, 19 June 1935)

Two well-known theoretical works on the nature of theology, David Tracy's in the hermeneutic tradition, and George Lindbeck's in the postmodern (or postliberal) tradition, provide a rather consistent picture of how the nature of theology

is viewed in contemporary theological thought.¹ Tracy subdivides theology into fundamental, systematic and practical (op.cit., 55). Fundamental theology primarily addresses the academy and therefore is most important for our discussion of the relationship between theology and science. Fundamental theology deals with arguments that “all reasonable persons,” not necessarily religious, “can recognize as reasonable.” It uses public discourse “formulated in arguments where claims are stated with appropriate warrants, backings and rebuttal procedures” and relies on appeals to one’s experience, intelligence, and rationality (57). Pursuing honest critical inquiry, it can abstract itself from all religious commitments for the purpose of critical analysis of religious and theological claims (ibid.). Fundamental theology attempts to show adequacy or inadequacy of a certain truth claim by employing “some explicit paradigm for what constitutes objective argumentation in some acknowledged discipline in the wider academic community.” Usually this discipline is philosophy, so it is often called “philosophical theology” (58).

Tracy also raises the issue of the multiplicity of models of truth, which is critical to the understanding of how theology relates to science. The idea of “truth” in the common unreflected scientific mentality, in fact, corresponds to only one model of truth, namely that of “correspondence” (something is “true” when it corresponds to something else in our experience). Theology operates with many models of truth employed by humans, including truth of coherence (something is “true” when it fits together well), disclosure (“truth” is when something is opened up or revealed to us), praxis-based or transformative (“true” is what works in practical terms), etc. (62-63). According to Tracy, fundamental theologies are explicit about the model of truth they espouse, while in systematic and practical theologies such models often remain implicit.

The audience of systematic theology is primarily the public of the church, a “community of moral and religious discourse and action.” It is concerned not so much with “public

¹ See D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination. Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); G.A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984).

modes of argument,” but with “the re-presentation, the reinterpretation of what is assumed to be the ever-present disclosive and transformative power of the particular religious tradition to which the theologian belongs” (57). It is loyal and faithful to a particular tradition. The main task of systematic theology is reinterpretations and new applications of a tradition to the present, and thus “systematic theologies are principally hermeneutical in character.” “Truth” in this context is understood as “disclosure through hermeneutical retrieval.” Thus systematic theologies, explicitly or implicitly, operate with the disclosive or revelatory models of truth (p. 58). Practical theology primarily addresses the public of society: a certain social, political, or cultural movement that has a major religious import. It is less concerned with theory and assumes “praxis as the proper criterion for the meaning and truth of theology.” That is, “true” for practical theology is what is transformative, has a real impact and brings about a practical change (57-58). Thus Tracy paints a picture that includes multiple models of doing theology.

Similarly, Lindbeck classifies theology in terms of systematic (or dogmatic, descriptive), which is mainly concerned with faithfulness; practical, which is concerned with applicability; and foundational or apologetic (Tracy’s fundamental), whose main concern is intelligibility (op.cit., 112). The issue in Lindbeck that is most important for the question of how theology relates to science is that of intratextuality. Intratextuality implies that in any cultural-linguistic system, such as theology, the meaning is immanent to the system of interpretation, and does not exist (i.e., make sense) outside of it. What something means is determined from the way the term is used within the system. According to Lindbeck, theology is intratextual in the sense that “each type of theology is embedded in a conceptual framework so comprehensive that it shapes its own criteria of adequacy” (113). In other words, something that makes sense within a certain theological system will not necessarily make sense to the audience outside this system of interpretation. Thus systematic theology gives a “normative explication of the meaning a religion has for its adherents” (ibid.), although this explication may be meaningless outside this community.

What is much more important for the current discussion, however, is that, according to Lindbeck, “in an extended or improper sense, something like intratextuality is characteristic of the descriptions of not only religion but also other forms of rule-governed behavior from carpentry and mathematics to languages and cultures,” although “meaning is more fully intratextual in semiotic systems ... than in other forms of ruled human behavior such as carpentry or transportation systems” (114). Thus although intratextuality is more prominent in semiotic systems such as languages, cultures and religions, potentially it is found in all human cultural forms.

It is equally important that a broader intratextual system, such as religion or theology, not only describes everything that it contains in itself in an organized and clear way, but also describes in its own terms all that is outside (as it were, bringing it inside), thus building a unified, coherent and intelligible world view (114-15). All reality is “faithfully” described in terms of normative writings, according to the paradigms provided by holy writ, until one starts seeing everything through the lenses of these normative writings. This newly created world seems no less real than the “real” world: the scriptural world “absorbs” the universe (116-17). One can easily confirm such an understanding of theology by looking at the early Christian apologists who skillfully subverted and “redescribed” ancient Greek philosophy in terms of Christian monotheism, thus absorbing the Hellenistic world view within their own picture.

Another important observation introduced by Lindbeck concerns the manner in which theology goes about creating this coherent world picture. According to Lindbeck, “in view of their comprehensiveness, reflexivity, and complexity, religions require what Clifford Geertz, borrowing a term from Gilbert Ryle, has called ‘thick description’...” (115). While Geertz applies the term “thick description” to culture in general, in postliberal theology it is commonly applied specifically to theology. According to Lindbeck, who quotes from Geertz, one cannot analyze religion by isolating elements, finding relations between them and characterizing a whole system. “The theologian, like the ethnographer, should approach ‘such broader interpretations and abstract analyses

from the direction of exceedingly extended acquaintances with extremely small matters.' 'As interlocked systems of construable signs ... culture [including religion] is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly — that is, thickly — described'" (ibid.). That is, theology is less of a "science" in its common understanding, i.e., an approach that uncovers and presents a system of precise relations between the elements, and more of a literary description or a narrative rich with particular details that are as important to the narrative as any internal structural relationships it reveals. The Bible serves Lindbeck as an example of such thick description. He raises a legitimate question: "What holds together the diverse materials it contains: poetic, prophetic, legal, liturgical, sapiential, mythical, legendary and historical?" (120-21). The Bible is a "vast, loosely structured, non-fictional novel" (Lindbeck quotes David Kelsey) that provides an "overarching story" that has the literary features of a narrative, i.e., a certain pattern that allows one to stitch together both the diverse material contained in the Bible and subsequently the whole of reality (ibid.).

Building upon Lindbeck's suggestion that not only theology or culture in general, but also disciplines that are usually classified as "scientific" exhibit intratextual qualities, we must further ask: is the manner of operation of contemporary science, which also attempts to create a coherent "scientific" description of the world, radically different from that of apologetic theology? Does science have a radically different claim to "truth" compared to other cultural constructs such as theology? K.J. Sharpe's study provides a good summary of recent reflections on the topic.²

² K.J. Sharpe, *From Science to an Adequate Mythology* (Auckland, New Zealand: Interface Press, 1984). In particular see Chapter 3, "Science as an Inadequate Mythology," 29-65, and an extensive bibliography in the end. I have to thank Anne Foerst of St. Bonaventure University for drawing my attention to this study. Sharpe uses the model of "mythology" instead of "theology." However, one can easily see that "mythology" in his understanding is very similar to either apologetic or systematic theology: he views "mythology" as an attempt to create a coherent world view that

Sharpe notes that a number of scholars in the philosophy of science have associated myth with science (32),³ and in general any theory construction with mythmaking,⁴ since in any theory “new relationships between objects are postulated but ... have yet to be accepted as true” (ibid.). In the words of M. Mahoney,⁵ “there are many striking parallels between organized religion and organized science.” For example, both “are populated by passionate and often dogmatic adherents who work diligently toward system-specific goals.” Just as religion, science involves “worship” (of knowledge), “ritualistic behavior” (such as compulsive publication and convention attendance), has its own “dogmas” and “clergy” who enforce these dogmas (scientists, journal editors, college instructors). Just as religion, science tries to be “persuasive,” “makes ambitious claims about both the nature of reality (ontology) and the appropriate methods of gaining access to that reality (epistemology).” It is actively involved in “proselytizing” through classrooms (its “temples”), textbooks, popular magazines and mass media.⁶

More important than these superficial resemblances are, of course, the fundamental similarities between the ways science and religion operate, which Sharpe outlines using the foundational studies of T. Kuhn, I. Barbour, and others.⁷ According to Sharpe, these are some of the features of science that it shares with religious or theological systems. First of all, any scientific discipline includes “research traditions” with their key examples or “paradigms,” which are taught as models of what is acceptable within the tradition (36). Any such tradition would also assume “metaphysical beliefs, for instance about the kinds of entities there are in the world”

would be both psychologically and practically beneficial for the group that shares this mythological view.

³ He cites Burhoe (1977) and Malville (1975).

⁴ Ibid., based on M. Hesse (1974).

⁵ 1976, 11, quoted on 32-33.

⁶ Mahoney, ibid.

⁷ T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1962); I. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms. A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), especially chapters 3 and 6, 142-46.

(*ibid.*). This is how Sharpe describes the operational method of science (*ibid.*):

The doing of (normal) science within a research tradition requires the construction of *models* and *theories*. There are three steps involved. A model (a theoretical model in particular) is an imagined mental construct, usually in science a mechanism or process. Then the particular phenomenon being investigated and some mental construct are taken as analogous, and a theory is developed by correlating some of the observable terms of the phenomenon and some of the terms of the model. ... A familiar and intelligible situation is thus used in an act of creative imagination as the basis by analogy for the theoretical understanding of some other aspect or part of the world. In particular, a *comprehensive theory* usually develops within a research tradition from its paradigms as the attempt to understand all that is within that tradition's area of study.

In other words, science starts with an imaginative mental construct that is aimed at making intelligible some phenomena in observed reality. This construct is deemed acceptable as a theory if it is, first, sufficiently coherent internally, and, second, sufficiently analogous to observable phenomena so as to result in a description of them that is satisfactory in intellectual, psychological and practical terms. As a result, "no [scientific] data can be bare and uninterpreted; all data are theory-laden." In fact, "to a large extent the data themselves are dependent on the theories" since the latter suggest what to look for to confirm them. However, at a higher level any comprehensive theory is still based on "metaphysical assumptions" (38).⁸ In addition to the metaphorical-imaginative

⁸ Cf. Sharpe, 43: "The over-arching assumptions and general-guiding theories of science turn out not to be subject to its proof mechanisms of empiricism. They are usually held unconsciously by scientists, and expressed either directly or more usually by implication in many of the things said in science; through their studies of the theories of the recent past, by the paradigms of their research traditions, budding scientists absorb the fundamental assumptions of science. They are often considered part of the definition of what it is to be doing science; Michael Polanyi (1964, 160-71)

element in constructing scientific theories, the process involves other aesthetic criteria, which, e.g., according to Tracy or postmodern theologians, are also crucial to religious and theological discourse. Such criteria may include “simplicity,” “coherence,” and the degree of harmonization with empirical evidence, where “simplicity ... includes also an aesthetic element, the ‘beauty’ or ‘elegance’ or ‘symmetry’ of the theory.”⁹ As any “thick description,” scientific material is also often arranged in narrative structures, with scientific entities acting like “characters.” It is equally interesting that, just as some religious fundamentalists, scientists sometimes fanatically hold fast to their traditions, even against the newly found theoretical or empirical evidence, Einstein being one of the more notable examples.¹⁰

Finally, together with Sharpe and many cultural anthropologists such as B. Malinowski, one must challenge the science’s monopoly on being empirically “true” in the practical or

suggests that “the metaphysical presuppositions of science ... are never explicitly defended or even considered by themselves by the inquiring scientist. They arise as aspects of the *given* activity of enquiry, as its structurally implicit presuppositions, not as consciously held philosophical axioms preceding it. They are transcendental preconditions of methodological thinking, not explicit objects of such thinking; we think *with* them and not *of* them.” It is not surprising that we are usually unaware of these presuppositions, for the reasons Polanyi suggests. They are precisely the reasons given before for our difficulties in observing our own myths.’

⁹ P. 37; Sharpe here refers to J. Wechsler, ed., *On Aesthetics in Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978).

¹⁰ Cf. Sharpe, 37: “There are many avenues open to a scientific community enabling it to hold onto a theory for which there is discordant data. It can, for instance, create auxiliary hypotheses to explain the data, or say the data are incorrect, or hope that reasons be found to undermine the rebel data. Thus a comprehensive theory is highly resistant to falsification.... High-level facets are, in fact, not primarily overthrown by discordant data, but by alternatives which have ‘greater promise of explaining known data, resolving anomalies, and predicting novel phenomena’” (Barbour, 1974, 114). On 56 Sharpe quotes P. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: NLB, 1975), 298, as pointing out that in science criticism and debates are aimed at minor points, not at the core assumptions; if someone questions core assumptions, this “evokes taboo reactions which are no weaker than the taboo reactions in so-called primitive societies.” I remember my St. Bonaventure colleague Anne Foerst sharing her experience of starting a program on science and religion at MIT: according to her, the attacks of the scientific community against her for undermining the “sanctity” of science were no less vicious than those of religious fanatics against “heretics”!

functional sense. As one can surmise already from the early anthropological work on myth, such as that of Malinowski,¹¹ myths and other religious practices are far from being random ignorant superstitions. They are robust and exact products of “cultural evolution” tested by historical practice and carefully selected on the basis of what works. The stories and practices that do not work simply die out, and what remains is something that is as much of a real practical force in society as is any industrial or scientific revolution.¹²

Even this brief overview indicates that science in its deepest core is not radically different from such comprehensive systems as mythmaking or theology. Just like other systems, it is aimed at the basic need of the human intellect and higher psyche: to create a comprehensive and coherent worldview with a minimum number of unintelligible “gaps” in order to ensure a comfortable and secure mental existence and block access to the abyss of “horror” of reality (Nietzsche). Nor can science lay a monopolizing claim to being the only practically and empirically viable type of activity. One only needs to compare the aeons-long role of mythology and religion in the survivability of the human race to the recent “salvific” impact of science on our planet and society.

SCOTUS’S PREDECESSORS ON THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY

The knowledge of the type “Christ died for us” and the like — unless the person is an inveterate sinner — moves one to love.

(Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences*, Prologue,
Question 3)

¹¹ Cf. I. Strenski, ed., *Malinowski and the Work of Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992).

¹² On 54, Sharpe quotes R.W. Burhoe, “What does determine human destiny? Science applied to interpret religion,” *Zygon* 12, no. 4 (1977): 361, to the same effect: “Traditional myths are tested by a slower form of selection by nature in the history of their success or benefit to a population of people. A cultural myth that benefits a societal system is selected by the facts of the history of that culture, as when it prospers, thrives, and attracts and holds a larger population. A myth that harms a culture declines and dies for corresponding reasons. ... Hence myths prior to science and even the myths (imaginative models, theories, paradigms, etc.) of the sciences carry ‘truth value’ which is tested by their viability.”

Our overview at this point can be aided by two recent studies of late medieval reflections on the nature of theology, which both list textual sources and summarize some of the views on the topic.¹³ In particular, T. Prügl¹⁴ draws attention to medieval Biblical *principia* as an important source of reflection on the nature of theology.¹⁵ He also underscores the close relationship between the *principia* and prologues to the commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard: the former often summarize and complement the latter (255) and, with some exceptions, contain the same type of material. Prügl also comments on the main themes and interpretations of theology contained in the *principia*, as well as on the organizational principles of the *principia* (which can also be observed in corresponding prologues to the commentaries on the *Sentences*). Thus many earlier thirteenth-century authors simply equate the notions “theology” and “sacred Scripture,” emphasizing the biblical foundation of theology and its exegetical method and nature (255): a crucial consideration while comparing various medieval views of theology. Some attempts are also made at interpreting theology as a “science” understood as a superior kind of organized knowledge (257).¹⁶ At the same time, theology is frequently understood as “wisdom,” with its non-linear ways of delivery and practical import (259ff). In terms of organizational principles, one common way of structuring a *principium* (and, as we will see, a prologue to the Commentary on the *Sentences* as well) was according to the four Aristotelian causes: i.e., by consec-

¹³ B. Niederbacher and G. Leibold, eds., *Theologie als Wissenschaft im Mittelalter. Texte, Übersetzungen, Kommentare* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2006), further cited as *Theologie als Wissenschaft*; M. Olszewski, ed., *What is “Theology” in the Middle Ages? Religious Cultures of Europe (11th-15th Centuries) as reflected in their Self-Understanding*. *Archa Verbi*. Subsidia 1 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2007), further cited as *What is “Theology”?*

¹⁴ T. Prügl, “Medieval Biblical Principia as Reflections on the Nature of Theology,” In *What is “Theology,”* 253-75; see bibliography on the subject on 270-75.

¹⁵ A medieval theologian had to give a *principium* as an incepting master, during the inauguration of the new master. Specifically *principium* is the first inception speech (op.cit., 253-54).

¹⁶ E.g., according to Prügl (263) to Henry of Ghent “Science meant ... first of all a coherent set of knowledge.”

utively presenting the material, formal, final, and effective causes of “theology” (again, often synonymous with “sacred Scripture”; 259ff). Finally, Prügl lists a category of what he calls “recycled *principia*,” when a *principium* was used to construct a prologue to another theological work: a procedure that further underscores a tight relationship between this theological genre and the genre of the prologue (265ff).

The present brief overview of Scotus’s predecessors will focus on three figures who, together with Scotus himself, are representative of the full range of medieval Franciscan views on the nature of theology. The *Summa theologica* ascribed to Alexander of Hales (further referred to as the *Summa Halensis* or *SH*) was influential not only for early Franciscan theologians but also for the whole thirteenth-century tradition in general. Bonaventure, of course, is a major authority in mainstream Franciscan theology even for Duns Scotus who still refers to him frequently. Peter of John Olivi, on the other hand, represents a rather idiosyncratic trend in theology, in some respects surprisingly contemporary. However, his influence on the Franciscan theological tradition, and possibly even on Duns Scotus, is now coming to light.¹⁷ The overview will be based on the prologues to the *Summas* (*Summa Halensis*, Olivi) and commentaries on the *Sentences* (Bonaventure), as the most systematic and detailed treatments of the question about the nature of theology.

The “Summa of Alexander of Hales”

The Introduction (or Qu. 1) to the *Summa Halensis* provides a good overview of the early reflection on the nature of theology in Franciscan circles.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that this

¹⁷ Cf. fundamental editions and studies of this author by David Flood, O.F.M. Re. the question of the relation between Peter Olivi and Duns Scotus see specific references below.

¹⁸ This overview will use the English translation of the Prologue (after the Latin text of the Quaracchi edition) printed below in the Appendix. A brief preliminary analysis of the Prologue (or. Qu. 1) to the *Summa Halensis* can be found in B. Niederbacher, “Alexander von Hales, *Summa theologica*, quaestio 1. Kommentar zum Text,” in *Theologie als Wissenschaft*, 110-30. Niederbacher provides background on Alexander of Hales and the sources of *SH*. He points out that by theology *SH* traditionally means “sacred doctrine” or “sacred Scripture” (113). By *scientia* in application to theology *SH*

introduction is typologically close to a *principium*, according to Prügl's description. The main task of the Introduction is to conceptualize how theology (here synonymous with "sacred Scripture" or "sacred doctrine") can be thought of in terms of a "science," a term that in the context of *SH* can be roughly understood as an "organized body of knowledge." *SH* starts with the two challenges to describing theology in terms of a science. First, theology deals with singular events, such as found in history, and with singular and individual things or persons (Ch. 1, arg. 1-2). Second, it deals with matters of belief (arg. 3). Objections also point out the revelatory (or divinely inspired) and practical nature of theology: theology is something that pertains to our salvation. In its Solution *SH* presents theology as "wisdom," not science. Theology is a "discipline about all," including the ultimate questions. *SH* makes a distinction between sciences or disciplines that "perfect our cognition by way of truth," which is analogous to cognition by way of sight, and those that "move our affection towards goodness," which is analogous to cognition by way of taste, here playing on the etymology of *sapientia* ("wisdom"), which derives from *sapere*. In other words, this is the division between speculative and practical sciences. Theology here, as later in Bonaventure and Olivi, is presented as a practical science that moves our affection: "Therefore, theology, which perfects the soul by way of affection, moving it towards the good through the principles of fear and love, is more appropriately and mainly wisdom."

Answering Arg. 1, *SH* points out that historical narratives in Scripture do not signify individual acts but are intended to signify universal principles of action: thus one can still speak of a science here that deals with "universals."¹⁹ Individual

means not our "science" (*Wissenschaft*) but simply "knowledge" (*Wissen*) or even "wisdom" (116). Niederbacher further outlines how *SH* presents the subject of theology (120) and the method of theology (122). He concludes that *SH* defends the status of theology as *scientia* that does not undermine faith (127). Theology according to *SH* provides a different kind of knowledge comparable to metaphysics (128), theologians being "wise believers" (129). Also cf. C. Trottman, *Théologie et noétique au XIII^e siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1999). Chapter 2 (44-49) gives a summary of the same text.

¹⁹ This is where Olivi will disagree with *SH*, claiming that the events of Scriptural history are important precisely qua individual, see below.

events also serve as general examples (to Arg. 2). Answering Arg. 3, *SH* simply quotes Augustine, *83 Questions*, q. 48:

there are three kinds of things pertaining to belief. Some are those that are always taken on faith and are never a matter of understanding, as any historical narrative. Others are believed in the course of understanding them, as all rational arguments, either about numbers or about some disciplines. Others are first believed and then understood: such are things pertaining to the divine that can only be understood by those of pure heart....

The quote reveals how theology is understood by the authors of *SH*. Augustine's text mentions three ways of acquiring knowledge and verifying its certainty: belief plays a crucial role in all three. The first type is simply facts or data: provided that we trust our source (the senses, witnesses, texts) there is nothing to understand there, it is all belief. As in the case of Tracy's "truth of correspondence," all one needs here in order to verify the data is to establish whether one set of data conforms to another. The second type is conceptual truth, something dealt with in science, philosophy or fundamental theology. Our trust in it arises as a result of a conceptual structure becoming clear to us, or being disclosed to us: this type of knowledge can be called "revelatory." The third type, according to the contemporary theological classification, is intratextual truth, which deals with things that make sense only within a system (e.g., of a certain belief system); this truth pertains to the area of systematic theology. Thus there is no contradiction in interpreting something that "pertains to the matters of belief" (i.e., theology) as a "science" since every way of acquiring knowledge, including the sciences, contains elements of belief. That is, science is also in a way a system of belief and therefore is not fundamentally different from theology, except that belief in science rests on "disclosure" from the clarity of conceptual structures that appeal to everyone, and systematic theology is more narrowly

focused on such disclosure within a certain system of interpretation.²⁰

The remainder of Ch. 2 and some of Ch. 4 expand on the understanding of theology as affective-practical. The basic outline of the difference between science, whose definition is given, and theology as practical-affective sounds as follows (Ch. 2, Objection *f*):

Also, all other sciences proceed, according to a rational order, from principles to conclusions, which teach the intellect, not move our affection. However, sacred Scripture proceeds, according to the order of instruction, from practical principles to actions, so that our affection could be moved, by fear and love, on the basis of faith in God's justice and mercy.

A further elaboration of the differences between science and theology in Ch. 2 (answers to Arguments 1-4) is based on how "truth" is approached in either: "In other sciences, i.e., speculative ones, the true is taken as true, and even the good as true." In other words, they analyze the meaning and conceptual structure of these notions. In theology, in its turn, "the true is taken as good," that is, it is interested in the practical aspects of truth: what can knowledge of this sort do for us in practical terms? The difference between theology and "practical moral disciplines," which also take true as good, is that the latter look at the good as "moral," while theol-

²⁰ Of course, if we advance our understanding of science as an essentially mythological structure, as in Sharpe, there will be even less divergence between the two! Cf. more comments on the differences between the types of evidence in science and theology in Objection *b* listed in Ch. 2. Again, the two differ in terms of either being intratextual, as theology, or appealing to the conversation *ad extra*, as the sciences: 'Also, all human sciences are founded upon evidence coming from creatures, which is the basis for all experience, as Aristotle says in his *Metaphysics* [...]. But theological teaching is based upon evidence coming from faith, according to the alternative reading of Is. 7:9: "Unless you believe, you will not understand." Cf. *ibid.*, Objection *d*: "Also, according to Hugh of St. Victor, other sciences are 'about the works of creation, which are apparent from the natural state of things, while theology is about the works of restoration,' which become apparent in [the light of] faith: not from the very nature of things, but in the mind of man...". Cf. Duns Scotus below on the two types of evidence.

ogy — as “given by grace”: in other words, theology, unlike philosophical ethics, is an exclusively intratextual discipline. Discussing the sense in which theology is ‘about God’ (ibid.), *SH* stresses that “theology is ‘about God’ not in the same sense as other sciences, e.g., First Philosophy, because they do not treat of God in the context of the mystery of the Trinity or the sacrament of the restoration of humanity”: *SH* here clearly speaks of systematic and practical, not philosophical theology. Finally (ibid.), the practical nature of theology is demonstrated in the fact that it “leads to God ... through the principles of fear and love based on the faith in God’s mercy and justice...”.

It is striking that already at this early stage in Western theology *SH* notes that theology as a practical discipline proceeds in ways that are more like art than like science.²¹ Thus Objection 1 in Ch. 4, art. 1 reads as follows:

Any poetic manner is non-scientific and alien to any discipline, because this manner is historical and metaphorical, neither of which is characteristic of a [scientific] discipline. But the theological manner is poetic, historical or parabolic; therefore it is not scientific.

SH replies that theology, indeed, is not science in our usual sense. “It operates by organizing divine wisdom in order to instruct the soul in those matters that pertain to salvation.” That is, theology works as a “thick description” rather than as a conceptually rigid “scientific” structure. However, as the answer to Objection 2 states, this manner is more effective for the practical purpose of eliciting the “affection of piety.”

However, at this point a serious problem arises. How can such a practical-affective discipline achieve the level of certitude and truth characteristic of sciences, for otherwise theology would be inferior to sciences, and its “scientific” status will be in question? *SH* starts with laying out the standard assumption that cognition through intellect (typical of science) is more certain than that through faith (practiced by

²¹ Cf. Tracy’s view of theology as aesthetic-artistic in nature, with its own “classics,” as well as the postmodern aesthetic interpretation of theology as a type of rhetoric.

theology).²² The Reply, however, points out that there is more than one type of truth or certitude (again, a strikingly contemporary observation!):

There is a certitude of speculation and that of experience. In addition to those, there is a certitude of intellect and a certitude of affection.... I say, then, that the theological approach is more certain by the certitude of experience, by the certitude of affection, which is by way of taste [...], but not more certain as far as intellectual speculation goes, which operates by way of seeing.

Once again, *SH* here points out the affective and practical nature of theology. The answer to arg. 2 reads as follows:

... one must say that there are principles of truth qua truth, and there are principles of truth qua goodness. Other sciences proceed from the principles of truth qua truth, which are self-evident. Theology, however, proceeds from the principles of truth qua goodness: which are self-evident insofar as goodness is concerned, but concealed and hidden insofar as truth is concerned. Hence this discipline is based rather on virtue than on science, and it is rather wisdom than science, for it consists rather in virtue and practical efficiency than in contemplation and [speculative] knowledge....

Thus certitude in theology as a practical discipline, according to *SH*, rests on the fact that it clearly works, although one cannot always explain why. As for certitude in theology as an affective discipline, it comes from the fact that a member of this faith community simply has an “internal sense” of cer-

²² Ch. 4, art. 2, arg. 2: “Also, the science that proceeds from the principles that are of themselves clear to the intellect is more certain than the one that proceeds from the principles that are hidden from the intellect. But while other sciences proceed from the principles that are of themselves clear to the intellect, theology is based on the principles that are hidden from the intellect, for they are the principles of faith. Therefore other sciences have a more certain way of proceeding.”

titude: certain truths simply “feel certain” because they feel good and raise one’s affection: “... And this does not diminish certitude for the soul that is disposed to [receive] this [kind of certitude,] i.e., the spiritual soul, as was said” (answer to arg. 4). Such understanding of theology certainly lays ground for the affective theology of Bonaventure. However, as we will see below, Duns Scotus finds alarming the deficiency in speculative certitude in such an understanding of theology. It is not sufficient for theology to work and feel good: it must also become transparent to the understanding. That is, the intellectually transparent fundamental theology must come to the aid of the faith-based systematic and practical type.²³

Bonaventure

Bonaventure gives an overview of what he understands by “theology” in the Prologue to his Commentary on the *Sentences*.²⁴ Again, according to Prügl’s classification, the Prologue is structured as a classic *principium*, according to the

²³ This move is certainly legitimate since, as was shown in the overview of Sharpe’s study above, any human discipline, even science, operates with both principles.

²⁴ The English translation of the text of the Prologue (based on the Latin text of the “great” Quaracchi edition) is printed below in the Appendix. The same text was recently discussed in G. Gasser, “Bonaventura, Prolog zum Sentenzenkommentar. Kommentar zum Text,” in *Theologie als Wissenschaft*, 214-34. Gasser provides information on the life and work of Bonaventure, as well as on the context and sources of the Prologue. He discusses Bonaventure’s views on the types of problems posed in, and on the methodological procedures of theology (223ff), for example on the question whether there is a scientific method in theology, and on the position of theology between theoretical and practical sciences (227ff). According to Gasser, Bonaventure was the first to develop a distinction between sacred Scripture and theology (230ff). Bonaventure presents theology as “wisdom” which integrates and embraces all other forms of knowledge, and points out the importance of emotion in theology (ibid.). Bonaventure’s understanding of theology is also discussed in C. Trottmann, *Théologie et noétique au XIIIe siècle*, Chapter 3, 52-68. Trottmann believes that in Bonaventure’s mind theology is still mainly reduced to sacred Scripture, and he focuses on practical and mystical aspects of it. The text of the Prologue to his Commentary on the *Sentences*, which, according to Trottmann, presents his views as a “bachelor” (*sententiarius*), is summarized and briefly discussed on 53-57.

four Aristotelian causes. Question 1 on the subject²⁵ of theology clearly echoes the *Summa Halensis*. In particular, Argument *c* suggests that the subject of theology is “matters that pertain to belief”:

Whence the Master says in the Prologue that his goal is “to strengthen our faith with the shields of the tower of David,” that is, to adduce rational arguments to prove articles of faith: not faith as a habit, but faith as something that has been believed; therefore, etc.

Such a definition, in the tradition of Anselm, indicates that at this point Bonaventure sees theology in its apologetic or fundamental (as in Tracy) role. As earlier in *SH* and later in Olivi, Objections 3 and 5 point out that, first, theology, unlike science, is about particular things (“this book contains some specific teaching and knowledge”), and, second, “matters of belief” pertain to the realm of “virtue,” not science, i.e., theology is a practical discipline. In his Response Bonaventure defines the subject of theology “by a single [Latin] term, which is *credibile*, or ‘what pertains to belief,’ insofar as that which pertains to belief falls under the principle of intelligibility, which happens through the addition of reason.” Again, he seems to be thinking, in present-day terms, of fundamental or philosophical theology.

Bonaventure continues to build his case for fundamental or apologetic theology in Question 2. Argument 4 points out that “the way of proceeding in sacred Scripture is typological and by way of a narrative, not inquiry,” i.e., not scientific. Arguments 5 and 6 outline the general problem faced by theology that tries to present itself as a “science.” Generally, matters of belief do not lend themselves to rational analysis. Further, the discipline of theology is practical: it “is oriented towards promoting faith.” However, “people believe fishermen, not dialecticians,” and reasons do not promote but invalidate faith: what is believed in cannot be known, for then it would be a matter of empirical knowledge, not belief. One can point out at this point that already *SH*, through August-

²⁵ What I translate as “subject” here is *materia* in Latin, i.e., it stands for Aristotle’s “material cause.”

tine, showed that any type of knowledge contains an element of belief (see above), so Bonaventure's argument seems to be superfluous. However, one can still see this as a valid point in the sense that it suggests that the "truth" practiced in theology should be of a different kind. Perhaps, if we take the several types of believable outlined in *SH*, after Augustine, one could say that theology aims not at the truth of "correspondence" (empirical knowledge) but at that of "coherence" or at the "affective" or practical truth.

In his Objections *a* and *d* Bonaventure mounts a defense of apologetic theology. Proceeding by rational argument in theology both helps against the heretics and gives reasons for our faith and hope. In Objection *c* Bonaventure raises the issue of multiple truths and types of truth. According to him, "the status of the truth of our faith is not inferior to that of other truths. But regarding all those other truths the situation is such that any truth that can be attacked through reasoning can and must be defended by way of reasoning: therefore, the same is the case with the truth of our faith." That is, even in an intratextual system, such as theology, which, for example, may practice a type of truth that is different from the truth of another discipline (e.g., the "truth of coherence" instead of "correspondence"), there are certain hermeneutic principles ("reasons") upon which this truth is built, which can be analyzed and used to "defend" it. In his Response Bonaventure affirms the appropriateness of rational investigation for theology. With Anselm, he states that reasoning and inquiry is valid for promoting faith for three kinds of people: it confounds the enemies of the faith, it supports those of weak faith,²⁶ and it delights those of perfect faith.²⁷

While his defense of apologetic theology is commonplace, in Question 3 Bonaventure presents another aspect of theology, affective-practical, which is what he himself mostly espoused. The question itself already pitches a speculative

²⁶ "For if the weak saw that no probable reasons in favor of faith were present, and the opposite reasons were abundant, no one [of them] would persist."

²⁷ "Third, it is valid in order to delight the perfect. For in some mysterious way the soul is delighted in understanding what it believes with its unshaken faith."

approach against practical: “Is this book, or theology, for the sake of contemplation, or for the purpose of us becoming good, i.e., is it a speculative or a practical science?” The preliminary arguments indicate that theology, indeed, seems to be “for the sake of us becoming good” and “for the sake of our improvement,” rather than for the sake of contemplation, and in general in his *Response* Bonaventure concedes that theology is for the sake of our improvement. However, it is the way theology functions and achieves its practical goals that is most interesting: this is where Bonaventure’s “affective” theology really comes into play. Bonaventure’s general scheme works as follows: speculation (as in speculative theology) raises affection, which moves us towards practice (as in practical theology):

... it is our intellect or understanding that is perfected by a science. And it [i.e., the intellect] should be understood in three different ways: in itself, insofar as it extends towards affection, or insofar as it extends towards action (... by way of command or control). According to this threefold condition, because it has a tendency to err, the intellect possesses three ways of regulating itself through a habit or disposition [such as a science]. For if we consider the intellect in itself, in this way it is properly speaking speculative and is perfected by a habit which serves the purpose of contemplation and is called speculative science. Now if we consider the intellect as naturally capable of extending itself toward action, in this way it is perfected by a habit that serves the purpose of our improvement: which is practical or moral science. But if one considers it from an intermediate point of view, insofar as it is naturally capable of extending itself towards affection, in this way it is perfected by a habit that occupies an intermediate position between purely speculative and practical, and which embraces both. And this habit is called wisdom, which implies both cognition (or knowledge) and affection at the same time ... [...] Whence this [habit] is for the sake of both

contemplation and our improvement, but mainly for the purpose of our improvement.

Such is the sort of cognition [i.e., wisdom] that is treated in this book. For this sort of cognition or knowledge helps faith, and *faith* is positioned in the *intellect* in such a way that, *insofar as it contains its elements (or principles), it is naturally capable of moving our affection*. This is quite clear. Indeed, *the knowledge of the type 'Christ died for us' and the like—unless the person is an inveterate sinner—moves one to love*, unlike this one: 'the diameter is incommensurate with the semicircle [based on this diameter]' (my italics).

Thus in theology we deal with the knowledge of a special, "affective" kind. Bonaventure here points out the element that is crucial to human behavior. Indeed, neither purely speculative knowledge (what is logical), nor purely practical knowledge (what we know empirically is harmful or helpful) accounts for what ultimately drives humans to act, for we often commit illogical and impractical acts while being in full possession of all the necessary information. Bonaventure notices that the missing element is what in medieval vocabulary is called "affect" or "affection." His observation is perennial for it reflects the way human beings work. The emotive-affective element continuously "colors" both our understanding and our beliefs and, in fact, is the only thing that gives them that non-conceptual visceral "meaning" (the sense of our body and our whole being) that ultimately makes either a thought or a belief relevant. This is easy to demonstrate by appealing to common experience: if one is not emotionally involved in a certain train of thought, not only will it not appear "relevant" to him or her, but it will not even have any "meaning" and ultimately will not be "understood." (This phenomenon is, of course, the foundation of the main principle of apologetic theology "faith seeking understanding," except for Bonaventure this "faith" is also emotional in nature.) Nor will a person be deeply attached to any article of belief without such an affective involvement. It is also easy to demonstrate that it is not our understanding of, or belief in issues that

determines our emotional attitude towards them, but that these are two entirely different phenomena. Thus we may have a perfect conceptual understanding that our situation is good, and still not feel positive, and vice versa. From the point of view of neuro-science, of course, long-term affective-emotional states can be explained as being caused by what the ancients and medievals called “humors,” the heavy chemical substances that linger for hours or days on end and color our whole perception of the world no matter what we might intellectually think. At the same time, our conceptual structures or “thoughts” can be interpreted in terms of electrical signals²⁸ that come and go quickly but have little effect on our mood, and in general lack “depth.” Without the emotive-affective element, or our visceral awareness of our bodily state, nothing really has any “value” or “meaning.”²⁹ It is precisely this affective element that “colors” and gives meaning to otherwise “empty” conceptual knowledge that, according to Bonaventure, plays a crucial role in theology and harmoniously integrates its speculative and practical aspects. Thus the particular knowledge “Christ died for us” contained in the Scriptures has enough affective power to become deeply felt and meaningful for us, to color emotionally our perception of it and to give us enough psychic energy to act on it. At the same time, the theorems of geometry, while conceptually

²⁸ Mostly based on physical structural connections between neurons, to be sure, but nevertheless electrical in nature as far as their actual operation is concerned.

²⁹ R.R. Niebuhr (*Experiential Religion* [NY: Harper & Row, 1972]) discusses the role of such affective elements in religion, which he calls “religious affection”: “it suffuses the entire mind”; under this condition “there is nothing intrinsically meaningless”; faith is “an elemental form of experience” just like willpower, the senses, etc. Affection is understood as the ancient “humors of the body”: “an affection determines man’s disposition or temperament by qualifying all of his perceiving and thinking”(43). Niebuhr calls such affections an “attunement” of the self; it “gives to the whole of personal existence its determinate quality, color, and tone”; it is not sufficient to conceive of a faithful man as a rational soul with choosing and willing; he is also an “affectional being” with affection pervading his whole person and attitude to the world (45). According to Niebuhr, “a true affection lies at such a depth in personal existence that it is inaccessible to volition”; “... it is affection that endows the will with its specific tone and energy” (46).

clear, to us are “empty” and devoid of any emotional involvement and energy that can transform into practice.³⁰

Peter of John Olivi

Peter of John Olivi is important for the present overview for two reasons. First, he represents a very original and innovative way of theological thinking within the Franciscan tradition. Second, evidence has been mounting concerning the potential influence of Olivi on Duns Scotus.³¹ Scotus was certainly familiar with Olivi’s work at the point when he was working on his *Lectura Oxoniensis* in 1299, but for obvious reasons had to omit all further references to Olivi’s writings.³² Thus it will be interesting to see if there is any correspondence between Olivi’s view of theology and Scotus’s own theological project. The present overview will be based on the Introduction about the nature of theology (Question 1) to Olivi’s *Summa Quaestionum super Sententias* where he

³⁰ Although this subject is beyond the scope of the present Introduction, it is interesting to note that despite Scotus’s professed interpretation of theology in terms of a speculative discipline (see below) at its core his thought, and therefore his view of theology, just could be profoundly affective-Bonaventurian. There is vast literature, which need not be recited, elucidating Scotus’s view on the interaction between the intellect and the will, to the effect that reality is not definitively known until the will assents to what the intellect presents to it and acts on it, with the intellect subsequently understanding the results of the will’s reaction. A. Vos, rehearsing this view in *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 271-72, uses an interesting phrasing: propositions presented by the intellect to the will, prior to the investment of the will (that is, emotion, affect, desire) in them, are neutral, or, in his words, “empty,” having no truth value. That is, purely intellectual activity is empty and devoid of meaning prior to the operation of desire or emotion. In other words, just like in Bonaventure, all cognition (including theological) according to Scotus must be affective in nature!

³¹ E.g., cf. S. Dumont, “The Origin of Scotus’s Synchronic Contingency,” *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 149-67. A. Vos, op.cit., mentions this study on 43-44 and 236. Also cf. essay by Mary Beth Ingham included below in this volume. She provides a few more references to the scholars who acknowledge Olivi’s influence on Scotus, e.g., Ernst Stadter, Bonnie Kent, François-Xavier Putallaz, Olivier Boulnois and Timothy Noone.

³² Cf. *Lectura* I, d. 26, q. un., n. 42: “Tertia opinio est Petri Ioannis, quam dimisi scribere, propter causam certam” (Vaticana XVII, 327). A. Vos mentions this passage (op.cit., 134), mistakenly as paragraph n. 46.

clearly dialogues with both *SH* and Bonaventure.³³ According to Prügl's typology, Olivi's Introduction is, again, structured as a *principium*, according to the four Aristotelian causes: Qu. 1 here corresponds to the "material cause," and Qu. 2-3 to the formal and final causes.³⁴

The main question of Qu. 1 is about the subject (the "material cause") of "this book," i.e., theology, which to Olivi, as to the two Franciscans discussed above, is clearly synonymous with sacred Scripture. The underlying motif is, again, whether one can conceive theology as a kind of "science." Olivi presents various opinions, some reminiscent of those listed by *SH* and Bonaventure, on the nature of theology. Thus theology is portrayed as an intratextual (Tracy's and Lindbeck's "systematic" theology) and practical discipline (arg. 6): its subject is "truth of faith" or "truth that leads surely to God." In arg. 9 he points out that Scripture is not organized as a science, but presents, e.g., very diverse legal material, such as commands, laws, admonitions, and threats — i.e., it contains particular practical instructions, not universal rules. Arg. 10 (contra) admits that no subject can be assigned to theology, for it contains many things that are not organizable into a discipline, such as "mysteries," "future contingents," precepts, counsels, and "many particulars." Moreover — and this is where Olivi disagrees with *SH* — these particular things "belong to its principal purpose," i.e., the particulars in themselves, which cannot be "deduced" from any universal principles, are of

³³ See notes to the English text of Qu. 1 (based on the Latin edition of E. Stadter), which is printed below in the Appendix. David Flood, OFM, in addition to providing a draft translation, has been very helpful in discussing and analyzing this text.

³⁴ Of course, one might raise the question why Olivi's actual *principia* are not used instead of his *Summa*: after all, an excellent edition is available ("Principia quinque in Sacram Scripturam," in *Peter of John Olivi on the Bible*, ed. D. Flood and G. Gál [St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997], 5-151.). However, Olivi's *principia* on the Bible are very different in nature from other known *principia* and do not really have a "scholastic" discussion of the nature of theology in the way his Qu. 1 of the *Summa* does. The style of his Biblical *principia* is more exegetical, ornate and artistic-rhetorical in nature: this is probably why Prügl doesn't have much to say about them either. Cf. Prügl, op.cit., 264: "he practiced a rather new and atypical exegesis of Scripture," trying to give account of the "confusing and incoherent variety of biblical images, symbols and events."

the very essence of theology, and do not serve as “data” or particular examples for the purpose of illustrating universal laws. Arg. 12 (contra) once again stresses the particular nature of material presented in theology and echoes one of Bonaventure’s introductory arguments as to the incompatibility of scientific knowledge with this type of theological material, i.e., particular events and persons that are a matter of belief:

Indeed, everything we have here reaches us *in a way more appropriate to faith* than to a body of knowledge. ... Second, everything [in Scripture] has to be presented *simply and absolutely and not by reason of anything which proves or infers it (indeed, if things were believed principally by reason of such processes, they would be scientifically known rather than believed)*. And third, [Scripture] passes on many things in its principal mode of communication which *in no way can be known through reason* ... — such as *God being one and three, and God being man* ... and things like that. *All of these examples are particular* and have to do with piecemeal things rather than with universals. *Nor can they be examined by reason.* ... but can only be taken on faith. It follows then that this Scripture does not have the kind of structuring characteristic of a [single] subject in the way that other bodies of knowledge do (my italics).

Olivi’s own opinion stated in his Reply is a stunning example of late medieval theological acumen that is rivaled only by twentieth-century theologians working in the tradition of classic Heidegger- or Gadamer-style hermeneutics. It is best expressed in his own simple and clear words that require almost no commentary. Olivi starts with the reasons why no unified subject or method can be attributed to Scripture:

Scripture simply makes statements about laws, sciences, histories, about plans of action. It foretells events, it reveals much about God which in no way can be investigated. Among these and similar types of

material Scripture includes many individuals: Christ and the Virgin, their ancestors and the apostles ... It includes many particular acts: the deeds of those ancestors, the wars of kings and peoples, and the whole course of particular instances of time... Scripture contains as well many particular actions and marvels and kindnesses of God, such as the creation of the world on a certain day in a certain year... And in that [course of events] it contains many future contingents, at least the most important events in the future....³⁵

Again, according to Olivi who disagrees with the authors of *SH* on this issue, all this material is not examples or data to illustrate universal rules, but is of the essence of Scripture. This is precisely what makes faith believable: the concreteness of it! It is not rules and concepts but concrete historical narratives³⁶ that affect people. Thus for Olivi it is the other way around: i.e., it is the factuality and historicity of faith, not its universal value, that really works. For “there is no blessedness in abstraction,” Olivi quips, “but rather in fact”:

We cannot say, as those others do, that Scripture offers these events only as examples and cases in order to reach by induction universal propositions or universal statements of faith. The reason is that these are in themselves of the substance of faith, just like those universal statements.... I believe that the singular person of Christ, together with his actions, his sufferings and achievements and virtues, as well as those of the Blessed Virgin and all the great saints whom Scripture mentions, all this has many uses and purposes far beyond the aforementioned [‘leading

³⁵ Cf. Answer to Objection 4: “But here Christ and his members are not handled in this way [i.e., scientifically], nor are God and his works. It [Scripture] simply reports a great deal about them and speaks about them in other ways that have nothing to do with science, as when it relates commands and advice and persuasions and other such things. It talks about these things in particular as well as universally.”

³⁶ Or, one could say, with contemporary anthropologists, mythological narratives.

to universals’]. Moreover, they say, it is rather those universals [doctrinal statements] that ensure that we adhere to these particulars perfectly rather than the other way around. For there will be no blessedness in abstraction, as they say, but rather in fact. In ‘the readiness to go along with’ (*credulitate*) Christ factually and with the other saints and in love of them is there justification now.

A perceptive reader, perhaps, has already realized where this is headed. Yes, there is no alternative to admitting that Olivi, anticipating twentieth-century postcritical theologians, sees theology as nothing else but “thick description”! The body of material contained in Scripture (which is for Olivi synonymous with “theology”) is likened to instructional narratives and descriptions of life given by our parents: they are believable and work not because they are rational and conceptually well structured, but precisely because they are concrete and detailed descriptions that cover all practical and emotional aspects of our existence. They are believed precisely because they are so concrete, varied and detailed:

Scripture shows this further ... in the way it hands down its contents. Scripture passes them on as things to believe. The unity of faith does not require that whatever is believed about anything have one scientific rationale or one subject, as the unity of science requires. By the faith by which I believe my father I can believe many assertions and negations of various kinds, even *insofar as* they are of different kinds, and much that is factual. However, I cannot know the particulars by one type of reasoning from principles, or through a principle of one sort (Reply, Section c).

Let us suppose that a father wants to lay out for his sons and his friends in writing a distinctive way of going about life. So he compiles for them a brief text that contains some medical and nutritional data, something about mathematics and physics, and a few recent stories about ancestors of theirs, and all of this with advice, rules, warnings and corrections,

put together and weighed in accordance with what he thought would be useful. He adds as well forecasts of coming events. We would not be able to say that his compilation had any one subject, in a way sciences have a single subject, seeing as it contains material that is related to many particular and general bodies of learning. In addition, it would contain much else which has nothing to do with the notion of science (Reply, after Section *g*).

Olivi further echoes Bonaventure's view of theology as affective-practical. A "thick description" works precisely because it affects people emotionally and moves them to action: something rational arguments on their own cannot achieve. It speaks to everybody, not just to speculative intellects:

The excellence of Scripture's purpose and its practical efficiency also attest to this. Otherwise it would not succeed in raising every reflection and the certitude of every rational and intelligible learning to transcendent insights, and this with regards to all sorts of human intellects and not only to one intellect alone. Nor would it be able to give rise to all the spiritually useful [sentiments] which God through Scripture could elicit in the human heart, unless it contained an endless variety of material and ways [of dealing with it], transcending every [particular] kind, and unless it possessed the way of stating things simply and absolutely, as God speaks and not as humans: in a way that is prophetic, and not by inquiry and demonstration (Reply, Section *g*).

Thus theology as "thick description" creates a coherent and detailed view of the world that covers all necessary aspects of it, and further serves practical instructional purposes.

At this point, the following question arises. Olivi clearly views theology as an intratextual discipline that is also affective-practical: the view that consistently follows from the tradition of *SH* and Bonaventure, even though Olivi reaches

new depths in understanding the role of concrete-historical elements in theology. Can such a view of theology in any way accommodate the speculative project mounted by Scotus? Curiously, although Olivi clearly denies that theology in the sense of Scripture (i.e., as thick description) is a “science,” he is ready to entertain the idea of a hypothetical project of creating a “quasi-scientific” speculative structure on the basis of theology in its traditional sense. This structure, in his mind, will be “analogous” to regular sciences:

Consequently there might well be some one science that investigates God and his works, insofar as reason can know them. Indeed, in order to secure the unity of a science it is sufficient for the subject and its nature to have an analogous sort of unity. It is then sufficient to create there a framework of the subject and attributes merely according to the order of understanding. And so we can talk about the divine perfections we prove about God as his “attributes.” It is sufficient for something to be proven about the subject through effects or through some conclusive arguments, even though this would not suffice for the sort of science that proceeds through principles and causes (answer to Objection n. 4).

Of course, according to Olivi, theology as sacred Scripture is not such a quasi-science. Before we proceed to Duns Scotus, then, we must stress that in late medieval Franciscan thought we clearly deal with an equivocal usage of the term “theology,” which is what creates some of the havoc with the issue whether theology is a science: both among medieval authors and among their present-day interpreters. Thus Olivi and his predecessors understand “theology” in terms of a “thick description,” which is what allows them to equate “theology” with sacred Scripture itself: a move that sounds rather odd to our ears. As we will see shortly, however, the sort of theology practiced by Scotus and theologians like him is more like that project of the “analogue of science” outlined by Olivi: that is, a speculative discipline that proceeds in ways analogous to regular sciences but uses theological ma-

terial. As will become clear below, however, Scotus is far from seeing his theological project as a “quasi” science: and he has good reasons for this.

John Duns Scotus on the nature of theology

For science has an object that is certain and is evident from the evidence of the object; faith has an object that is certain to it and is evident from authority. And thus the object of faith is not completely non-evident ..., and so in no way do the two contradict one another.

(Duns Scotus, *Reportatio I-A*, Prologue, Question 2)

Before Scotus

It is generally agreed that around the time of Scotus theologians were trying to present theology as some sort of a science.³⁷ The most difficult question, as before, was how something that dealt with contingent propositions could be a science.³⁸ This concern is precisely what made *SH* and Olivi interpret theology as a kind of thick description, rather than science. Although Niederbacher (see above) and Vos³⁹ suggest the interpretation of *scientia* in late medieval theology as something like “organized knowledge” or even a disposition of knowing (*Wissen* rather than *Wissenschaft*), clearly scholastic theologians also employed a more rigorous and traditionally-Aristotelian definition of *scientia* as a method that “proceeds from principles to conclusions” (*SH*), or as “the certain cognition of a necessary truth that is suited by nature to be made evident from another necessary truth — that has been earlier made evident — by way of syllogistic discourse.”⁴⁰ As

³⁷ Cf. S.D. Dumont, “Theology as a Science and Duns Scotus’s Distinction between Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition,” *Speculum* 64 (1989): 579-99, a study discussed in more detail below. E.g., on 580 he notes that prologues to Commentaries on the *Sentences* around the time of Scotus “typically treated theology as a science.”

³⁸ Cf. Dumont, *op.cit.*; Vos, *op.cit.*, 348, and in general the section “Theory of science” where he discusses *Lectura*, prol. pt. 3, q. 1.

³⁹ Cf. Vos, 347-48, where he interprets *scientia* not as ‘science’ but as “an act or a disposition of knowing,” where an “organized set” of such dispositions would be close to what we call science.

⁴⁰ Duns Scotus, *Rep. I-A*, prol. q. 1, n. 8; Scotus follows *Anal. Post. I*.

we have seen, even Olivi, who interprets theology squarely in terms of a “thick description,” allows for a possibility of construing a discipline based on theological material built on such a method, although he calls it “analogous” to science. In present-day terms, we can say that he was describing an intratextual system (“systematic theology,” according to Tracy). We will also see that Scotus, without directly contradicting such an interpretation, further develops the idea into a full-scale defense of theology as a valid and rigorous science in its own right, with its own system of evidence and proofs that lead to certainty.⁴¹

Stephen Dumont’s study (op.cit.), which focuses on the issue of abstractive vs. intuitive cognition, provides a useful background for the situation with the debate about the “scientific” status of theology around the time of Scotus, in particular about the relationship between the positions of Scotus, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines. Thus according to Dumont (585) Henry thought that there can be demonstrative or scientific knowledge of truths of faith in the present life: a “theologian can attain knowledge of the objects of belief beyond that given in faith which is sufficiently clear and evident to be called scientific.” Henry outlines three levels of attaining truth (586): faith, intellect (where evidence is attained not by an object being present but by reasoning through definitions and syllogisms), vision (where the object is immediately and evidently present to the intellect). Out of these three types, “vision” is not possible in theology in the

⁴¹ At this point one must make a comment on the perennial discussion in secondary literature (well reflected in Vos’s study, op.cit.) as to whether Scotus and the likes of him practiced philosophy or theology. Clearly they practiced what we now would call, according to Tracy’s or Lindbeck’s classification, a mix of systematic and fundamental theology, where fundamental theology, just as philosophy, uses arguments accessible to the conversation *ad extra*, for example to pagan philosophers, and systematic theology, while maintaining its intratextual nature, uses ways of making things clear and coherent, just as any other discipline. The cause of the confusion is that medievalists debating this issue are uninformed of hermeneutic and postcritical developments in either philosophy or theology. Indeed, if one considers that most scientific disciplines are intratextual according to Lindbeck, and “mythologically” coherent according to Sharpe, from the present-day point of view there is simply no fundamental difference between what theology and sciences do, except for the degree of their intratextuality, which can be broader or narrower.

present state. At the same time, according to Henry “theology is truly scientific in the sense of *intellectus*.” Although evidence obtained this way is not as great as that of the “vision,” there may be just enough evidence to justify the status of theology as a science (587). According to Henry (cf. *SH* and *Olivi!*), “the whole basis for the obscurity of the truths of faith is that they concern particulars, while *intellectus* is limited to universals.” This is the reason why theological truths in this state cannot be held by faith and understanding at the same time (587, note 34).

As opposed to Henry, Godfrey claims that theologians only *believe* the articles of faith, so theology cannot be called science strictly speaking (588). Already at this point one can see, as will become clear from the following analysis, that apart from some details Scotus is generally more in agreement with Henry’s position on the status of theology.⁴² Dumont states as much and sums up Scotus’s position in the following way (590):

... Scotus maintained that it is possible for a wayfarer to have an unqualified (*simpliciter*) and perfect science of theology. It is an absolute or unqualified science since it is a priori and not merely a posteriori; it is perfect since superior to faith. That is, Scotus here argued nothing less than that a fully rigorous proper science of theology is compatible with the wayfarer state.⁴³

However, how exactly does theology operate to achieve a status of, or at least parallel to that of a science?

⁴² E.g., Scotus recites these arguments of Godfrey in *Rep.* I-A, prol. q. 2, n. 166 and rejects them in n. 170ff.

⁴³ Cf. 591: abstractive “cognition of the divine nature, which is nonetheless distinct, is available to the wayfarer” and it “suffices for an a priori science of theology superior to faith...”; 592: Scotus tries to “preserve a rigorous science of theology outside the beatific vision.” The question whether for Scotus the question of theology as science is limited to the “wayfarer state” of theology will be addressed later.

*Prior to the Reportatio I-A account*⁴⁴

Scotus's accounts of the nature of theology prior to the *Reportatio* I-A show a clear dependence on the previous tradition that goes back to the *Summa Halensis* and echoes through the earlier accounts of Bonaventure and Olivi discussed above. For example, the Oxford Collation 30 (Vivés, vol. 5, 260-65)⁴⁵ which raises the question "whether theology of God is practical or speculative" definitely reflects some sort of an early stage in the discussion that is still based on the four Aristotelian causes (cf. Prügl) and addresses themes such as whether the subject of theology is "the whole Christ" or "God" that are already raised in *SH* and Olivi.⁴⁶ The *Ordinatio* Prologue — which is similar in structure to that of the *Lectura*, with the key texts on theology (discussed below) exhibiting clear parallels, but different from the *Rep.* I-A — presents an interesting case. On the one hand, there is a clear link to the earlier, more derivative discussion of theology. For example Part 5 ("Of theology as a practical science"), which no longer has a parallel in *Rep.* I-A, discusses a number of issues similar to the Oxford Collatio 30, i.e., it clearly gravitates to the older material. Parts 1 and 2 do not correspond to anything in *Rep.* I-A. Part 3 ("On the object of theology") is on a subject close to the *Rep.* I-A account — however, the contents do not entirely match *Rep.* I-A. For example, Scotus here, as *SH* and Olivi before him, still debates whether Christ is the first object of theology, etc.

⁴⁴ The reason why the current analysis is based on the *Reportatio* I-A account as the key text will be stated below. I must thank Dominique Demange for his valuable critique of this section, which allowed me to clarify some statements.

⁴⁵ As printed in the Vivés-Wadding edition, Paris collations precede Oxford collations (cf. Vos, op.cit., 62, note 13). However, according to S. Dumont, "William of Ware, Richard of Conington and the *Collationes Oxonienses* of John Duns Scotus," in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, edited by L. Honnefelder et al. (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 59-85, the order of Collations is not definitive, and while Dumont seems to claim that Oxford Collations were after Paris, Vos (op.cit.) claims that Oxford Collations were before Paris. We prefer to proceed based on the contents, which clearly exhibit, in the case of the Oxford Collation 30, a more derivative stage in Scotus's work, compared, e.g., to the discussion of theology in the *Reportatio* I-A.

⁴⁶ See texts printed in the Appendix.

The section of the *Ordinatio* Prologue that is most interesting for the present discussion, as well as closest to the way the question is posed in the Prologue to *Rep.* I-A, is Part 4 (“On theology as science”), which discusses the issues whether theology in itself is a science and whether it is a subordinate science or not.⁴⁷ If one compares the accounts of the *Ordinatio* (which is close to that of the *Lectura*) and the *Rep.* I-A (discussed below), one immediately starts to wonder whether by the time of the *Reportatio* Scotus removes some limitations from the concept of science (or obtaining and possessing knowledge that corresponds to a scientific way) that was based on *Anal. Post.* I: a move that would certainly impact his conceptualization of theology as a science. The flow of the argument in *Ord.* prol., pt. 4, q. 1-2, n. 208 (I, 141), where Scotus lists four conditions required for a “science,” indicates that at this point he still considers all four of them as necessary⁴⁸ (as will become clear later, condition 4 is no longer a *per se* condition in *Rep.* I-A): it must be (1) certain, (2) necessary, (3) caused by a cause evident to the intellect, and (4) “applied to the object of cognition through a syllogism or discursive argument.” The difficulty with such a restricted understanding of science arises when Scotus applies it to the three levels of theology that he deals with: for God, for the blessed, and for the pilgrims. It is obvious that in the case of God there cannot be any imperfections, and condition 4 is a sign of imperfection, when the acquisition of knowledge proceeds not instantly but one step after another.⁴⁹ Therefore

⁴⁷ Echoes of the earlier tradition remain even in this Question, for example a discussion of theology as “wisdom,” as earlier in *SH* and *Olivi*.

⁴⁸ Indeed, if he did not, as in *Rep.* I-A, there would be no reason to discuss seriously the difficulty listed below, which is not even mentioned in *Rep.* I-A.

⁴⁹ According to Scotus, who expresses a standard point of view, God knows without discursive knowledge, cf.: “However, God does understand all, and, moreover, without discursive knowledge; therefore, he knows matter according to its proper nature and the notion of matter as it is in itself (without any actual analogy with form), and not through the nature of form, and thus there is a proper idea that corresponds to [matter]” (*Rep.* I-A, dist. 36, n. 106); “... God, before any processing activity of the intellect, understood himself and his essence. Otherwise he could not have constructed any [concepts] about it through [more complex] intellectual operations, because the processing activity [of the intellect] as regards its object follows a simple apprehension and intellection of this object (and, in

such a concept of science does not seem to apply to God, and Scotus further debates whether or not it could apply to the state of the blessed. Thus the concept of theology as a science, if it includes the discursive step (i.e., in the restrictive sense of *Anal. Post.* I), does not entirely satisfy all the three levels at which theology can potentially exist.

If one turns to the account of the *Rep.* I-A, presented below in detail, it becomes immediately clear that Scotus no longer distinguishes between the several levels at which science (and theology) is possible, but speaks of science in universal terms as applied to any — generic — intellect, and only then qua in the intellect of a pilgrim. Discursive thinking is no longer a necessary condition for science. Removing this restriction automatically removes the problem with such a science being in an “ideal” or perfect intellect that does not employ discursive thinking: hence this problem is not even mentioned.⁵⁰ Instead of the requirement of a discursive method, what is now required of science is a possibility of building a conceptual construct based, first of all, on several distinct “concepts other than the main quidditative concept,” and, second, on the “order between such concepts” based on “natural”⁵¹ priority or posteriority. If one were allowed to apply the terminology of contemporary philosophy, one could say that there is a clear shift from seeing science in terms of a syllogistic, step-by-step process to something that operates with “eidetic” (Husserl) structures. Such structures can only be perceived by humans in temporal succession, but theoretically they, or their validity, do not depend on such successive processes. They can be immediately and simultaneously per-

its turn, any [simple] intellection can be followed by the will or volition of an appropriate type, e.g., in the simple form of being agreeable). Therefore, he can understand and will before any processing activity of the intellect, and in this way in God the intellect and will, as well as their acts, precede any processing activity of the intellect from the very nature of things” (*Rep.* I-A, Dist. 35, n. 34).

⁵⁰ Again, one can say that the concept of science is basically the same in both works: the human intellect needs discourse while a perfect intellect does not. However, it still makes a difference whether the problem that discursive knowledge poses for a perfect intellect is still discussed (as in *Ord.*), or one starts (as in *Rep.* I-A) without considering it since it has already been resolved.

⁵¹ Vos uses an apt term “structural priority.”

ceived by a perfect or ideal intellect “at a glance,” not worked out in temporal succession.⁵² In other words, there seems to be a shift from the traditional restrictive understanding of science — as based on syllogisms, which unfold in temporal succession according to certain rules that must be followed — to something like phenomenological⁵³ observation of conceptual structures that can potentially happen in an instant and where the main objective is to “see” (as in regular vision) whether the parts of the structure “fit” or not. One can compare such a way of grasping intelligible structures with the way Mozart perceived music: according to well-known anecdotal accounts, he did not have to replay his symphonies in real time in his head, but “saw” them simultaneously at a glance as visualizable structures.

One must acknowledge, however, that the move towards seeing science in this unrestricted “phenomenological-eidetic” way starts already in the *Ordinatio* (*Lectura* contains a similar account), so *Rep.* I-A does not present a radically different account but only completes what was started in earlier works. For example, in *Ord.*, prol. pt. 4, q. 1-2, n. 209 (I, 142-3), while resolving the question whether condition 4 (discursive process) pertains to the science of the blessed, Scotus observes that such discursive process may not always have to be successive, i.e., one step after another temporally, but

⁵² Of course, no analogy between medieval and modern thought can be exact. However, an analogy with Husserl does work to some extent. Thus for Husserl perceiving an eidetic structure (or “synthesis”) also takes time, just as it does in Scotus in the case of the human intellect. However, theoretically eidetic structures are “timeless,” or independent from the successive step-by-step process of their perception. While in our normal experience we “walk around” them and are only able to examine them from one angle, they are there in all their “three-dimensional” integrity at every moment, so theoretically they can be grasped in their totality at a glance (as in the case of Scotus’s divine intellect). (Thus whatever Scotus attributes to the “divine intellect” simply corresponds to the a-temporal aspects of Husserl’s eidetic structures that persist through any temporal process of their perception.) Cf. our perception of images: the human brain perceives and then reproduces even “still” images successively in time, although very fast, but theoretically they can be captured in an instant, as by a camera, unlike, e.g., a piece of sounding music, which must be perceived in succession.

⁵³ Again, the term is used in its Husserlian sense.

could simply be based on the “priority of nature,” in which case it is not incompatible with superior forms of cognition:

However, just the opposite seems to be the case. Indeed, the quiddity of a subject matter, in whatever light it is seen, of itself virtually contains all truths that it can reveal to the intellect affected by such an object of knowledge. Therefore, if the quiddity of a line seen in natural light can reveal truths contained in itself to our intellect, by the same token it can also [reveal them] as seen in the divine essence. However, every truth caused in our intellect through something naturally known prior to that, is caused in a discursive manner; hence, discourse [ideally] does not require temporal succession nor temporal order, but only a natural⁵⁴ order, which goes as follows: the initial point of a discourse is known as prior to [the next one] by natural [priority], and as such it brings about the [naturally] next point.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Vos would say “structural.”

⁵⁵ *Sed oppositum videtur, quia quiditas subiecti, in quocumque lumine videtur, continet virtualiter veritates, quas potest facere notas intellectui, de se, scilicet intellectui passivo [affected by] a tali obiecto. Ergo si quiditas lineae visa in lumine naturali potest facere veritates in se inclusas notas intellectui nostro, pari ratione et ut visa in essentia divina; sed omnis veritas causata in intellectu nostro per aliquid prius naturaliter notum causatur per discursum, quia discursus non requirit successionem temporis nec ordinem ipsius, sed ordinem naturae, videlicet quod principium discursus sit prius naturaliter notum, et ut sic sit causativum alterius extremi discursus.* Vos (op.cit., 311) quotes a parallel text from *Lectura*, prol. pt. 3, q. 1, n. 109 (XVI, 40), which renders the same idea (i.e., that temporal discursive thinking is not required to reach conclusions as in a science, but that it can also be done simultaneously as a “structure”)—curiously—even more clearly (my translation): “Hence a discursive movement from the principles to conclusions does not need to happen in [temporal] instances. Our intellect can also simultaneously conceive of both the principles and their application to the conclusion. Whence the only thing that is required for discourse is something cognized as naturally prior and something else as [naturally] posterior: that which is known as [naturally] posterior is deduced from the naturally prior in thought at the same instant of time” (*Unde ad discursum a principiis ad conclusionem non requiritur quod in diversis instantibus fiat talis discursus, sed simul etiam intellectus noster cognoscit principia et applicationem eorum ad conclusionem; unde ad discursum solum requiritur quod sit aliquid naturaliter prius cognitum*

This passage seems to suggest that a generic intellect (e.g., in its ideal state) is capable of “seeing at a glance”: it happens just as in the process of simple cognition, except that in this case the intellect “sees” not just the initial self-evident principle or a datum but the whole conceptual structure based on the above. That is, perceiving structures (which Scotus here still calls “discourse”) does not need to be temporal but, as it were, “phenomenological-eidetic.”⁵⁶ However, in the *Ordinatio* Scotus still has not removed “having discursive reasoning” as a necessary condition of science: hence he is still debating this issue instead of starting with a clean slate.

A. Vos makes a similar observation based on the parallel text from the *Lectura*⁵⁷ in his Chapter on Scotus’s epistemology (op.cit.).⁵⁸ According to Vos (op.cit., 311), Aquinas’s position is that certainty is partly lost in the human intellect because of the temporal and sequential nature of discourse. According to Scotus, however, “certainty ... exclusively depends on the certainty of self-evident premises and the demonstrative force of an inference,” and it cannot be lost. As Vos remarks, “Duns constructs an alternative epistemic framework by replacing *time* with *structure*.” It is conceptual validity, not the fact that the argument is construed in time, that determines certainty. (One could comment, it is not a *discursus* but a valid “eidetic structure” (Husserl) that determines certainty and that can be seen as the foundation of a “science.”)⁵⁹ Thus theology as a science — in the sense of “theology in itself,” in

et aliud posterius, et ex priore naturaliter cognito potest simul tempore deducere posterius notum).

⁵⁶ Again, the structures are a-temporal: humans perceive them in time, but an ideal intellect could potentially grasp them in an instant.

⁵⁷ The text is quoted in the footnote above.

⁵⁸ I noticed that Vos already discovered this move from temporal to structural in Scotus’s epistemology after I had completed this section of the Introduction. (I thus decided to append his thoughts on the matter as confirming the point.) However, it is surprising how little attention he pays to something that is seemingly a very important (and quite modern) move in Scotus’s epistemology compared to his predecessors!

⁵⁹ Vos’s claim that in his logic Scotus switches from a diachronic to a synchronic model, i.e., from temporal succession to “structural” moments that are all simultaneous but distinguishable in terms of “structure” (e.g., natural priority), can be used to substantiate the claim that Scotus’s epistemology switches to a “structural” model as well. Cf. 360: Scotus “develops a different type of epistemic logic which is controlled by structures: he does

its perfect state — is rather an epistemic structure; it does not need temporal discourse and can be known by a perfect or blessed intellect as well (op.cit., 349-51).

This “eidetic-phenomenological” moment in Scotus’s interpretation of theology as science seems to be generally consistent with his account of how the intellect acquires truth, which remains unchanged from the *Ordinatio* to the *Reportatio*. Scotus discusses the criterion of certainty of the objects of the intellect in relation to Anselm’s *Proslogion* proof of the existence of God, which Scotus thinks is perfectly valid.⁶⁰ The criterion, according to Scotus, is in the clarity of the concept itself: if a concept is sufficiently clear, the intellect, through some sort of a direct seeing, can perceive whether the concept is valid and even whether the conceptualized object is real or not. We should trust our intellectual abilities, Scotus thinks, just as we trust our senses that immediately and unmistakably pick out regular patterns, as it happens, for example, with detecting harmony or dissonance in musical sounds. This quasi-aesthetic seeing of intelligible objects in Scotus’s discussion of Anselm’s proof seems to be of the same nature as the ability to perceive whole conceptual structures, which is characteristic of Scotus’s discussion of what constitutes “scientific” knowledge in theology. Thus Scotus in general sees our intellectual activity as a kind of eidetic-phenomenological (as in Husserl) observation of conceptual structures where the criteria of validity and truth can be perfectly handled within the area of interaction between the object and our intellectual activity, without going “outside” for confirmation.⁶¹

not work with *moments of time*, but with *structural moments (instantia naturae)...*”.

⁶⁰ The relevant texts are in *Reportatio* I-A, Dist. 2, Part I, q. 1-3, n. 71-74; cf. parallel but not identical texts in *Ordinatio* I, Dist. 2, d. 2, p. 1, q. 1-2, n. 131-138 (II, 206-10). This issue cannot be discussed here at length; see Chapter 8 of my forthcoming monograph for a more detailed discussion: O. Bychkov, *Aesthetic Revelation: Reading Ancient and Medieval Texts after Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Catholic University Press).

⁶¹ This is, of course, also Husserl’s criteria of validity of phenomenologically observable eidetic complexes (e.g., in *Cartesian Meditations*): such criteria come from within the phenomenological observation itself. Since no external reference is possible, the main criterion must be the particular

The Prologue to Reportatio I-A

The present reconstruction of Scotus's view of theology as science will be based on the *Reportatio* I-A account.⁶² There are clear indications that *Rep.* I-A is a different work of Scotus that presents his latest and most advanced judgments.⁶³ In particular, Dumont confirms the importance of the *Rep.* I-A Prologue over that of the *Ordinatio* specifically for the discussion of theology as science in Scotus.⁶⁴ Vos's objection to the position that *Rep.* I-A is a more advanced or mature work of Scotus based on the fact that, according to his chronology, Scotus started to work on *Rep.* I in the same year as he finished *Ord.* I-II (based on *Lectura* I-II)⁶⁵ cannot be considered decisive. Even if Scotus himself was not much more mature when he started working on the *Reportatio*, this next stage in his work, quite naturally, reflected a different, more thought-out approach to issues. For this reason the state of

coherence and elegance of such structures. Aesthetic aspects of phenomenology are the focus of my next research project.

⁶² Another study of the issue of theology as science in Duns Scotus based on the account of *Reportatio* I-A is forthcoming: D. Demange, "La théologie est-elle une science? La réponse de Duns Scot à Godefroid de Fontaines dans le prologue des *Reportata Parisiensia*," *Documenti e studi* (2009). Dominique kindly allowed me to read the draft. This essay contains additional reasons for using the *Reportatio* I-A rather than the *Lectura* or *Ordinatio*.

⁶³ For some details see Introductions to both volumes of the Wolter/Bychkov edition-translation of the *Rep.* I-A: A. Wolter and O. Bychkov, *John Duns Scotus. The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture (Reportatio I-A)*, vols. 1-2 (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2004, 2008). The same edition-translation is used for all textual references in the present essay.

⁶⁴ Thus Dumont (1989, 581) notes that the theme of intuitive-abstract cognition is less developed in the *Ordinatio* Prologue compared to the *Rep.* I-A Prologue. He himself mostly discusses the *Reportatio* text (585ff), which he clearly views as more important. In Dumont's own words, the *Rep.* I-A Prologue is "another matter. There Scotus explicitly appealed to this distinction to address perhaps the most fundamental debate in theology, which had recently become heated in Paris. That debate was over the scientific status of theology itself." Cf.: "Scotus's reply to the second question of his Parisian prologue can thus be taken as his part in the debate at Paris over the status of theology" (589).

⁶⁵ Cf. Vos, op.cit., 64; he does admit, however, that the *Reportatio* contains new material (ibid., 63).

his thought in a particular work should not be judged on chronology alone, but also on the contents of his arguments.

In order to establish the possibility of theology as a science, one must first resolve the question (Question 1) “whether God can be the per se subject of some science under the proper aspect of deity.”⁶⁶ The problem is that God is traditionally assumed to be simple, i.e., “nothing knowable about God has a concept intrinsically other than a concept of God” (n. 1). However, if there are no conceptual distinctions in a subject matter, one cannot build a conceptual structure required for a scientific analysis: there will only be a knowledge of fact, as in simple apprehension. To take the example of natural and social sciences: already Aristotle declared that it is meaningless to study, e.g., “why water is water.” In order to have a science about water it must be taken under different aspects: e.g., water as viscous (physics), water as a solvent (chemistry), water as a commodity (economics), etc. Scotus proposes to resolve the matter by means of examining four issues: (Article 1) what is ‘science’? (Article 2) what is ‘the first subject of a science’? (Article 3) can God be conceived under characteristics that are distinct from the notion of his essence? (Article 4) is there any order among such characteristics?

Examining the issue “what is meant by science” in Article 1 Scotus, following *Anal. Post.* I, provides the following definition (n. 8): science is “(1) the certain cognition of a (2) necessary truth that is (3) suited by nature to be made evident from another necessary truth — that has been earlier made evident — (4) by way of syllogistic discourse.” That is, science is not merely simple apprehension but includes building inferences upon foundations that are clear and certain. The first two conditions (i.e., being certain and necessary), Scotus says (n. 11), are common to science and knowledge of principles (which is simple cognition “based on immediate evidence of its terms”). The third condition is proper to science: science is “about a truth *deriving* its evidence from principles” (n. 12). Now comes an important difference from his earlier accounts: instead of starting with a discussion of implications of, and problems issuing from the limiting fourth condition,

⁶⁶ The “aspect of deity” is necessary to make this discipline theology, as opposed to, e.g., physics.

as in *Ord.*, he dismisses this condition right away as not essential to science *per se*. “The fourth condition,” he says (n. 13), “namely that it is subsequent knowledge *derived by syllogistic inference (per discursum syllogisticum)* from earlier knowledge, is a matter of imperfection, *nor is it characteristic of scientific knowledge per se*, but only of imperfect science, *and it does not pertain to science except* in as much as this exists in an intellect that moves *discursively (discurrere)* and proceeds from what is known to what is unknown” (my italics).

As the reader remembers, in the *Ordinatio* account discursive knowledge is still a necessary condition of science, and it poses a problem for theology at the level of the divine and blessed intellect, although Scotus does entertain the idea of “discursive” knowledge that excludes temporal succession. Clearly, in *Rep.* I-A it is no longer such a condition, which means that Scotus here speaks of “science” in general terms, as no longer limited to the condition of the intellect in our “pilgrim’s” state. This allows science as such, including a “science of God,” to reside even in a higher type of intellect. Therefore below in Article 3, speaking of the possibility of distinct concepts in God, Scotus simply ignores the issue of discursive knowledge and speaks of the knowledge of God in a generic intellect, including God’s own intellect. This is also why the condition of “discursive knowledge” is never mentioned in *Rep.* I-A as a potential threat to the universality of theology as a science. Thus, with the criterion of discursive knowledge out of the picture, this is the only specific criterion that is now required in order for us to speak of a science (n. 14): “... scientific knowledge can only be about something of which there can be *several concepts*, one of which is quidditative and the others are quasi-derivative, *according to the certain order* they have to the quidditative concept itself” (my italics). In other words, there must be several concepts that can be ordered. No discursive knowledge is needed: an ideal intellect simply “sees” these concepts in the order of their “natural” (or “structural”) priority or posteriority. So if one can show that there can be such knowledge of God, i.e., several distinct concepts that can be organized between themselves, one would have a science of theology.

Although the other two criteria, i.e., the requirement of being based on certain and necessary principles, are not specific to science (see above), they must certainly be present as well. However, although the issue of certainty and clarity of evidence in theology — i.e., that certain “theological truths” are not immediately evident and certain to the human intellect, but are assumed on faith—is usually presented as the main obstacle to theology being a true science, this is not actually an issue for Scotus at this stage (i.e., in Question 1). Indeed, here he examines the status of theology as science for an ideal intellect (see texts quoted below), and the ideal intellect, such as that of God, is assumed to know “theological” truths with the certainty and clarity of simple apprehension. Thus the only issue that needs to be examined at this stage is whether one can in principle build a conceptual structure out of such initial body of evidence. The question of the certainty of primary evidence in theology, however, will become important for the discussion of the status of theology in our present state (Prologue, Question 2). Although the present overview does not focus on Question 2,⁶⁷ the question about the nature of evidence in theology will be briefly addressed below.

Since following Scotus’s definition of science one needs to determine first of all if there can be multiple concepts of God in order to form a conceptual structure, i.e., that God is more than just identity and simplicity, Article 3 goes right to the question “whether God can be conceived under the notions distinct from that of the essence.” Scotus brings up a common point. The pilgrim can only conceive of God “by way of creatures”: that is, “pure perfections” — qualities that imply no defect or limitation⁶⁸ — that are distinct in creatures are considered “united” in God. In other words, these perfections “represent” those perfections that are in God in a united state. Since the created intellect cannot comprehend them in their unity it forms “distinct” (i.e. separate) concepts of these perfections modeled on their existence in creatures. “And in this fashion,” Scotus sums up, “the intellect of the pilgrim can have about God some concept expressing just what he

⁶⁷ This Question has already been discussed in detail by Dumont (1989) and Demange (op.cit., forthcoming).

⁶⁸ Anselm’s “better it than not-it.”

is and other concepts about his *quasi-attributes ...*" (n. 55; my italics). Scotus shows how to construct such conceptual knowledge of God through combining distinct concepts about him in *Rep.* I-A, dist. 3, q. 1, a. 3. The question here is whether God can be naturally knowable by the intellect of a pilgrim, the answer to which (n. 41) is that it is possible to have a concept proper to God in the intellect of a pilgrim. Scotus continues (n. 45-46):

I admit that, if we are speaking of a concept that is absolutely simple, and cannot be split up into diverse concepts, we cannot have a proper concept of God without every concept of this sort abstracted from a creature being univocally common to himself and the creature. But since we cannot distinguish him from what is not him if we remain with such a concept, we must be able to distinguish him through a concept that is proper, but this takes place only after another concept—or other concepts that are unqualifiedly simple and common to him and creatures—first qualifies such a simply simple common concept and thus it becomes proper to God, so that it is not common to any creature, although such concepts are all abstracted from creatures. [46] For example: 'being' is a simply simple concept affirmed of God and a creature; this concept, qualified by means of some other equally common concept, such as goodness, actuality, and necessary existence simultaneously joined to it, is proper to God and inapplicable to any creature: e.g., 'a being that is good, pure act and has necessary existence' is God. And this is just about as proper a concept as we can have of him in this life, for we cannot in this life have naturally any definitive concept, which is expressive of this quiddity that is deity, as deity.

However, Scotus continues in an important move in the Prologue, the question is not limited to the imperfect way of knowing by the pilgrim's intellect. Can this conceptual structure of the essence and "quasi-attributes" be perceived by a higher intellect?

But what is more, besides this truth about the intellect of the pilgrim some others ask if God can be conceived under distinct notions *by any intellect whatsoever*, also by the divine intellect.... [T]he question does not ask about God as related to the intellect of the pilgrim, but *absolutely* [it asks] if God on his part is such an object as can be known in a science that is *in some proportionate intellect*" (n. 56, my italics).

That is, the question is asked in general about any — ideal — intellect, including the divine. Thus the status of science is elevated to the universal level. In other words, conceptual structures here are not understood as discursive or sequential, but simply as forming some distinct eidetic patterns detectible by any intellect, including an ideal intellect that perceives them in an instant. Scotus concludes that indeed, in this sense — i.e., in the sense of the existence of multiple distinct concepts, with one being main or "quidditative" — there can be a science about God in a perfect and isolated intellect:

I concede that without comparing the divine essence in God to anything outside one can have not only a quidditative concept of the essence qua essence, but also other *quasi-derivative* concepts: not only of the personal and notional, but also of all pure or unqualified perfections. For these distinct concepts, no intellectual knowledge comparing something to what is outside is required (n. 107).

It is most remarkable that Scotus consistently adds "quasi" to the terms he employs ("quasi-attributes" in n. 55, "quasi-derivative concepts" in n. 14, 107) when describing his "science of God." Indeed, since God is simple, one cannot speak of the elements of this science in a direct sense, but only in an analogical sense. But this way of speaking, willingly or not, brings Scotus's description of his project very close to

Olivi's language when the latter speaks of the possibility of an analogate of science about theological matters!⁶⁹

The question that is perhaps most important for determining the scientific status of theology is asked in Article 4: "What order exists among such concepts?" Indeed, in order to have a science, it is not enough to have multiple distinct concepts. One also needs to show that there is some order among these concepts, i.e., to prove that they all can be organized under some central concept into an "eidetic" structure. Scotus thus attempts to show that "God under the aspect of deity" is the first subject of the science of theology, and all other aspects can be ordered under this central one:

... there *is* an order among notions under which God is conceivable, such that the notion of the essence is absolutely first and the rest that follow are either prior or posterior to one another depending upon whether they are closer to this notion or more remote from it (n. 117).

The practical problem that Scotus faces at this point is that he is trying to establish, epistemologically, the possibility of the science of theology for an ideal intellect, while he himself does not possess one. The only way he can achieve that is by assuming a parallelism or a close analogy between the ways different types of intellect operate. In this case the operation of the human intellect even in its present state should be analogous to the operation of the ideal intellect. Thus by observing how the human intellect builds conceptual structures by way of detecting patterns (e.g., natural priority or posteriority, etc.) one can infer how this happens in a generic intellect.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Cf. his answer to Objection n. 4 quoted above. According to Olivi, the division into the subject and "attributes" in God will be "merely according to the order of understanding," and this sort of a science will be analogous to, but not entirely sufficient to qualify as, a true science.

⁷⁰ If one continues the parallel with Husserl's phenomenology, here is how this would happen. One can reconstruct what the "divine intellect" would perceive by isolating the eidetic structures that remain constant throughout the process of their perception by the human intellect.

Scotus outlines the governing principle for discovering a hierarchical conceptual structure — that would guarantee the possibility of a science — as regards God: if things have some real order between them when they are really distinct, they will have the same conceptual order when they are only conceptually distinct. As Scotus's example of construing such conceptual order regarding God shows, he starts precisely by recreating the order of "conceptual priority": the only way available to a human theologian who does not have a direct access to divine reality. We must assume, following Scotus's appeal to trust our mental observation (outlined above in connection to his discussion of Anselm's proof), that recreating the conceptual order sufficiently clearly, guarantees the correctness of the real⁷¹ order inferred from this purely intellectual procedure. In other words, Scotus is involved, from a modern perspective, in a purely phenomenological exercise. His "speculative" approach to theology here must be understood literally, in the sense of internal seeing. Here is the example:

The minor is proved,⁷² first by comparing essentials or pure perfections among themselves. Let us suppose that the *perfect immaterial nature, the perfect intellect*, that through which the intellect has a proportionate object present to itself, and the act of understanding itself were really distinguished. And, besides these, suppose that there were one act about the primary object and another about the secondary objects that

⁷¹ In order to understand correctly the following discussion in Scotus of the real or conceptual order, or real or conceptual distinctions in application to God, one must remember that properly speaking there is real identity in God; however, since both personal properties and pure perfections in God, according to Scotus, are also somehow really distinct, he uses the idea of "formal distinction" (in his own words "formal non-identity"), or something between conceptual and real, in application to God. This is another reason—in addition to the fact that he is reconstructively inferring such real order in the divine—why he puts his statements about "real distinction" or "real order" in God in the subjunctive ("there would be," "if they were," etc.).

⁷² The minor, viz. "now however, if the personal characteristics were really distinct from those that are essential, and the essential attributes would have an order as they follow from the essence itself."

are virtually contained in the primary object. Then the following real order would obtain among them: the perfect immaterial essence would be really prior to the perfect intellect, and the perfect intellect really prior to the representation of its object, and this representation would be [really] prior to the act of understanding the object, and the act of understanding the primary object would be really prior to the act of understanding the secondary object. *And this would be a statement of the reasoned fact:* “One having a perfect immaterial nature has perfect intellectuality.” And this would be a reasoned fact: “what is perfectly intellectual can have a notion that represents perfectly an object proportionate to itself.” And again this would be a reasoned fact: “A perfect intellect having an object proportionate to itself perfectly present understands unless impeded.” And this is a reasoned fact: “An intellect understanding a primary object can understand a secondary object virtually contained in the primary object,” *so that from any two of the aforesaid propositions there could be a demonstration of the reasoned fact to conclude one term from another*” (n. 118, my italics).

The key moment in this example is that on the basis of simple structural relations such as “thinker and thought” or “thought and the object of thought” directly detected by our intellectual (in modern terms phenomenological) observation, the intellect can proceed to “statements of reasoned fact”⁷³ — i.e., to building more complex conceptual structures or, in Scotus’s own words, to deriving further evident and necessary truths on the basis of other necessary truths that have been made evident earlier — that are required for there to be a science. One must remember that “statements of rea-

⁷³ As Allan Wolter explains in the Glossary (see Wolter/Bychkov edition of *Rep.* I-A, vol. 1 or 2) “reasoned fact” is a technical term (cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, Bk. I, chapter 13) for the “conclusion of a syllogistic demonstration (*demonstratio propter quid*) in which the middle term cites the precise cause of why the predicate inheres in the subject.” As opposed to that, “simple fact” is “where the middle term does not give precise cause or reason why the predicate inheres in the subject.”

soned fact" here must not be understood merely as results of syllogisms or discursive thinking, but as parts of intelligible or "eidetic" structures that can be detected directly and simultaneously by any intellect, even the one that does not use discursive thinking.

Up to this point Scotus's task of establishing the possibility of conceptual structure or order in God has been made easier by the fact that he starts with examining concepts of the type "pure perfections" — i.e., something that can be naturally known by both ideal and pilgrim's intellect. (We can safely add that such structural relations between "simple or unqualified perfections" could be detected by and become clear to any observer in our present state, even a non-Christian one, which would qualify Scotus's exercise here, according to Tracy, as fundamental theology, or conversation *ad extra*.) For example, notions related to thinking, as in Scotus's example quoted above, are easily derivable from observing our own mental reality, and subsequently can be applied to a "perfect intellect." But what about revealed or "exclusively theological" truths such as the Trinitarian doctrine that are not evident to the pilgrim's intellect, and (a present-day theologian would add, only within an intratextual community) are only believed in?

In our present state theology, according to Scotus, utilizes two basic types of initial data. One type — such as the existence of God, "pure perfections" in God, etc. — can be obtained naturally based on experience, observation, and reason (as it happens presently in fundamental theology, or conversation *ad extra*). The other type, such as the elements of the Trinitarian doctrine (for example, personal properties in God, as in Scotus's example), is based on articles of belief alone (the parallel would be our systematic or intratextual theology).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Re. the two types of material about God accessible to theology cf. Prologue, n. 124: "Now however some things can be concluded [about it, i.e. the Cause] from the effects, as is evident from Bk. XII of the *Metaphysics* and will be made evident in many questions about God, but some cannot be inferred from the effects, such as truths which are exclusively theological"; cf. *ibid.*, n. 125, "Some things are knowable about God in a confused way, as it is possible to know from creatures, other [things] can only be known about God distinctly under the notion of such an essence and under the notion of the essence proper; therefore, etc."

While operating with the first type of data is conceivable, the second type presents obvious problems for a “pilgrim” theologian. Of course, this does not threaten the possibility of theology as a science for an ideal intellect. One could still think of a possibility of theology in a higher intellect that perceives these theological truths clearly. However, Scotus attempts to prove the scientific nature of theology from his present position as a pilgrim, and currently his task is to show, precisely from the pilgrim’s position, that some order obtains between not only essential but also personal properties in God. But how would a non-ideal intellect establish at least the possibility of structuring such “exclusively theological” concepts on the basis of the data that comes from the articles of faith? Can a human theologian at least show that theology is still a science when it operates with purely theological truths — setting aside for the moment the question of their evidence — i.e., that they can be ordered? If establishing an order between “natural” concepts such as pure perfections at least can be inferred from observing this order in creatures, how can we infer such an order between concepts of which we have no natural knowledge whatsoever?

As Scotus’s examples show, he thinks that this can be achieved *by analogy* with ordering natural concepts. Just as the intellect of a pilgrim is able to infer how natural concepts are ordered really in God from the conceptual order between them that it can detect already in our present state, so should the ideal intellect be able to order concepts of the “exclusively theological” kind. However, as the nature of all types of intellect is the same, the ideal intellect that sees “theological truths” clearly, must have the same mechanism of reconstructing the order between them as our intellect has while operating with natural concepts. Therefore, a pilgrim theologian can use the mechanism of ordering natural concepts that is available to us in our present state in order to reconstruct, analogically, the order between “theological” concepts, or at least to infer the existence of such an order between them, even though this material is not directly accessible to our intellect. This is how Scotus describes this process:

Secondly, *the order of simple or unqualified perfections can be used to clarify the situation with notional acts and personal properties. If these differed really: perfect memory, which includes the intellect and the object of the intellectual act presenting itself, and the act of expressing the declarative knowledge of this object which is to speak, and that knowledge produced by the act of speaking, which is called the Word, there would be there the simply real order: the memory in a perfect act would be there first, and to speak second, and the Word third* (n. 121, my italics).

Scotus further works out the order of natural (structural) priority of perfections and properties (n. 122): pure perfections should precede notional or personal acts, and notional acts should precede notional terms. The structural priority of pure perfections, which can be phenomenologically perceived even by a pilgrim's intellect, in its turn determines the priority among personal properties: thus both pure perfections and properties can be ordered. Fine-tuning his ordering of personal perfections even further, Scotus points out that one can detect two types of notional properties: the type of really identical, equal and alike properties (common relations such as equality), but also the type that is ordered in respect to common relations: personal properties that are relations of origin (such as generation or procession).

And thus it is evident that always *through the prior as [tamquam] through causes of the reasoned fact what is posterior can be known scientifically*. Therefore there is such a conceptual order among them as there would be a real order if they were really distinct from one another, as was said (n. 123; my italics).

From the texts just quoted one can reconstruct Scotus's "analogical" technique of establishing the order between the elements of "exclusively theological" truths. He does this by painting an imaginary scenario. "If these differed," he says (n. 121), as if he said "suppose that there were distinct personal properties and a real order between them" — then,

since any real order corresponds to a recreatable conceptual order, this order between the “exclusively theological” elements could be recreated on the basis of a conceptual model, which, in its turn, for a pilgrim theologian is based on the order between pure perfections. The same order that we are able to see conceptually in our mind, in theory should obtain really. One must note, once again, that Scotus here speaks of the scientific knowledge of the divine in general, suitable for any intellect. The phrase *tamquam* (n. 123) must mean that while discerning the order between personal properties in the Trinity the ideal intellect operates in the manner that is *analogical* (“as if”) to syllogistic discursive reasoning in an imperfect intellect. That is, “structural” priority or posteriority forms some sort of an eidetic structure that is discernible even without any temporal discursive movement, although it can also be translated into such a movement in the human intellect.

Duns Scotus wraps up his presentation in Article 4 by stating definitively that one can have a science of God “under the aspect of deity,” i.e., theology:

... one could formulate an argument of this sort. That whose essence is the first characteristic that virtually contains necessary truths having an ordered evidence under the aspect of essence can be the first object of some science. But God is such an object, therefore etc. (n. 130).

One must note at this point that looking back at Scotus’s picture of theology as a science, one can see both similarities and differences with the project of the “quasi-science” of theology outlined by Olivi. On the one hand Scotus is forced to proceed analogically when he deals with purely “theological truths.” On the other hand, he clearly has a higher opinion of this project than Olivi, who only mentions it briefly. Even if one deals with premises that are merely believed, one can still have a method, which would make theology into a rigorous science. While for Olivi the particular matters of belief were valid in themselves, without forming a conceptually analyzable science, Scotus defends the advantages of

theological knowledge as opposed to the faith of a “simple old woman”⁷⁵ who only believes in the articles of faith and is guided by them as a child by a parent’s “thick description” of reality. In other words, if one deals with a model where the “scientificity” of knowledge is warranted, as it is in modern phenomenology, by the internal rigor and validity of structural elements and not by any external reference, all one needs to be concerned about is establishing such conceptual rigor and clarity. The “science” here depends not on the type of data but on the characteristics of the process itself. Thus one can still affirm the existence of a rigorous, verifiable science of something even though ultimately the very data it is about is not accessible to our direct experience.⁷⁶

However, what about the two initial criteria of science, certainty and necessity? For our present pilgrim’s state the question of the nature of evidence in theology, as far as “exclusively theological” truths are concerned, is still important. The remaining two questions of the *Reportatio* I-A

⁷⁵ *Rep.* I-A, Prologue, n. 170.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ord.* prol., pt. 4, q. 1-2, n. 210 (I, 144-45), where Scotus asserts that knowledge of contingent objects in theology is still certain and clear, although it is more like knowledge of evident principles than like science of conclusions: “It is the quality of being certain and evident cognition that is a matter of perfection in science; as for being about a necessary object, this is the condition of the object, not of cognition [as such]... Therefore, if some other [type of] cognition is certain and evident, and of itself permanent, it seems to be, formally in itself, more perfect than a science, [despite the fact] that [it] requires a necessary object [but in itself can be less rigorous]. However, the [type of] contingents that pertain to theology are suited by nature to have certain and evident cognition [of them]...”. In this sense theology is not much different from, e.g., contemporary mathematics or theoretical physics: how much, for example something like “alternative dimensions” is accessible to our experience even in principle? And yet people defend bona fide dissertations and write “scientific” books about them! A. Vos also notes the shift in Scotus’s epistemology from the status of the object of knowledge to the qualities of the process of knowing itself. Knowing in itself can be “valid science” no matter what the status of its object if it constitutes an intratextual system that is coherent and valid within itself. Cf. Vos, op.cit., 351: “... there is a shift from the modal status of the epistemic object to the epistemic quality of the act or disposition of *knowing*”; *ibid.*, 353: “the condition of necessity has to be dropped, since it concerns the epistemic object, and not the status of *knowing* itself”; *ibid.*, 355: “The proof theoretical dilemma consists in the possibility that a theological argument may enjoy cogency and probative value while, nevertheless, it is not a demonstration for the philosopher.”

Prologue, Questions 2 and 3, inquire precisely about these sorts of issues: “whether truths that are knowable per se of God as deity can be known by the intellect of the pilgrim” and “whether we can know all the truths knowable about God from what is purely natural” as opposed to supernatural. Although some previous scholars (such as Dumont and Demange) focused precisely on these questions as the most important for determining the status of theology,⁷⁷ one must stress, once again, that they are not at all crucial to establishing the status of theology as a science. Indeed, Question 1 already has established in general the possibility of a bona fide science of theology as a valid eidetic structure suitable for any type of intellect, including human. Whether such a science, and in particular the primary data of such a science (“theological truths”) can be accessible to a human intellect in its current state, and whether this happens naturally or supernaturally has no bearing on the possibility and validity of such a science, although these remain, of course, very important questions. Scotus’s general assessment, however, is reasonably optimistic. Knowledge of God is in principle accessible to the intellect of a pilgrim, but Scotus points out the differences, for the pilgrim’s intellect, between the nature of evidence in theology as opposed to other sciences. As for the source of this knowledge, it can come from both natural and (at least theoretically) supernatural sources, since in principle the capabilities of the human intellect — qua intellect generically speaking — exceed the level of data available to it in our present state.⁷⁸

Speaking of the nature of evidence in theology in our present state according to Scotus, A. Vos further clarifies

⁷⁷ E.g., Dumont (1989), who focuses on Question 2 from the *Rep.* I-A Prologue, remarks in note 3 on p. 580: based on his collection of texts in the Appendix, “... a number of questions listed ask whether abstractive or even intuitive knowledge of God can be communicated to the wayfarer (*viator*). As will be evident, after Scotus this became a chief issue in deciding whether theology is a science, at least with respect to the wayfarer.” Of course there are two qualifications to this assessment, first “after Scotus” and second “at least with respect to the wayfarer,” which means that it does not directly contradict our present assessment but simply shifts accents.

⁷⁸ See Prologue, q. 3, nn. 222-23, 226-27.

the impact that the special object of knowledge in theology (“theological truths”) has on its system of proof and evidence. As noted above, theology as a science can still have a rigorous structure of valid and “necessary” arguments, although they will not be self-evident from the point of view of a philosopher, because the initial premises are taken on faith. In other words, such arguments will not constitute proof in the sense of “demonstration.”⁷⁹ However, Vos points out that Scotus expands the “range of debatable and provable truths in theology” in our present state (op.cit., 346) by introducing another category of proofs, those based on authority (341-42). Although these are not demonstrations from the point of view of a philosopher, authority is a type of evidence. Thus theology and science do, indeed, employ different types of evidence. However, typologically, i.e., as regards the requirement of being based on evident truths and proceeding from them methodically to other truths, theology and science are not diametrically opposed:

For science has an object that is certain and is evident from the evidence of the object; faith has an object that is certain to it and is evident from authority. And thus the object of faith is not completely non-evident, although it is not evident on account of that habit, which derives evidence from the thing and the object, and so in no way do the two contradict one another. Nor do ‘to be evident from the object’ and ‘to be evident from authority’ contradict, or are opposed to one another ... (*Rep.* I-A, prol., qu. 2, n. 176).

To sum up, what unites science and theology, according to Scotus, is that both operate with a precise method of creating conceptual constructs on the basis of the initial evidence.

⁷⁹ Cf. Vos, op.cit., 338. He uses the parallel texts from *Lectura* and *Ord.* I, dist. 42 where Scotus discusses arguments made about the Trinity. Cf. *Lectura* I, dist. 42, q. un., n. 19 (XVII, 527; my translation): “Whence many arguments are made about the Trinity that are necessary, without any deficiency in the argument, and nevertheless they are not demonstrations that present evidence about their conclusions that is certain, because the immediate propositions upon which they depend are not evidently known.” Cf. Vos, *ibid.*, 341-42.

This is truly the main feature of “scientificity” in them. As for the question of the initial evidence, the recent discussion of the nature of science, as well as common knowledge about contemporary science, suggest that even regarding this issue theology and science are not significantly different, as opposed to what is usually believed. Indeed, the realities that underlie “scientific” constructs, for example, in modern physics, are far from being significantly clearer and more evident than “exclusively theological” truths with which theology operates! Thus, as far as their methods of constructing conceptual patterns are concerned, science and speculative theology as described by Scotus can indeed be seen, even in our times, as typologically similar.

CONCLUSIONS

The current analysis shows that the medieval Franciscan tradition already has a very sophisticated and deep understanding of the nature of theology. For example, many Franciscan theologians feel that traditional science alone cannot lay claim to truth, but that there are multiple types of truths, some appropriate for theology. Moreover, not unlike present-day postliberal theologians, Olivi has a profound reflection on theology as an intratextual discipline, or a “thick description.” However, Olivi’s assertion that because of that theology cannot be a science, or at best a “quasi-science,” shows that he is simply not advanced enough to perceive that any science is also intratextual, to a greater or lesser extent, and so in fact theology and science are not really opposed.

While Olivi, long before our time, discovers the nature of theology as “coherent description,” Scotus approaches the issue from the other end, following his intuition that theology is not fundamentally opposed to science. However, does Scotus’s view, which also emerges prior to our current advanced hermeneutic apparatus, actually allow for a smooth integration of the two models: “science” and “coherent description”? Armed with the present-day phenomenological method in philosophy and being mindful of the hermeneutic trend in theology, let us analyze Scotus’s model of theology as a science. As was shown above, in Scotus something like scientific

knowledge, i.e., diversity of concepts and the structural order between them, can be known without employing syllogistic discourse: that is, immediately “seen” in the manner of eidetic reality in Husserl’s phenomenology.⁸⁰ For example, in order for theology to be a science one needs some distinct concepts about God other than that of “deity” to start with. Such concepts come from two sources: some are self-evident (all “essential” concepts such as God as being, good, intellect, superior power, etc.), and some are taken on faith (all “personal” concepts such as God as a Trinity, the properties of the three persons, etc.). One can also order these concepts according to “natural priority/posteriority” thus reestablishing an eidetic structure necessary for rigorous science.

However, we already know, from his own words, that for Scotus the perception of such eidetic structures in scientific knowledge is analogous to the perception of aesthetic structures, such as harmony or dissonance, by our sensory system. That is, just as we trust our sensory system in detecting regular patterns in sensible reality, so we should trust our cognitive system in detecting clear conceptual structures. Now it is well known that in a system such as Husserl’s phenomenology, where eidetic data are analyzed based upon internal criteria, not external reference, one often recurs to aesthetic criteria such as “elegance,” “harmony,” “coherence,” and so forth in order to judge the validity of a certain structure.⁸¹ It is also well known that contemporary hermeneutic theology that views theological discourse in terms of a “coherent description” often recurs to aesthetic parallels,⁸² for example with building an internally coherent plot structure in a novel. Just as artistic fiction does not need to be based on self-evident data to be internally coherent, so theology can be coherent even though some of its principles are faith-based and not self-evident. But in this sense descriptive “aesthetic” theology, the one that creates a coherent and harmonious picture, is not substantially different from specula-

⁸⁰ Again, it would be immediate only for an ideal intellect; a regular intellect, in both Scotus and Husserl, needs time to observe intelligible structures.

⁸¹ E.g., Husserl in *Cartesian Meditations*.

⁸² E.g., Tracy in *The Analogical Imagination*.

tive “scientific” theology, which judges the validity of eidetic structures by analogy to our aesthetic sense, that is, based on their internal clarity and coherence. Now Scotus’s system of speculative theology is not based on reference, or “truth of correspondence,” but on the inner coherence and clarity of its conceptual (we could say eidetic) structures. It is not the self-evidence of its object but its internal coherence that determines the validity and rigidity of the science of theology. Consequently, Scotus’s system in theory allows, although without his express acknowledgement, for a seamless integration of the two models: theology as a “science” based on the quasi-aesthetic principles of phenomenological-eidetic seeing, and theology as a “coherent description.”

Thus the incredible degree of sophistication and insight in the medieval Franciscan theological tradition demonstrates, well before our time, that theology should not be considered a pseudo-science, nor science the exclusive way to truth, but that both are simply ways of describing reality coherently and aesthetically attractively in order to assist us with our lives; both are accurate, useful, and have a claim to truth in their own, slightly different, ways.

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