Duns Scotus

Treatise on the First Principle

Translated, with Commentary, by
Thomas M. Ward

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INTRODUCTION

The *Treatise on the First Principle* (*Tractatus de primo principio*) is a virtuosic work of philosophy that deduces God's existence from strictly metaphysical theorems. An architectonic assumption of the book is that things are connected to other things by their very natures: they are *essentially ordered*, as Scotus puts it. Here we are as far away from David Lewis's "Humean mosaic" as a philosophical outlook can be.[1] Everything that begins to exist has one or more originating principles, and at least some elements of that origin are essential to it. Ultimately, there is nothing that begins to exist that is not essentially dependent on a First Principle. And the means by which we can discover the existence of this First Principle also yield the theorems we need to show that it has just the sort of attributes by which we know that it is God. The result: everything that exists or can exist is God or implicates God.

The logical cohesiveness and razor-blade subtlety of the *Treatise* should make it of interest to all puzzlers, whatever their (current) answers to the question whether God exists. But it is not mere logic-chopping. The Latin text is always austere, but sometimes beautiful, especially when it expresses rhetorically simple but spiritually profound prayers to God, for help and in thanksgiving, and even in ecstatic praise. It is something like a literary hybrid of Ernest Hemingway and St. Anselm.

But it is an intrinsically difficult work—the few who know it well know it's hard. My own experience with the text and in the classroom made it clear to me that there was no English translation that was as precise and as readable as Scotus deserved, and no English commentary that was sufficiently focused on helping readers track the logical structure of Scotus's arguments. Nor were extant translations or commentaries in print. So I resolved to make the *Treatise* more accessible and more attractive by producing a new translation with a concise and philosophically focused commentary.

Scotus composed the *Treatise* late in his career. Prior to the *Treatise*, he had worked out many of its key arguments in his commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*: the *Lectura*, the *Ordinatio*, and possibly the *Reportatio examinata.* About half of the *Treatise* is taken verbatim from *Ordinatio*.[2] But the *Treatise* is no mere digest of earlier and longer works. It has a unity found nowhere else in Scotus, arguments developed elsewhere built up into

1. David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), ix.

2. P. Carolo Balić, *De ordinatio I: Duns Scoti Disquisitio historica-critica* (Vatican 1:161–64).

a more rigorous and systematic whole. At the level of purely formal cohesion, it at least rivals, and arguably surpasses, the vaunted *more geometrico* of Spinoza's *Ethics*. But it must be said that the *Treatise* is not immaculate. 2.18(36) comes to mind, where the text says "This is proved also by reason," but no proof follows; and there are more places than we'd expect in a masterpiece at which Scotus expects us to rely on prior acquaintance with, or expects us to consult, his earlier works. But in its main argumentative line it is indeed a masterpiece, one of those artifacts of human culture both the neophyte and the connoisseur should revere.

About Scotus himself, the man, we know sorrowfully little. He was born in 1265 or 1266, in Scotland. As a teenager he joined the Franciscans, who sent him to Oxford for his education. There he was eventually ordained a priest and taught theology; later he was sent to Paris where, after a period of exile due to his support of the pope against the king, he was made Regent Master, the loftiest academic job available to Franciscans at the most prestigious university in Europe. For unknown reasons he was sent to Cologne at the height of his career, and died shortly thereafter, in 1308.

A Note on the Text

I have translated the Latin text found in Duns Scotus, *Abhandlung über das erste Prinzip*, 4th ed., ed. Wolfgang Kluxen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009). To Anglophone readers, the most well-known Latin text and translation is *A Treatise on God as First Principle*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans., with commentary, by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982). Kluxen and Wolter use different numbering systems. For ease of reference to the secondary literature written in English, I have devised the "Kluxen-Wolter" citation method: Chapter Number.Kluxen Paragraph Number(Wolter Paragraph Number). Chapter divisions are consistent across editions. Thus, "1.1(1)" refers to the opening lines of Chapter 1.

Further Reading

On Scotus

Williams, Thomas. "Introduction: The Life and Works of John Duns the Scot." In *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Dumont, Stephen D. "John Duns Scotus's Life in Context." In *Interpreting Duns Scotus: Critical Essays*, ed. Giorgio Pini, 8–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Wolter, Allan B., O.F.M. "Reflections on the Life and Works of Scotus." In *Scotus and Ockham: Selected Essays*, 1–34. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003.

Ingham, Mary Beth, CSJ. *Understanding John Duns Scotus: 'Of Realty the Rarest-Veined Unraveller'*. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2017.

Cross, Richard. *Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Ward, Thomas M. *Ordered by Love: An Introduction to John Duns Scotus.* New York: Angelico Press, 2022.

On Treatise on the First Principle

Duns Scotus, John. *A Treatise on God as First Principle*. 2nd ed. Edited and translated, with commentary, by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982.

Duns Scotus, John. *The De primo principio*. Edited and translated by Evan Roche, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1949.

Cross, Richard. *Duns Scotus on God.* New York: Routledge, 2016.

A Note on the Commentary

I wrote the commentary with the goal of keeping the reader's attention as closely fixed on the *Treatise* as possible. The commentary follows the numbering system of the primary text, for ease of reference. Every numbered paragraph has an entry, some short, some long, according to my own sense of what might help the reader understand Scotus's arguments and concepts. Readers already familiar with the *Treatise* might possibly benefit from reading the commentary on its own. But I wrote with new readers in mind, imagining them reading the primary text, getting to a difficult paragraph, flipping over to the corresponding entry in the commentary, then flipping back to continue reading Scotus first-hand.

The focus is distinctively philosophical rather than historical or literary; the *Treatise* is, after Chapter 1, more or less a long chain of syllogisms, and I have spent my energy trying to explicate these. Where Scotus references

other authors, or other works of his own, I have for the most part been content to cite the relevant passages in footnotes to the translation, leaving motivated readers to search them out on their own. Many of these notes are borrowed from Kluxen's text, and I have added many of my own. But in some places, mere footnotes will not suffice: the *Treatise* presumes familiarity with Aristotle's philosophy, and some familiarity with Avicenna; it also presumes acquaintance with some of Scotus's own distinctive views he develops elsewhere, including the disjunctive transcendentals, intuitive cognition, formal distinction, and haecceity (thisness). Thus, at the relevant points in the commentary, I offer digressions that are just long enough to help the reader make progress with the primary text.

For the most part I have resisted the urge to include my own judgments about Scotus's arguments. Where I do evaluate, critically or sympathetically as the case may be, I do so tentatively and as a pedagogical exercise, modeling the deep-structure engagement the text invites. The task of judgment I leave to readers.

Acknowledgments

This book was made possible by a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which funded my research leave from Baylor University in the spring of 2022. I am grateful to Thomas Williams and Giorgio Pini for offering the early encouragement I needed to commit myself to what I guessed, correctly, would be a taxing project. Daniel Shields, Dominic LaMantia, and Harrison Jennings read the first draft of the translation; Jennings also read the first draft of the commentary. Thomas Williams read a later draft of the translation. I have been greatly aided by their many insights, suggestions, and corrections, and I am deeply grateful for their help. Mistakes are my own, of course.

TABLE OF THEOREMS

Scotus structures Chapters 2-4 of the *Treatise* around forty-six theorems (*conclusiones*). He frequently invokes prior theorems as premises in proofs of later theorems. In the commentary I adopt a similar practice. Those readers who, like me, cannot hold all the theorems in mind, will benefit from the following table.

Theorems of Chapter 2

Describing Essential Order

4th Division of Essential Order: Causal Dependence

3rd Division of Essential Order: Non-Causal Dependence

Theorems of Chapter 3

Theorems of Chapter 4

ABBREVIATIONS

Williams	Anselm. *Basic Writings*. Edited and translated by Thomas Williams. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2007.
Hause and Pasnau	Aquinas, Thomas. *Basic Works*. Edited by Jeffrey Hause and Robert Pasnau. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2014.
Barnes	Aristotle. *The Complete Works*. 2 vols. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
Dyson	Augustine. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Edited and translated by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Chadwick	Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
McKenna	Augustine. *The Trinity*. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963.
Marmura	Avicenna. *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"*. Translated by Michael E. Marmura. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005.
Wolter and Bychkov	Duns Scotus. *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*. 2 vols. Edited and translated by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M., and Oleg V. Bychkov. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008.
Alluntis and Wolter	Duns Scotus. *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*. Translated by Felix Alluntis, O.F.M., and Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.
Van den Bercken	Duns Scotus. *On Being and Cognition: Ordinatio* I.3. Edited and translated by John van den Bercken. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
Vatican	Duns Scotus. *Opera omnia*. 21 vols. Edited by the Scotistic Commission. Vatican City: Typis Vaticanis, 1950–2015.

PW	Duns Scotus. *Philosophical Writings*. Translated by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987.
Etzkorn and Wolter	Duns Scotus. *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle*. 2 vols. Translated by Girard J. Etzkorn and Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1998.
Kluxen	Duns Scotus. *Tractatus de primo principio (Abhandlung über das erste Prinzip)*. Edited and translated by Wolfgang Kluxen. 4th ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009.
DPP	Duns Scotus. *A Treatise on God as First Principle*. 2nd ed. Edited and translated, with commentary, by Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982.
Copenhaver	Peter of Spain. *Summaries of Logic*. Edited and translated by Brian P. Copenhaver, with Calvin Normore and Terence Parsons. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
Spade	Spade, Paul Vincent. *Five Texts on the Mediaeval Problem of Universals: Porphyry, Boethius, Abelard, Duns Scotus, Ockham*. Edited and translated by Paul Vincent Spade. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994.

Translation

Chapter 1

The Divisions and Types of Essential Orders

1. (1) May the First Principle of things permit me to believe, discern, and disclose whatever pleases His Majesty and elevates our minds to contemplate him.

(2) Lord our God, truest Teacher, when your servant Moses asked for your name, that he might proclaim it to the children of Israel, you replied, knowing what the mind of mortals can conceive of you, revealing your blessed name: "*I am who I am*."[1] You are True Existence. You are Total Existence. This I believe, and this, if it is possible for me, I would like to know.

Help me, Lord, as I seek the utmost limit of the knowledge our natural reason can achieve concerning the True Existence you are, if we begin with the *being* you have predicated of yourself.

Introducing Essential Order

2. (3) There are several properties of being it would be useful to consider in pursuit of this goal, but I will pursue the more fruitful route of *essential order*, in the following way: in this first chapter I will set forth the four divisions of order, from which the number of essential orders may be calculated.

(4) An explication of a division requires the following: first, that the things resulting from the division be stated and shown to be contained under the thing divided; second, that the repugnance of the things resulting from the division be made evident; and third, that it be proved that the things resulting from the division exhaust the thing divided. The first of these requirements will be met in this chapter, and the other requirements in the second chapter. Here, then, I will delineate the divisions and explain the things resulting from these divisions.

3. (5) But I do not take essential order in its narrow sense, as do those who say that the posterior is ordered but the prior or the first is beyond order. Instead, I take it in the broad sense, in which order is a relation of comparison said of the prior with respect to the posterior and the posterior with

1. Exodus 3:14.

respect to the prior, or in which prior and posterior fully divide that which is ordered. Thus whenever there is talk of order there is thereby talk of both priority and posteriority.

The First Division of Essential Order
Eminence and Dependence

4. (6) *First Division.* I first say therefore that essential order appears to be divided first of all as an equivocal term into its equivocates: the order of eminence and the order of dependence.

(7) In the first way (the order of eminence), the prior is called eminent and the posterior is that which is excelled. Briefly put, whatever is more perfect and more noble according to essence is prior in this way. It is in this sense of priority that Aristotle shows in *Metaphysics* 9 that act is prior to potency,[2] where he calls act prior according to substance and species. He says that those things that are posterior in generation are prior in species and substance.

(8) In the second way (the order of dependence), that on which something depends is called the prior, and that which depends is called the posterior. Aristotle explains this sense of priority in *Metaphysics* 5,[3] with the testimony of Plato: the prior according to nature and essence can exist without the posterior, but not conversely. I understand this to mean that even if the prior necessarily causes the posterior and hence cannot exist without it, this is not because it needs the posterior for its own existence; rather, the posterior needs the prior. There is no contradiction in positing the existence of the prior and the nonexistence of the posterior. But the converse of this is not true, because the posterior needs the prior. This need we can call *dependence*, so we may say that every essentially posterior thing *depends necessarily* on the prior, but not conversely, even when the posterior follows necessarily. This sort of prior and posterior we could also describe as priority and posteriority according to substance and species, as the other sort was described above; nevertheless, for the sake of precision, let this sort be called prior and posterior according to dependence.

2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8.1050a1–5 (Barnes, 2:1658).

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.11.1019a1–4 (Barnes, 2:1609).

The Second Division of Essential Order
Causal and Non-Causal Dependence

5. (9) *Second Division*. Leaving undivided the order of eminence, I now subdivide the order of dependence, because the dependent either is caused and that on which it depends is its cause, or the dependent and that on which it depends are both dependent on the same cause, the dependent more remote from the cause, and that on which it depends closer to the cause.

(10) Concerning this second division, the account of its first member, and the fact that this member really is contained under the thing divided, are understood well enough. For it is clear what a cause is, and what a caused thing is; and, given the above account of what is here divided—namely, essential order—it is clear that a caused thing essentially depends on a cause, and that a cause is that on which it depends.

(11) But it is not so clear what this second member of this second division is, or how it is contained under the essential order of dependence.

First, I say that if there are two effects [A and B] of the same cause [C] of which one [B] is first and more immediately comes to be caused by that cause [C], while the other [A] would not be caused unless the more immediately caused thing [B] were already caused, I say that with respect to their cause [C], the other [A] is the posterior caused thing, and the more immediately caused thing [B] is prior. This is the account of this second member of the second division.

(12) Given this, I show that the second member is contained under the essential order of dependence, that is, that the more remote effect [A] essentially depends on the closer effect [B]. First, it [A] would not exist if the other [B] did not exist. Second, the causality of the cause [C] is related to them [A and B] in an orderly way; therefore they are essentially ordered to each other in that they are both related to a third thing which is the cause of both, and therefore they are ordered to each other due to the features in virtue of which each is related to their cause. Third, the cause [C] considered just insofar as it is a cause, is the immediate cause only of that [B] which is more proximate to it [C]. If that [B] is not caused, then it [C] would be only a remote cause with regard to any other things it causes [such as A]. But if that [B] is caused, then it [C] is proximate in relation to a second thing [A]. Now a remote cause, just insofar as it is remote, does not cause anything. Therefore the second thing [A] depends on the cause [C] insofar as the cause has first produced that closer effect [B]. And therefore the second thing [A] depends on the closer effect [B] as well as its cause [C].

The Third Division of Essential Order
Two Orders of Non-Causal Dependence

6. (13) *Third Division*. Each member of the second division is subdivided. I subdivide the second member first, given what has just been said above. One caused thing [B], which is closer to a cause than some other caused thing [A], is said to be prior [to A] not only insofar as it is closer to their proximate cause but also insofar as it is closer to their remote cause.

Suppose that the proximate cause [C] of one thing—call it A—is in no way a cause of the other thing—call it B—but some other prior cause [D] is both B's proximate cause and a remote cause of that caused thing [A] of which the other [C] is the proximate cause. Then there will be an essential order between these caused things [A and B], that is, an essential order of the prior caused thing [B] to the posterior caused thing [A]—so long as the causality of their common cause [D] is an essential order to each [i.e., of D to A and of D to B].

(14) But it is less clear that the second member belongs under this third division. I show that it does belong in this way: first, two things [A and B] are essentially ordered to a third thing [D], which is a cause of both. Therefore they are essentially ordered to each other. Moreover, their common cause [D] is merely a remote cause of the posterior [A], if the prior [B] is not caused first. Finally, A cannot exist without B.

The Fourth Division of Essential Order
Four Orders of Causal Dependence

7. (15) *Fourth Division*. The first member of the second division, namely cause, is famously subdivided into the four well-known causes: final and efficient, material and formal. That which is posterior to cause is divided into four, corresponding to the four causes: namely, that which is ordered to an end, or, for short, the *finitum*; the *effectum*;[4] that which is brought about from matter, that is to say, the *materiatum*; and that which is brought about

4. "*Effectum*" has a narrower meaning in the *Treatise* than its closest English translation, "effect." This is because the English word "effect" is simply the correlative of "cause," taken generally. But in Scotus's essential orders framework, in which the four Aristotelian types of causes are four types of essential order, "*effectum*" is specifically the correlative of "*causa efficiens*" (efficient cause) and not "*causa*" (cause) in general. For this reason, whenever possible I have reserved "effect" to translate "*effectum*." Scotus often uses "*causatum*" (caused thing) as his general term for the correlative of "*causa*."

through form, that is to say, the *formatum*.[5] Here I will not offer a full account of this division, since I have written extensively about it elsewhere and in what follows I will eventually come back to this issue, when the matter at hand requires it.[6]

Conclusion

8. (16) Summing up, I harvest the fruit of this chapter: essential order is exhaustively divided into six types of order, four concerning the order of cause to that which is caused; one concerning the order of two caused things—taking here as one the two members of the third division; and one concerning the order of the eminent to that which is excelled.

(17) Two more things need to be shown for the presentation of these divisions to be complete, namely, that the members of the divisions are repugnant to each other, and that they exhaust the nature of what is divided. These two will be shown in the following chapter, as much as it is relevant to the task at hand. In that chapter some general, necessary propositions will be set forth, and the aforementioned orders and their correlatives will be compared with reference to the necessary and non-necessary relations between them, since this comparative work is very important for what will follow.

5. I leave these four italicized terms untranslated in this paragraph because, except for *effectum*, none has a natural one-word English equivalent. A literal English translation of this paragraph would therefore have been clunky and silly.

6. 2.9(1)–17(33) below.

Chapter 2

The Relations Between the Types of Essential Order

9. (1) This chapter proceeds with arguments about those four divisions of essential order that are to be presented, and the correlatives of those orders that are to be compared.

Description of Essential Order

(2) Lord our God, who infallibly taught the venerable doctor Augustine when he wrote about you, the Triune, in *On the Trinity* 1, saying, "Nothing whatsoever births itself into being,"[1] have you not impressed upon us with equal certitude the following similar truth?

Theorem 2.1: Nothing whatsoever is essentially ordered to itself.

(3) For in the order of eminence what is more impossible than that the same thing excel itself with respect to an essential perfection? And in the sense of "dependence" outlined above, in any of the other six types of essential order, what is more impossible than that the same thing essentially depend on itself, or can exist without itself?

(4) This, too, harmonizes with the truth:

Theorem 2.2: In any essential order a circle is impossible.

(5) This is because whatever is prior to the prior, is prior to the posterior. Something opposed to Theorem 2.1 follows from the denial of Theorem 2.2; if Theorem 2.2 is denied, one and the same thing will be essentially prior and posterior to itself, and thus more and less perfect than itself, or dependent on and independent of itself, all of which are a long way from the truth. In *Posterior Analytics* 1, Aristotle excludes such a circle from demonstrations,[2] and it is no less impossible among things.

1. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 1.1.1 (McKenna, 4).

2. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 1.3.72b25 (Barnes, 1:117).

(6) There is a third theorem that, like Theorem 2.2, can be proved from, and is sufficiently contained in, Theorem 2.1; I make it explicit because I will make use of it below.

Theorem 2.3: What is not posterior to the prior, is not posterior to the posterior.

(7) This theorem follows from what has already been affirmed. And it follows from it that what does not depend on the prior, does not depend on the posterior. It also follows that what is not caused by the prior cause, is not caused by the posterior cause, because the posterior depends, in its causing, on the causal activity of the prior.

The Fourth Division of Essential Order
Four Orders of Causal Dependence

10. (8) Now, God, with you as our guide, let us compare these six orders to each other, beginning with the four orders of cause to caused thing. However, I refrain from describing the differences between these orders or the sufficiency of their division, because enough is known already. Indeed, it might be wordy and beside the point to do so. I will merely compare—in six theorems—these orders with respect to the connections or logical relations they have to each other on account of what is caused.

11. (9) Theorem 2.4: What is not ordered to an end, is not an effect.

(10) [*First proof*] It is proved first in this way: what is not from a *per se* efficient cause, is not an effect. What is not for the sake of an end, is not from a *per se* efficient cause. Therefore, etc.

The major premise is proved in this way: the *per accidens* is not first in any genus, as Aristotle explains adequately in *Physics* 2,[3] where he says that nature and intellect, as *per se* causes in a given genus of cause, are necessarily prior to chance and fortune, which are merely causes *per accidens*. But what is not from a first, is not from what is posterior to the first, by Theorem 2.3. (I speak of positive things, which alone properly speaking can be effects.) The major premise is therefore clear. The minor premise is proved in this way: Every *per se* agent acts for the sake of an end because it does not act in vain, as Aristotle, in *Physics* 2,[4] concludes about nature, concerning which it is less clear that it

3. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.6.198a5–13 (Barnes, 1:338).

4. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.5.196b17–22 (Barnes, 1:335).

acts for the sake of an end than it is in the case of intellect. Therefore, a *per se* agent does not efficiently cause anything except for the sake of an end.

(11) [*Second proof*] Theorem 2.4 is proved, secondly, in this way: the end is the first cause in causing; that is why Avicenna calls it the cause of causes.[5] This is also proved by reason, since the end moves metaphorically insofar as it is loved, in such a way that the efficient cause brings about form in matter. But it is not the case that the end moves insofar as it is loved due to some other cause causing it. Therefore, the end is essentially the first cause in causing.

[*Third proof*] It is also proved in this way: Aristotle shows that the end is a cause in *Metaphysics* 5,[6] because it furnishes the answer to the question, "On account of what?"—a question that seeks a cause. Therefore, since the first answer to this question is given by the end, it will be the first cause. The assumption is clear because if the question is asked, "Why does it produce an effect?" the reply is, "Because it loves or intends the end." But the converse does not hold: it does not love the end because it produces an effect.

(13) From the primacy of the end with respect to the effect, now triply proved, Theorem 2.4 follows, since, according to Theorem 2.3, what has no prior cause has no posterior cause.

12. (14) Theorem 2.5: What is not an effect, is not ordered to an end.

(15) Proof: the end is not a cause except insofar as the existence of the thing ordered to the end essentially depends on it, as on what is prior to it. This is clear because any cause, insofar as it is a cause, is prior in this way. But the thing ordered to the end does not depend on the end for its existence in this way except insofar as the end as loved moves the efficient cause to give existence to it: the efficient cause would not give existence in its genus of causality unless the end were causing in its causality. Therefore the end causes nothing except what is effected by the efficient cause for the love of the end.

(16) [*First corollary*] Here follows a corollary. Not to be left unmentioned is that false opinion about the end, that the final cause of a being is the last operation or object that is attained through that operation. If it is held that this as such is the final cause, this is false, because the last operation exists only after the thing ordered to the end already exists and therefore the thing ordered to the end does not essentially depend on it as such. Instead, because the effect of an efficient cause is ordered to something loved, the final cause is precisely that out of love for which the efficient cause makes something

5. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.5.30 (Marmura, 229).

6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.2.1013a33–35 (Barnes, 2:1600).

else exist. That loved thing—just insofar as it is loved—is the final cause of what was made.

Sometimes it may well be that the object of the last operation is the very thing that is loved and is therefore the final cause—but this is not because it is the completion of the operation of such a nature, but rather because it is loved by that which causes that nature. Nevertheless, the last operation of a thing, or that which is attained through it, is sometimes called its end, because it is the last and in some sense the best, and thus meets some of the conditions of being a final cause.

(17) Aristotle would not hold, therefore, that properly speaking the Intelligences have a final cause but not an efficient cause,[7] unless he were to take "end" in an extended sense as the object of the best operation. Also, while he might grant that properly speaking the Intelligences do have an efficient cause, he would definitely not hold that it produces them through motion or change. This is because in metaphysics the four causes are considered in abstraction from those features that make them part of the subject matter of physics. If Aristotle takes these Intelligences to be sempiternal and necessary, he would not grant that an efficient cause first gave them existence after they did not exist—taking "after," that is, in the sense of duration rather than the sense in which Avicenna takes it in *Metaphysics* 6.2, that is, in the sense of an order of nature, the sense in which "after" applies to creation.[8] The claim here is not weakened whether or not the thing caused is repugnant with necessity. Even if some efficient cause could cause simply and necessarily, and some end could move an efficient cause to act for its sake necessarily instead of contingently, still, any caused thing whatsoever is not only possible in the sense that is opposed to the impossible, but also in the sense that is opposed to whatever has its necessity from itself. This is because any caused thing is the object or endpoint of a power of its cause. But—according to the philosophers, anyway—the thing caused would not be possible in the sense that is opposed to all necessity whatsoever, since they would deny that there is contingency of this sort in the separate substances.

(18) [*Second corollary*] Another corollary is clear, namely that the end is the final cause of the effect of the efficient cause, and is not the final cause of the efficient cause itself. Thus, in the saying, "An agent acts because of the end," "end" should not be understood to refer to the end of the agent, but rather the agent's effect.

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7. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1072b1–4 (Barnes, 2:1694); 12.8.1073a22–39 (Barnes, 2:1696).

8. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.2.9 (Marmura, 203).

13. (19) Theorem 2.6: What is not an effect, is not made of matter.

(20) Proof: matter of itself is in contradictory potency to form, so it is not from itself actualized by form. Thus it is actualized through something else bringing that potency to actuality, namely, the efficient cause of the composite (since to produce a composite just is to bring about the actualization of matter by form).

The first consequence[9] is clear, because merely passive and contradictory potency does not bring itself to actuality. If you say that form brings it to actuality, this is true formally. But since form and matter are first understood to be non-united—that is, prior to the subsequent formal actualization—therefore that by which they are united has the character of an efficient cause.

(21) A second proof of the theorem: the efficient cause is immediately proximate to the final cause and is therefore prior to the material cause. Whatever has no prior cause likewise has no cause posterior to that prior cause. The first proposition is here proved, for the causal activity of the end is, metaphorically, to move insofar as it is loved; in this manner it moves the efficient cause and no other cause.

(22) A third proof: the composite is truly one; therefore it has some one entity that is the entity neither of the matter nor of the form. And that one entity is not caused principally by these two entities, because nothing one comes from many except by the power of something one; nor is it caused principally by either one of these two entities, because each of these is lesser than the total entity of the composite. Therefore it is caused by one extrinsic cause.

14. (23) Theorem 2.7: What is not composed of matter, is not composed of form; and what is not composed of form, is not composed of matter.

(24) Proof: what is not made of matter, is not composed of essential parts. This is because in everything that is composed in this way and is essentially one, one of its parts is potential, since nothing becomes one *per se* except from potency and act—see *Metaphysics* 7 and 8.[10] Therefore whatever does not have a part that is potential *per se*, is not a composite; and therefore neither is it composed of form, because something composed of form is a composite, which has form as one of its parts. (As it is argued concerning

9. "Consequence" here and throughout translates *consequentia*, a technical term that refers to the relationship between two statements when one follows from the other.

10. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.8.1033b16–19 (Barnes, 2:1632); 8.6.1045b19–21 (Barnes, 2:1651).

matter and form, it may also be argued in the same way concerning subject and accident.)

(25) The above proof is confirmed by that bit of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 7:[11] if something were to exist from just one element, it would be nothing but that element—or, rather, it would not be an element, by Theorem 2.1. Thus, similarly, if something has just one essential part, it is nothing but that part—or, rather, it is neither a part nor a cause, according to Theorem 2.1. Therefore everything that is caused from some intrinsic cause also has some other intrinsic cause, and so Theorem 2.7 is clear.

15. (26) Theorem 2.8: What is not caused by extrinsic causes, is not caused by intrinsic causes.

(27) This is clear enough from the preceding four theorems. Nevertheless it has its own special proofs.

[*First proof*] First, the causalities of extrinsic causes express a perfection to which no imperfection is necessarily joined, whereas intrinsic causes have an imperfection necessarily joined to them. Thus extrinsic causes are prior to intrinsic causes in their causing, as the perfect is prior to the imperfect. Add Theorem 2.3 as a premise and Theorem 2.8 follows.

(28) [*Second proof*] The second is this: the intrinsic causes in themselves can be caused by the extrinsic causes. Therefore the former are posterior to the extrinsic causes in their causing. The antecedent is clear concerning form, and clear concerning matter insofar as matter is a part—concerning matter in itself, too, as will be shown, below.[12]

16. (29) Theorem 2.9: The four types of causes are essentially ordered in their causing of one and the same thing.

(30) This is clear from the preceding five theorems.

[*First proof*] But it can be seen to be reasonable in its own right that several things, on which one and the same thing essentially depends, themselves have an order, according to which the one thing depends on these several things so ordered. For every group of several things, which is not also itself something one—either in the sense that it is not composed of act and potency, or in the sense there is no unity of order among the members of the group—does not essentially cause one and the same thing. Therefore, if the four types of causes are neither parts of some one thing composed of them as of act and potency, nor have unity in their causing, how then would they cause something itself one? Therefore, they do have a unity of order insofar

11. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.17.1041b11–25 (Barnes, 2:1644).

12. 2.16(32) below.

as they cause the thing they cause, and by virtue of this order they themselves are one, one with respect to some third thing, namely, their causing; and this is similar to the way in which the many things in the universe, through order, are one in being.

(31) [*Second proof*] How there can be an ordering of the types of causes is clear from what was already said about the final and efficient causes, both the order they have among themselves—according to the second proof of Theorem 2.4 and the second proof of Theorem 2.6—and the order they have to other causes—according to the same proofs and also Theorem 2.8.

(32) But here I do not want to pursue an inquiry about how the intrinsic causes are ordered among themselves; I have little use for them in what follows. Nevertheless, it seems that matter is prior according to independence, because the contingent and informing seems to depend on the permanent and informed, since being formable is understood as prior to informing. In this way some explain Augustine's remarks in *Confessions* about the priority of matter with respect to form.[13] And if you seek the order in which it is prior, I reply that it is prior as a caused thing that is closer than some other caused thing to the same remote cause, closer in the sense that necessarily, according to that order, form is caused after the matter is caused. Nevertheless form is prior to matter according to eminence because it is more perfect. Aristotle takes this for granted in *Metaphysics* 7,[14] where he compares them, although it is possible to prove this from things he says elsewhere, in *Metaphysics* 9,[15] concerning act and potency.

17. (33) But understand that it is one thing for causes to be essentially ordered in their causing, or according to causation, and it is another thing for the things that are causes to be essentially ordered, as is clear in Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 6.5.[16] For the first is true and has been shown to be true; if it were false, the following would be false: "Because it loves the end, it produces its effect," and, "Because it produces an effect, form informs and matter receives form." But these are widely admitted to be true. But the second is false, for that which is the end is not a cause of that which is the efficient cause, nor is the converse ever true. Also, normally that which is the efficient cause is not the cause of the matter but presupposes the matter.

13. Augustine, *Confessions* 12.3–4 (Chadwick, 247).

14. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3.1029a4–6 (Barnes, 2:1625).

15. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 9.8.1049b4–5 (Barnes, 2:1657).

16. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.5.28 (Marmura, 228).

The Third Division of Essential Order
Two Orders of Non-Causal Dependence

18. (34) Having laid out the relationships between the members of the fourth division, I cover the third division only briefly, since it is clear how the things falling under this division are repugnant to each other and how they exhaust the thing divided. So:

Theorem 2.10: When two things are related to the same cause, that cause is either proximate or remote.

The Second Division of Essential Order
Causal and Non-Causal Dependence

(35) Concerning the second division I propose two theorems. The first concerns the distinction of its members:

Theorem 2.11: It is not the case that each thing [B] more proximately caused by a cause [C] is itself a cause of a more remote thing [A] caused by that same cause [C]. Therefore, it [B] is something caused prior [to A], but it is not causally prior [to A].

(36) The antecedent of this theorem is proved by example and by reason. Here is the example: quantity is a more proximate caused thing than quality, but is not a cause of quality. This is clear by considering the types of causes. This is proved also by reason.[17]

19. (37) The second theorem concerns the sufficiency of the second division:

Theorem 2.12: A thing essentially depends only on a cause or on something caused that is more proximate to some cause.

(38) Proof: if a thing depends on something other than a cause, let that other thing be A and the dependent thing be B. If A does not exist, then B will not exist.[18] But, A not existing, all the essential causes of B can still concur, and also, all the things more proximate than B, which are caused by

17. The text does not include whatever argument Scotus had in mind.

18. At 1.6(13)–(14), Scotus introduced A as the posterior and B as the prior, and that is the meaning I assigned the symbols both in the translation and the commentary up to 2.18(35). Here at 2.19(38)–(40), and also at 2.22(48), Scotus switches the order: A is the prior and B is the posterior. This switch does not affect Scotus's overall meaning or argument, but I note it here to prevent confusion.

these causes, can still be caused. Now, supposing these causes do concur and these more proximate things caused by these causes do exist, still, by your assumption, none of these is A and therefore B will not exist. Thus all these essential causes are not sufficient causes [of B], even if all the more proximate things have been caused. The consequence is clear, since if it is granted that causes are sufficient for causing more proximate things, then these causes can cause more remote things.

(39) [*First objection and reply*] It is futile to say that the argument does not establish that they *cannot* cause, but only that they *do not* cause. For according to your assumption, if A is not granted existence, then B cannot exist. Granting everything on the part of all the causes and the prior things caused by those causes, A cannot exist by means of them, because it is neither one among them nor something that can be caused by them. Therefore B cannot exist by means of them, either: for if B cannot exist except by that without which it is impossible [namely, A], then whatever cannot bring about A cannot bring about B, either.

(40) [*Second objection and reply*] There is no strength in the objection that a composite substance can exist through a natural agent, even though that agent cannot produce the matter the composite needs in order to exist. This is because a natural agent is not the total cause of the composite—that is, it is not the sort of cause that, excluding everything else, could still produce the composite. I bring this up because if I join together every cause in every type of causes ordered to B, and if all their effects that are more proximate to B have been produced, still, by means of all of these together A cannot exist, because it is not numbered either among the causes nor among the things caused by them. But without A, B cannot exist. Therefore through all these joined together at once, B cannot exist. Therefore all these joined together at once are not totally the cause of B—which is the opposite of your initial assumption.

The First Division of Essential Order
Eminence and Dependence

20. (41) Concerning the first division I propose two similar theorems. The first is that its members are distinguished from each other:

Theorem 2.13: Not everything that is excelled essentially depends on that which is more eminent than it. Therefore the first member of the first division does not entail the second member.

(42) Proof of the antecedent: The nobler species is eminent with respect to a less noble, as a contrary is with respect to a lesser contrary. And it is clear inductively that the more noble is not a cause of the less noble, and neither is it a thing more proximately caused by something that is a cause both of it and the less noble, because the causality of a common cause is not essentially ordered to them as caused things. Were it so ordered, it could not cause that which is excelled unless it first caused the more eminent, which is clearly false, for each and every type of cause. Consider that if the lesser contrary is produced by this cause, while the nobler contrary has been produced by no cause, then these are not together essentially ordered to any cause.

Moreover, if the eminent thing is neither a cause with respect to that which is excelled, nor a thing more proximately caused by a cause both of it and that which is excelled, then the excelled does not essentially depend on the eminent thing. This consequence is clear from what was just shown in Theorem 2.12 and its proof.

(43) Out of a sense of abundance I tack on the converse of Theorem 2.13:

Theorem 2.14: Not every dependent thing is excelled by that on which it depends.

(44) This is clearly seen in the case of a composite substance, which depends on matter, while it itself is much more perfect than matter. Similarly, form perhaps depends on matter—as was touched on in Theorem 2.9—but form is more perfect, according to *Metaphysics* 7.[19] In cases of orderly change, that which is posterior in generation depends on the prior, because the prior is a more proximate effect of their common cause; nevertheless, the posterior is more perfect, according to *Metaphysics* 9.[20]

21. (45) In order to show the sufficiency of the first division, I here postulate a third theorem, a general statement familiar enough from Aristotle:

Theorem 2.15: Plurality is never to be posited without necessity.

(46) Since there appears to be no need to posit more essential orders in the first division than the two already discussed, these are the only two. Theorem 2.15 also shows that there are only six essential orders, as many as have already been shown, and there appears to be no need to posit others.

22. (47) Having compared the members of the first division to each other in a general way, now in particular I compare the posterior of this order, namely, that which is excelled, with two posteriors of the second order, namely, the

19. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3.1029a4–6 (Barnes, 2:1625).

20. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8.1050a4–6 (Barnes, 2:1658).

effect of an efficient cause and that which is ordered to an end. Here I postulate one theorem, as follows:

Theorem 2.16: Everything ordered to an end is excelled.

(48) [*First proof*] The proof is that the end is better than that which is for its sake. And the proof of this in turn is that an end [A], insofar as it is loved, moves the efficient cause to cause its effect [B]. Therefore A is neither less good than B, nor equally as good; therefore it is better. The second part of the antecedent [namely, that A is not equally as good as B] is proved by considering that, if A and B were equally good, then, for whatever reason A moves the efficient cause to produce B for the sake of A, for the same reason B could move its efficient cause to produce B for B's sake—by our assumption it is equally lovable and desirable as A—and thus B would be the final cause of itself, which is contrary to Theorem 2.1. From this we can also conclude that A is not less good than B.

(49) [*Second proof*] Again, nature acts for the sake of an end as art would act if it acted naturally. But the end of works of art provides the principle of artisanal know-how, and whatever is ordered to the end follows from the principle, as a conclusion from premises, as it says in *Physics* 2.[21] But the principle is truer than the conclusion; therefore the end, which includes that truth virtually, is more perfect than the subject of the conclusion (that is, whatever is ordered to the end).

23. (50) You object that some will causes something for the sake of some lesser good that is loved; therefore, in such a case, the end is excelled. The antecedent is clear in every action that is good by reason of its kind but bad by reason of its end, because such an action is ordered by the agent to something inferior to the agent itself.

I respond that Theorem 2.16 goes through for any end that is due to the nature of a thing, the sort of end that is always the end of a nature and the end of a rightly ordered will. But the example of a disordered will does not destroy the conclusion, because such a will is not the first cause of an effect. Therefore, even if such a will is ordered to an end that is not more perfect than itself, still it is ordered by some superior cause to something else, more perfect than itself—otherwise that superior cause would not be well-ordered, as the proof of Theorem 2.16 shows. But if it has an end more perfect than itself (owing to the superior cause that produced it), then there really is something more perfect than itself to which it is ordered. Hence everything ordered to an end is excelled by some end to which it is ordered—even if

21. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.8.199a9–15 (Barnes, 1:340); 2.9.200a15–200b14 (Barnes, 1: 341–42).

in some cases a thing is not excelled by that immediate end on account of which, insofar as a disordered agent loves it, that agent causes it.

It might also be said that that inferior end is the disordered agent's end only in a qualified way. But this response is not satisfactory, because even when an efficient cause is the cause of something inferior, it is still unqualifiedly an efficient cause. Therefore, so long as it does not produce its effect completely because it is being moved—such as a staff or rod in motion, where action for the sake of an end does not truly correspond to this sort of efficient cause, because it is not properly an agent but more like a more proximate effect—to repeat, so long as an efficient cause does not produce its effect in this way, then its end is an end unqualifiedly, because for every efficient cause *per se* there is an end *per se*.

Chapter 3

On the Triple Primacy of the First Principle[1]

24. (2) Lord our God, you have declared yourself to be the first and the last.[2] Teach your servant to show by reason what he holds by most certain faith: that you are the First Efficient, the Most Eminent, and the Final End.

(3) I would like to focus on three of the six types of essential orders discussed above, namely, the two orders of extrinsic causality and the one order of eminence, and—if you grant it—to demonstrate that one and the same nature is simply the first in each of these three orders. I say "one *nature*" because in this third chapter the three firsts just mentioned are shown to pertain not to a unique or numerically one individual, but rather to a unique quiddity[3] or nature. However, there will be discussion later about the numerical oneness of this one nature.[4]

The Primacy of Efficiency

25. (4) Theorem 3.1: Among beings, some nature can produce an effect.

(5) This is shown: something can be produced; therefore, something can produce an effect. The consequence is clear by the nature of correlatives. The antecedent is proved in this way: first, something is contingent; therefore, it is possible for it to exist after not existing; but then it does not exist due to itself, nor due to nothing—since, either way, a being would exist due to a non-being—and therefore it is producible by another. Second, some nature can undergo movement or change, since it is possible for it to lack some perfection it is possible for it to have; therefore, the result of a change can begin to exist, and so be produced.

26. (6) I could phrase Theorem 3.1, as with some theorems that follow, so as to be about actual things, like this: some nature is effective, since something

1. The heading of Chapter 3 belongs to the Latin text. It is numbered as paragraph 1 in Wolter's edition.

2. Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12; Revelation 1:8, 1:17.

3. Literally, *whatness* or *what-it-is-ness*.

4. 4.94(87)–97(93) below.

is effected, since something begins to exist, since something is the result of a change and is contingent. But I prefer to advance theorems and premises about possible things. If the theorems and premises about actual things are granted, those about the possible are granted, too—but not conversely. Also, the former are contingent (even if they are sufficiently obvious) whereas the latter are necessary. Again, the former concern existent being, while the latter can pertain to being considered in its very nature. The actual existence of that nature will indeed be shown later;[5] for now, its ability to produce an effect will be shown.

27. (7) Theorem 3.2: Something able to produce an effect is simply first—that is, it cannot be produced, and it can produce its effect without the power of anything else.

(8) This is proved from Theorem 3.1. Something—call it A—can produce an effect. If A is first in the sense under discussion, we have our conclusion right away. If A is not first, then it is posterior, either because it can be produced by another, or because it can produce its effect only by the power of something else. (If the negation is denied, the affirmation is affirmed.) Given this other thing, call it B. The same reasoning about A will apply to B. But then, either there will be an infinite series of things able to produce an effect, such that each one, with respect to its immediate prior, will be a second; or, the series will stop at something that has no prior. But an ascending infinite series is impossible. Therefore, since that which does not have a prior is in no way posterior to anything posterior to it—for a circle of causes was ruled out by Theorem 2.2—a first is necessary.

28. (9) There is an objection here, that according to the philosophers an ascending infinite series is indeed possible, as they posited infinite generators of which none is the first but each is second to another; and they hold this without positing a causal circle. In rejecting this objection I say that the philosophers did not posit the possibility of an infinity of *essentially ordered* causes, but only *accidentally ordered* causes, as is clear in Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 6.5,[6] where he speaks of an infinity of individuals within a species.

(10) Here I explain what essentially ordered causes are, and what accidentally ordered causes are, in order to show the theorem. It must be known that it is one thing to speak of *per se causes* and *per accidens causes*, and another thing to speak of *per se ordered* causes (that is, essentially ordered causes) and *per accidens ordered* causes. For in the first pair there is only a comparison of

5. 3.33(18) below.

6. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.5.22 (Marmura, 226).

how one thing, a cause, is related to another thing, its effect; in this sense a *per se* cause is that which causes with respect to what belongs to its nature and not with respect to something accidental to it. But in the second pair there is a comparison of how two causes are related to each other, precisely insofar as an effect comes from them.

(11) And essentially and *per se* ordered causes differ from accidentally ordered causes in three ways. The first difference is that in *per se* ordered causes the second depends, in its causing, on the first; in *per accidens* ordered causes it does not depend on the first in this way—although it may well depend on it for existence or in some other way. The second difference is that in *per se* ordered causes the causality is of a different nature and order, since the higher cause is more perfect; in accidentally ordered causes this is not the case. And this difference follows from the first, for no cause essentially depends, *for its causing*, on a cause of the same nature as itself, since just one cause of a given kind suffices for the causation of anything requiring a cause of that kind. The third difference follows, namely that all *per se* ordered causes necessarily and simultaneously are required for causing their effect; otherwise some *per se* causality would be lacking for the effect. But accidentally ordered causes are not simultaneously required.

29. (12) From the following three propositions, Theorem 3.2 is shown: (A) an infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible; and (B) an infinity of accidentally ordered causes is impossible unless an essentially ordered series comes to an end; therefore an infinity of essentially ordered causes is totally impossible. (C) Even if essential order is denied, an infinite series of causes is impossible; either way, therefore, there is something simply first that can produce an effect.

Here there are three assumed propositions. For brevity's sake call the first A, the second B, and the third C.

(13) The proof of these. First, A is proved.

[*First proof of A*] First, the totality of essentially ordered caused things is itself caused; therefore it comes from some cause that itself is not a member of that totality—otherwise it would be the cause of itself. For the totality of dependent things is itself dependent, and it does not depend on anything whatsoever that belongs to that totality.

[*Second proof of A*] Second, an infinity of essentially ordered causes would exist simultaneously in actuality (from the third difference, explained above[7])—a conclusion no philosopher accepts.

7. 3.28(11) above.

[*Third proof of A*] Third, the prior is nearer to a beginning (from *Metaphysics* 5);[8] therefore where there is no beginning, there is nothing essentially prior.

[*Fourth proof of A*] Fourth, the higher is more perfect in its causing (from the second difference explained above[9]); therefore the infinitely higher is infinitely more perfect and so is infinitely perfect in its causing; it therefore does not cause by anything else's power, because anything that causes in this way causes imperfectly, since it is dependent in its causing.

[*Fifth proof of A*] Fifth, being able to produce an effect does not as such necessarily convey any imperfection, as is clear from Theorem 2.8; therefore, the ability to produce an effect can exist without imperfection in a nature. But if there is nothing that is not dependent on a prior, then nothing would have, without imperfection, the ability to produce an effect. Therefore the ability to produce an effect independently can belong to some nature; such a nature is simply first; therefore it is possible for something to have the ability to produce an effect and be simply first. This is enough for now, since later on it will be established that such a thing exists in reality. Thus, from these five arguments, A is clear.

30. (14) B is proved. Assuming an infinite series of accidentally ordered causes, such a series is not simultaneous, obviously, but only successive—one thing after another—such that a second, although it might have come to exist from what is prior to it, does not depend on the prior in its causing, for it can cause its effect even if the prior is non-existent, as a son procreates whether his father be dead or living. An infinite series like this is impossible, except by some infinitely enduring nature, on which the whole series and each of its members depends. For changes of form do not occur except by virtue of something enduring, not itself a member of the succession of things changing form (since all members of the succession are of the same nature); but something is essentially prior to the succession, because everything in the succession depends on it, and in a different order from that in which each depends on its proximate cause, which itself is a member of the succession. Therefore B is clear.

31. (15) C is proved. From Theorem 3.1, some nature can produce an effect; if an essential order of things able to produce an effect is denied, then that one nature does not cause anything by another's power. And even if that nature, in some individual, is assumed to be caused, still, in some other individual the nature is uncaused—which is just what is proposed concerning

8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.11.1018b9–11 (Barnes, 2:1608).

9. 3.28(11) above.

the First Nature. The reason is that, assuming the nature to be caused in each individual, denying essential order entails a contradiction, since (from B) one cannot posit that any nature is caused in a given thing in such a way that there is an accidental order under that nature without an essential order to some other nature.

32. (16) Theorem 3.3: That which can produce an effect in a way that is simply first is uncausable, because it cannot be the effect of anything else and it can produce an effect independent of anything else.

(17) This is clear from Theorem 3.2 because, if it could be produced by another thing, or could be a cause only by another's power, then either there would be an infinite series of causes, or a circle of causes, or the series would stop at something not able to be the effect of anything else and able to produce an effect independent of anything else. That thing I call first, and it is clear from what you have granted that no other thing is first.

Additionally, it is established that if the first cannot be the effect of anything else, then it is uncausable, because it cannot be ordered to an end (by Theorem 2.5), or be made of matter (by Theorem 2.6), or have form (by Theorem 2.7), or be composed of form and matter together (by Theorem 2.8).

33. (18) Theorem 3.4: Something able to produce an effect in a way that is simply first exists in actuality, and some actually existing nature can produce an effect in this way.

(19) Proof. Anything the nature of which is repugnant with being able to exist by another, can exist of itself if it can exist at all. The nature of that which can produce an effect in a way that is simply first is repugnant with being able to exist by another (by Theorem 3.3). But it can exist (by Theorem 3.2). Indeed, the fifth proof of A, which would appear to establish less than the other proofs, establishes this.

The other arguments[10] can be treated as dealing with existence, in which case they have contingent (but evident) premises; or they can be treated as dealing with nature, essence, and possibility, and therefore as having necessarily true premises.

Therefore something able to produce an effect in a way that is simply first can exist of itself. What does not exist of itself cannot exist of itself; otherwise a non-being would produce something existent, which is impossible; moreover it would then be the cause of itself, and so would not be completely uncausable.

10. Probably, the other arguments for A, B, and C offered in 3.29(13)–31(15).

Another way to show Theorem 3.4 is that it would be unfitting for the universe to be missing the highest possible degree of being.

(20) Note a corollary of Theorem 3.4: not only is the first among things able to produce an effect, prior to all others, but it is contradictory that anything be prior to it. Thus, insofar as it is first, it exists. This is proved in the same way as Theorem 3.4 was proved, for that nature maximally includes being uncausable; therefore if it can exist (because it does not contradict being) then it can exist of itself, and so exists of itself.

34. (21) Theorem 3.5: What is uncausable exists necessarily from itself.

(22) This is proved: by excluding every cause of existence other than itself (both intrinsic and extrinsic causes), it is shown that it is impossible for it not to exist from itself.

Proof. No nature can fail to exist unless something else can exist that is incompatible with that nature—incompatible either in the positive sense [i.e., that its existence rules out the other's existence] or in the privative sense [i.e., that its non-existence rules out the other's existence]—because one or the other of a pair of contradictories is always true. Nothing incompatible positively or privatively with the uncausable nature can exist, for it would exist either [i] from itself or [ii] from another; but not [i] from itself, because then it would in fact exist from itself (by Theorem 3.4) and thus incompatible things would exist simultaneously and, for the very same reason, neither would exist, for you concede that given the incompatible thing, the uncausable thing would not exist, but the converse also follows. And neither [ii] from another, because nothing that is caused has a more vigorous or powerful existence by its cause, than the uncausable thing has just of itself, since the caused thing is dependent in its existence, whereas the uncausable is not. Likewise, the possible existence of the causable thing does not necessarily imply its actual existence, as it does for the uncausable thing. But nothing incompatible with something already existing can exist from any cause unless it receives from its cause a more vigorous or more powerful existence than the existence of the being with which it is incompatible.

35. (23) Theorem 3.6: Existing necessarily from itself pertains to only one nature.

(24) [*First proof*] This is proved in this way: if two natures could exist necessarily from themselves, then necessary existence would be a common feature. Therefore there would be some essence on account of which these two natures have that common feature, and from which that common feature would be received, as though it were their genus; moreover, the two natures would be distinguished from each other due to their ultimate actual formal features.

Two impossibilities follow from this. First, each will be necessarily existent primarily due to a common nature, which has less actuality, and not due to a distinguishing nature, which has greater actuality; for if it has necessary existence formally from its distinguishing nature, then it will have necessary existence twice, since the distinguishing nature does not formally include the common nature, just as a difference does not include its genus. But it seems impossible that what has less actuality would be primarily the reason that something is necessary, and what has more actuality would be neither primarily nor essentially the reason that something is necessary.

The second impossibility is that neither would have necessary existence through the common nature that is posited to be primarily that through which both have necessary existence, since neither exists completely through that nature. Indeed, any nature is the very nature it is through its ultimate formal feature. But that through which something has necessary existence (disregarding all of its other features) is that whereby it necessarily exists.

If you say that the common nature suffices for existence on its own, apart from further distinguishing natures, then that common nature of itself exists actually yet indistinctly, and consequently it is indistinguishable, since necessary existence that already exists is not in potency to existence as such—yet a genus's existence in a species is the only existence a genus has.

(25) [*Second proof*] Again, two natures falling under the same common nature do not have an equal degree of perfection. This is shown through the various differences dividing up a genus. If these differences are unequal, then, for two things belonging to the same genus but of two different species, the existence of the thing of one species will be more perfect than the existence of the thing of the other species. But no existence is more perfect than necessary existence of itself.

36. (26) [*Third proof*] Again, if there were two natures that exist necessarily of themselves, neither would depend on the other for its existence; therefore they would not be essentially ordered to each other. Therefore one of them would not be a member of this universe, since there is nothing in the universe that is not essentially ordered to other beings in the universe, since what makes this universe *one* universe just is the order among its parts.

Here it is objected that since each would have an order of eminence to the parts of the universe, this would suffice for the unity of the universe. But to the contrary, neither would be in an order of eminence with respect to the other, because the more eminent nature more perfectly exists, yet nothing is more perfect than necessary existence from itself. Also, one of these would be in no order with respect to the parts of the universe, because there is just one order for one universe, and one order is ordered to one first. Proof: if it is posited that there are two first natures, then the nature immediately posterior to

the first would not have a unique order or dependence to a unique first, but two orders to two firsts, and likewise there would be two orders to it, and so on for each lower nature. In the whole universe, then, there will be two orders to a first, and so two universes. Alternatively, there would be an order to just one necessary being, and not to the other.

37. Proceeding reasonably, however, nothing should be posited in the universe unless there is some evident need for it, that is, unless some order to other things that manifestly do exist proves its existence—after all, a plurality is not to be posited without necessity (from *Physics* 1).[11] A necessarily existing thing is revealed to be part of the universe by considering what is uncausable, and the uncausable is revealed by considering the first cause, and the first cause is revealed by considering what is caused. But in considering what is caused there appears to be no need to posit a plurality of natures that are first causes. Indeed this is impossible, as shown later in Theorem 3.15. Therefore there is no need to posit a plurality of natures that are uncaused or necessarily exist. Reasonably, then, these are not posited.

The Primacy of Finality

38. (27) I now set forth four theorems about the final cause, similar to the theorems in the first part of this chapter about the ability to produce an effect, and shown to be true through similar arguments. The first is:

Theorem 3.7: There is some nature among beings such that it can be an end.

(28) Proof: something can be ordered to an end. Proof: since something can be produced (from the proof of Theorem 3.1), something can be ordered to an end. The consequence is clear from Theorem 2.4. Being able to be ordered to an end is even more clearly an instance of essential order than being able to produce an effect (see Theorem 2.16).

(29) Theorem 3.8: Something that can be an end is simply first, that is, it cannot be ordered to some other end, and not by anything else's power is it the end of other things.

(30) This is proved by five arguments similar to those offered for Theorem 3.2.

11. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.4.188a17 (Barnes, 1:321); also Theorem 2.15.

(31) Theorem 3.9: The first among beings that can be an end, is itself uncausable.

(32) Proof: it cannot be ordered to an end; otherwise, it would not be the first. Moreover, it therefore cannot be an effect of any efficient cause (from Theorem 2.4). Additionally, see the above proof for Theorem 3.3.

(33) Theorem 3.10: The first among beings that can be an end, actually exists, and this primacy belongs to some actually existing nature.

(34) The proof is just like the proof for Theorem 3.4. A corollary is that it is first in such a way that it is impossible for anything to be prior to it, and this is proved just like the corollary of the above proof for Theorem 3.4.

The Primacy of Eminence

39. (35) Having just advanced four theorems each about the orders of extrinsic causality, I likewise offer four theorems about the order of eminence. The first of these:

Theorem 3.11: Among the natures of beings there is something that excels.

(36) Proof: something is ordered to an end (from Theorem 3.7); therefore, it is excelled (from Theorem 2.16).

(37) Theorem 3.12: Some eminent nature is simply first in perfection.

(38) This is clear from one of the features of essential order, namely priority and posteriority. According to Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 8,[12] forms are related to each other as numbers are related to each other. Any essential order comes to a stopping point, as is proved in the five arguments offered above for Theorem 3.2.

(39) Theorem 3.13: The Supreme Nature is uncausable.

(40) [*First proof*] Proof: it cannot be ordered to an end (from Theorem 2.16); therefore it cannot be an effect (from Theorem 2.4); and it cannot be caused by any other type of cause, as is clear from the above proof for Theorem 3.3.

[*Second proof*] Likewise, that the Supreme Nature cannot be an effect is proved from the section establishing proposition B in the proof of Theorem 3.2, since everything that can be an effect has some cause to which it is essentially ordered.

12. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 8.3.1043b33–1044a14 (Barnes, 2:1648).

(41) Theorem 3.14: The Supreme Nature is something actually existing.

(42) This is proved in the same way as Theorem 3.4. A corollary is that it is contradictory to assert that something else is more perfect than, or is superior to, it, and this is proved in the same way as the corollary in the proof of Theorem 3.4.

The Triple Primacy

40. (43) Theorem 3.15: To one and the same unique and actually existing nature belongs the triple primacy within the three types of essential orders discussed in this chapter, namely, efficiency, finality, and eminence.

(44) [*First proof*] This fifteenth theorem is the fruit of this chapter. From what has already been shown it follows clearly, thus: if necessary existence from itself belongs to just one nature (by Theorem 3.6), and whatever possesses any of the three primacies has necessary existence from itself—by Theorems 3.5 and 3.3 for the first primacy, Theorems 3.5 and 3.9 for the second primacy, and Theorems 3.5 and 3.13 for the third primacy—then each of these primacies belongs to a single nature. Also, any nature that possesses one of these primacies possesses the others. For each of them is in *some* nature; but it is not the case that one of them is in one nature and another one in another nature (by Theorems 3.4, 3.10, and 3.14). Therefore, they all belong to one and the same nature. The proof of the minor premise is that otherwise several natures would exist necessarily (from the second premise of the argument just given).

[*Second proof*] Again, Theorem 3.15 is proved through the nature of the uncausable, since that is uniquely first. But each of the primacies mentioned here is uncausable. Therefore Theorem 3.15 follows. The major premise is proved in this way: how will a multitude exist of itself?

The Uniqueness of the First Nature

41. (45) Theorem 3.15 is intensely pregnant, for in its power it contains six additional conclusions, three about the *unity* of the nature to which each of these aforementioned primacies belongs; and three about the *identity* of the nature that is first with respect to one type of primacy with the nature that is first with respect to the other type of primacies.

Also, Theorem 3.15, pregnant in this way, has been shown through Theorem 3.6 alone, as though it were a major premise.

It is befitting to state the proper major premises for these six additional conclusions just mentioned, if they can be found.

42. (46) For the first two of these six conclusions to be shown, I offer this theorem:

Theorem 3.16. It is impossible for one and the same thing to depend essentially on two things in such a way that its dependence terminates wholly in each.

(47) This is proved. If one cause totally causes something in one type of causality, it is impossible for another cause, in the same type of causality, to cause the very same thing as that first cause; otherwise the same thing would be caused twice, or neither cause would be its total cause; or similarly, then something would be a cause, but if it were not causing, the same effect would come about anyway—which is absurd. So too it is impossible, in any type of dependence, for one and the same thing to depend on two things, where one of the two terminates the whole of the dependent thing's dependence. If, in such a circumstance, the dependent thing were to depend on one of the two, then the other does not after all completely terminate the dependent thing's dependence. Similarly, then, that dependent thing would depend on something such that, if it turned out not to exist, the dependent thing would still exist in the very same order of being—but it would be contrary to the nature of dependence to think that it would still exist in the same order of being.

43. (48) Theorem 3.16 having been shown, I now advance the first conclusions included together in Theorem 3.15, thus:

Theorem 3.17: To only one nature belongs each primacy of any type of extrinsic cause.

(49) [*First proof*] This is proved, because if such a primacy were to belong to several things, they would be first either with respect to the same posterior things, or to different posterior things. Not to the same posteriors, from Theorem 3.16; also, in each posterior thing there would be two dependencies of the same type, since there is not one dependence on two first causes. The consequent is unfitting. Neither to different posteriors, since if there were another first cause, of other things, there will be a different universe comprising those things, since those things and these things will be ordered neither to each other nor to the same thing. Without unity of order there is not a unity of the universe. Aristotle holds that the chief goodness of the universe is in its one end.[13] And since there is one order for one highest thing, it is

13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.10.1075a11–19 (Barnes, 2:1699).

enough for me to speak of only one universe, not inventing another when I have no reason to do so; indeed, the conclusion is untenable.

44. (50) Probable proofs are added. [*Second proof*] In an ascending essential order there is advancement toward unity and paucity; therefore such an order is brought to rest in one thing.

(51) [*Third proof*] Again, the causality of a higher cause extends itself to more things; thus, the higher up a causal series, the fewer causes suffice. Therefore, etc. This clarifies the previous proof.

(52) [*Fourth proof*] Again, it seems obvious that there can be only one most eminent nature: given that it is impossible for two natures not to be ordered with respect to eminence, where one does not excel the other (since in this ordering natures are like numbers[14]), it is all the more impossible for two natures to occupy the same highest degree of eminence.

(53) [*Fifth proof*] Again, concerning the end: if there were not a single final end, then there would be no end in which everything else comes to rest. Since this is unintelligible, it follows as before, that it is impossible for two natures to be the first final cause.

(54) [*Sixth proof*] Again, if more than one nature has any of the three primacies, no nature would virtually contain the perfection of all other natures; but it cannot be thought without contradiction that there should be no most perfect nature.

45. (55) There are also special proofs for the three other conclusions.[15] For:

Theorem 3.18: The First Nature that can produce an effect is most actual because it virtually contains every possible actuality. The first in finality is the best, virtually containing every possible good. The first in eminence is most perfect, eminently containing every possible perfection.

(56) These three primacies cannot be separated, because if one were in one nature, and another in another, it could not be determined which of these would be preeminent. Hence, these three primacies seem to express three necessarily concurring aspects of the highest goodness, which are the highest communicability, the highest lovability, and the highest integrity or wholeness. For the good and the perfect are the same (*Metaphysics* 5)[16] and the

14. A reference back to 3.39(38).

15. The second three conclusions of the six mentioned in 3.41(45).

16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.16.1021b14–22 (Barnes, 2:1613).

perfect and the whole are the same (*Physics* 3).[17] Moreover, concerning the good, it is clear that it is desirable (*Ethics* 1)[18] and communicative (Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 6).[19] For nothing perfectly communicates unless it communicates out of generosity, and this truly pertains to the highest good, since it does not look for something in exchange for its communication—and this is the mark of the one who is generous, according to Avicenna in chapter 5 of the same book.[20]

Everything Is Ordered

46. (57) Theorem 3.19: One actually existing nature is first in the three aforementioned orders with respect to any other nature, such that any other nature is posterior to that First Nature in these three ways.

(58) [*Objection*] Some impudent person, holding Theorem 3.15, could say that there are many natures besides this one, which indeed are not first, but are not posterior to that First Nature in one of the aforesaid orders; or are not posterior in all the orders, but only in eminence, or in eminence and finality, but not in efficiency—as some say Aristotle thought was the case for the intelligences posterior to the First Nature, and possibly for prime matter as well. Although this can be refuted from what has already been said, still it warrants explanation.

(59) [*First reply*] First, this view is certainly disproved at least by Theorem 3.6, since if necessary existence from itself belongs to just one nature, and whatever is not posterior in whichever of the three orders has necessary existence of itself, then only one nature is not posterior in any sort of posteriority. Therefore, anything else is posterior in three ways. The second premise of this argument is clear from Theorems 3.3, 3.9, and 3.13—just add Theorem 3.6 to each of them.

47. (60) [*Second reply*] Second, this view is disproved for each type of order. What is neither an end nor ordered to some end, exists in vain. Among beings, nothing exists in vain. Therefore every nature other than the first end is ordered to an end—and if to some end, then to the first (from Theorem 2.3).

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17. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.6.207a13 (Barnes, 1:352).

18. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1.1094a1–3 (Barnes, 2:1729).

19. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.5.45 (Marmura, 233).

20. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.5.48 (Marmura, 234).

[*Third reply*] Similarly it is disproved for the eminent. What is neither the highest nor excelled by something, has no degree of eminence; but such a thing is nothing at all; therefore, everything that is not the highest is excelled by something—therefore by the highest (from Theorem 2.3).

(61) [*Fourth reply*] From these, it is also disproved for efficiency, which some think Aristotle denies. Each thing is either the first end or something ordered to an end (from what was just said above); therefore each thing is either the first efficient cause or an effect, since the disjuncts of the latter disjunction can be converted with the disjuncts of the former. The convertibility of the disjuncts about posteriority is clear from Theorems 2.4 and 2.5; the convertibility of the disjuncts about the First Nature is clear from Theorem 3.18.

(62) [*Fifth reply*] It is similarly disproved through eminence. If everything is either the highest nature or excelled by the highest, then everything is either the first efficient cause or an effect, since these disjuncts are also converted (from Theorems 2.15, 2.16, and 3.15).

[*Sixth reply*] Also, the belief that there is some being having no order is extremely irrational, as shown obliquely by the second reason for Theorem 3.6 and the proof for Theorem 3.17.

48. (63) Truly, Lord, in wisdom you have made everything in an ordered way, so that it is evident to any reasonable intellect that every being is ordered well. Hence it was absurd for the philosophers to deny order of some beings. But from this general principle, *every being is ordered*, it follows that it is not the case that every being is posterior, and it is not the case that every being is prior. Both follow because their contradictories entail either that something is ordered to itself or that there is a circle in an order. There is, therefore, some being that is prior and not posterior, and so first; and something that is posterior and not prior; but nothing that is neither prior nor posterior.

You are the one and only first, and everything else is posterior to you, even in a triple order, as I have shown as well as I can.

Chapter 4

On the Simplicity, Infinity, and Intellectuality of the First Being[1]

49. (2) Lord our God, if you so grant, I would like in some way to show the perfections that I do not doubt belong to your unique and truly First Nature. I believe that you are simple, infinite, wise, and an agent who wills. Because I do not want to argue in a circular way, I will set forth some propositions about simplicity that can be proved here at the beginning. Other propositions about simplicity will be delayed until the proper place where they can be proved.

Simplicity

50. (3) Therefore, this is the first theorem to be shown in this fourth chapter:

Theorem 4.1: The First Nature in itself is simple.

(4) I have said 'in itself' because I am here thinking of essential simplicity, which completely excludes all composition in the essence.

Theorem 4.1 can be proved as follows: [*First proof*] The First Nature is not caused (from Theorem 3.3); therefore it does not have matter and form as essential parts.

[*Second proof*] Nor does that nature have diverse perfections really distinct in any way, from which could be taken concepts of genus and specific difference. This is proved from the first proof of Theorem 3.6: for *either* (i) one of those perfections according to its proper nature would be that whereby the whole primarily is necessary existence, and the other would exist necessarily neither primarily nor through itself—and then, since it is essentially included in the whole, the whole will not be necessary existence since it includes formally something that is not necessary—*or* (ii) if each reality were that whereby the whole primarily is necessary existence, the First Nature would be necessary existence twice over, and it would have two primary

1. The heading of Chapter 4 belongs to the Latin text. It is numbered as paragraph 1 in Wolter's edition.

existences, neither of which would essentially include the other. Similarly, one would not be the other, because something unified would not exist from them if each one primarily gives necessary existence. For each will be the ultimate actuality and so either nothing that has its own identity will be composed of them—or there will be no difference between them (and then they are not two realities after all).

(5) A corollary: the First Nature is not in a genus, which is clear from the argument just given. It is also proved in this way: the whole of a nature that is in a genus is expressed through a definition, where what is conveyed by the genus is not in any way the same as what is conveyed by the difference, lest there be vain repetition. But the opposite obtains in so simple a Nature.

51. (6) [*First objection to the second proof*] There is an objection here: if, concerning two perfections or realities existing in one and the same nature, only one can be necessary and the other non-necessary—since otherwise there would be two necessarily existing realities—it would follow that no realities that are distinct from each other by their formal natures could be granted necessary existence—not even the essence and a relation in a divine person. But the consequent is false; therefore the first part of the argument [(i) in the second proof above] errs.

[*Second objection to the second proof*] There is a similar argument against the second part [(ii) in the second proof, above], since either each would be a final actuality, or one of them would be non-necessary.

I respond. Concerning realities distinguished by their formal natures, if they can be composed as act and potency, or as two things by nature actualizing one and the same thing, then if one is infinite, it can include the other by identity, indeed it does include it by identity. Otherwise, the infinite could be composed, which is disproved by Theorem 4.9. But if instead it is finite, it does not include, by identity, that which by its formal nature is primarily diverse from it, because a finite reality either can be perfected by the other, or can compose something with it. Therefore, if it is granted that necessary existence has two realities, of which neither, by identity, contains the other—which is what is required for composition—it follows either that one will not be necessary existence, neither formally nor by identity, or that the whole will be necessary existence twice, and so the first and second parts of the proof [(i) and (ii)] hold.

The objections about a divine person are to no avail, because those two realities do not make a composition; instead, because one is infinite, one is the other by identity. Suppose you object: "Then I say there is composition and two realities in the necessary being, but one is infinite"—you contradict yourself in two ways: first, because the infinite cannot be a part making a composition with another reality, since a part is less than the whole; second,

because if you posit a composition, neither reality is the other through identity; and then the proofs go through.

Pure Perfections

52. (7) Theorem 4.2: Whatever is intrinsic to the highest nature is the highest such thing.

(8) Proof: By simplicity (see Theorem 4.1), any intrinsic perfection of the highest nature is entirely the same as that nature; therefore, just as that nature is the highest nature, so too any intrinsic perfection of that nature is the highest such perfection, because it is the same as that nature. Otherwise, if an intrinsic perfection of that nature could be understood to be excelled according to its own entity, then the nature itself, whose entity is the same as that perfection's entity, could be understood to be excelled according to its own entity.

53. (9) Theorem 4.3: Every pure perfection belongs to the highest nature necessarily and in the highest degree.

(10) That is called a pure perfection which is such that, in anything whatsoever, it is better than what is not it.[2]

But this description of pure perfection seems to be void, since if it is understood to concern the affirmation in itself [e.g., wisdom] and the negation in itself [e.g., not-wisdom], the affirmation is not better than its negation; and the affirmation in anything compatible with the affirmation [e.g., wisdom in a man] is not better than the negation in it [e.g., not-wisdom in a man]. But if the description is understood not to concern the affirmation in itself and in whatever is compatible with it, but understood instead to concern the affirmation and negation in anything whatsoever, then the description is simply false: for wisdom is not better in a dog, since there is no perfection such that it is good in that which it contradicts.

I respond: this description of pure perfection is famous. It can be explained in this way: "better than what is not it," that is, better than any positive, incompossible thing that entails not being it. I say it is better, in the stated way, *in* everything—not *for* everything—insofar as it is in itself; for it is indeed better than what is incompossible with it, due to which it cannot belong to such a subject. Briefly therefore it may be said that a pure perfection is that which is simply and absolutely better than anything incompossible with it. Thus,

2. Anselm, *Monologion* 15 (Williams, 21–23).

"better than what is not it, in anything whatsoever" may be explained as "better than anything that is not it." Other than this I am not worried about the description. I accept the first part of the description, which is plain enough. But concerning the incompossibility, it ought to be understood according to denominative predication, because this is the way it is commonly used in discourse.

54. (11) Understanding Theorem 4.3 in this way, I prove it. [*Proof*] A pure perfection has an order of nobility to everything that is incompossible with it—an order of excelling rather than being excelled (according to the description). Therefore, either it is incompossible with the Supreme Nature and so excels it, or it is compossible with it and so can belong to it, even in the highest degree (for if it is compossible with anything, it is compossible in this way with the Supreme Nature). As it is compossible with it, so it belongs to it. But it does not belong to it as a contingent accident. Therefore either it is the same as it, or at least a necessary feature of it. Thus Theorem 4.3 is proved: pure perfections belong necessarily to the Supreme Nature.

That a pure perfection does not belong contingently to the Supreme Nature, as an accident, I prove. In every perfection with which necessity is not repugnant, something having that perfection necessarily has it more perfectly than something having it contingently. Necessity is not repugnant with a pure perfection as such, because otherwise something incompatible with it would excel it, such as that which is necessary or could be necessary. But nothing can have a pure perfection more perfectly than the First Nature (by Theorem 4.2); therefore, etc.

Intellect and Will

55. (12) I set forth intellect and will before infinity and the remainder of simplicity, because the former are assumed in what follows below. The first such theorem is this:

Theorem 4.4: The first efficient cause understands and wills.

(13) This is proved. [*First proof*] The first is this. The first efficient cause is a *per se* agent, since something *per se* is prior to every *per accidens* cause (according to *Physics* 2).[3] Every *per se* agent acts for the sake of an end.

From this I draw two arguments. First, every natural agent, considered precisely as natural, acts by necessity and would act just as it does even if it were independently acting for the sake of no end at all. Therefore if it does

3. Aristotle, *Physic*s 2.6198a7–9 (Barnes, 1:338).

not act except for the sake of an end, this is because it is dependent on an agent loving that end. Hence, etc.

[*Second proof*] The second argument goes like this. If the first efficient cause acts for the sake of an end, either the end moves it as something loved by an act of will (and so Theorem 4.4 is shown), or as loved only naturally. But the second disjunct is false, because the first efficient cause does not naturally love an end other than itself, as a heavy thing loves the center of the earth or as matter loves form. Thus, if the first efficient cause loved an end naturally, it would exist in some sense for that end, because it would be inclined to it. But if it naturally loves only itself as an end, this means nothing more than that it is itself. But this cannot account for the fact that the First Nature is both the first efficient and the first final cause.

(14) Again, the first efficient cause directs its effect to its end, and does this either naturally or by loving that end. But not naturally, because something without cognition directs nothing except in virtue of something else with cognition, for the primary ordering of things belongs to the wise.[4] But the first efficient cause does not direct by anything else's power, just as it does not cause by anything else's power.

56. (15) [*Third proof*] And a third argument: something is caused contingently; therefore the first cause causes contingently; therefore it causes by willing. Here is the proof of the first consequence: every secondary cause causes insofar as it is moved by the first; therefore, if the first moves necessarily, everything else is moved and caused necessarily. And here is the proof of the second consequence: the only principle of acting contingently is the will or something connected to will, since everything else acts by the necessity of nature, and so not contingently.

(16) There are objections to the first consequence [of the third proof]. [*First objection*] Even if the first cause causes necessarily, our will can still cause something contingently. [*Second objection*] Also: the Philosopher concedes the antecedent but denies the consequent in the case of God's will, positing contingency in lower things on account of a motion that, while caused necessarily insofar as it is uniform, produces diverse effects on account of its parts and so causes contingent things.[5] And an objection to the second consequence [of the third proof]: [*Third objection*] some motions can be impeded and so the opposite can come about contingently.

(17) In response to the first objection, if the first efficient cause is first with respect to our will, the same would follow for our will as for everything else.

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4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2.982a18–19 (Barnes, 2:1554).

5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1072b3–8 (Barnes, 2:1694).

This is because either it would move our will necessarily and immediately, or move something else necessarily to move our will necessarily and immediately—it moves because it is moved; ultimately some immediate cause will move the will necessarily, and so the will necessarily will will and its willing will be necessary. Moreover, something impossible follows, namely that the will causes necessarily what it causes by willing.

(18) In response to the second objection, I do not here call "contingent" whatever is not necessary or sempiternal, but rather something such that, when it comes about, its opposite could come about.[6] This is why I said [in the third proof], "something is caused contingently" rather than "something is contingent." But I also say that the Philosopher could not, through his account of motion, deny the consequent while preserving the antecedent, for if that total motion exists necessarily by its cause, every part of it is caused necessarily when it is caused—that is to say, inevitably—so that the opposite could not then be caused. Moreover, what is caused by any part of a necessary motion is necessarily caused—that is, inevitably. Either therefore nothing comes about contingently (avoidably) or the first cause causes—even what it causes immediately—that which it need not cause.

(19) And in response to the third objection, if another cause can impede this cause, it can do so now by the power of a higher cause, and so on, up to the first cause. If the first cause necessarily moves the cause immediately below it, then there will be necessity throughout the whole order of causes, down to the impeding cause, and therefore it will impede necessarily. Therefore no other cause could cause the effect contingently.

57. (20) [*Fourth proof*] Here is a fourth argument. Something bad exists among beings; therefore the first efficient cause causes contingently; and then the argument continues as it does in the third proof just given. Proof of the consequence: an agent acting by the necessity of its nature acts to the full extent of its power, and so it will produce every perfection possible for it to produce. Therefore, if the first efficient cause acts necessarily (and consequently, as has already been deduced, every other agent acts necessarily), it follows that the whole order of causes will cause in that order whatever it is possible for it to cause in that order. Therefore that order would lack no perfection that could be brought about in it by the activity of all the causes; therefore it would lack nothing that it could receive; and therefore there is no badness in it. The consequences are obvious, since every perfection that can be received in the total order of causes, is causable either by some cause or by all the ordered causes together. The last consequence is obvious given

6. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* 1.39.q.1–5.n.49–51 (Vatican 17:494–96).

the nature of evil, and the proof works as much for moral viciousness as for natural evil.

You might say: "Matter does not obey." But this is nothing: a powerful agent would overcome disobedience.[7]

(21) [*Fifth proof*] In a fifth way Theorem 4.4 is proved: a living thing is better than every non-living thing, and among living things, an intelligent thing is better than every non-intelligent thing.

58. (22) [*Sixth proof*] Some argue for Theorem 4.4 in a sixth way, based on Theorem 4.3 above. They suppose it is obvious enough that understanding, willing, wisdom, and love are pure perfections.

[*Objections to the sixth proof*] But it is not evident how it can be concluded that these perfections are pure perfections, while the nature of the first angel is not a pure perfection. For if you were to take wisdom denominatively, it is better than every denominative predicate incompatible with it, but you have not proved thereby that the First Nature is wise. I say you are begging the question. You can only maintain that it is better, in everything besides the First Nature, to be wise than not wise. In the same way the first angel—understood denominatively—is better than every being incompatible with it (other than God). Indeed, the essence of the first angel, in the abstract, can be simply better than wisdom.

You might say, "An angel is repugnant with many things; thus, it is not better, taken denominatively, for everything than its opposite." I respond that neither is wisdom better denominatively for anything whatsoever; it too is repugnant with many things.

You might say, "On the contrary, it would be better for anything to which it could belong, since, for the dog, it would be better if it were wise." I respond: so too for the first angel: it would be better for it if it could be a dog, and for the dog it would be better if it could be the first angel.

You might say, "No indeed, for that would destroy the nature of dog; therefore it is not good for the dog." I respond: So too wisdom would destroy its nature. There is no difference here, except that the angel destroys as a nature of the same genus as the dog [i.e., substance], while wisdom destroys as a nature of a different genus from the dog [i.e., quality]—but wisdom is still incompatible with the dog because it demands for its subject a nature of the same genus as the dog but incompatible with it. And that which is primarily repugnant with a subject is also *per se* (but not primarily) repugnant with a property of that subject. The common way of talking about pure perfection is frequently weak.

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7. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 9.q.12.n.11 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 2:552).

Again: being intellectual seems to express a supreme degree of a determinate category, such as substance. Should it for that reason be inferred that being intellectual is a pure perfection? With the properties of being as such it is different, because these follow from every being [not just substance], either as properties belonging to all, or as disjunctive properties. If a contentious person were to say that every foremost denominative predicate of any most general genus is a pure perfection, how would you disprove it? For such a person would say that any such perfection is better than anything incompossible with it, if it is understood denominatively, because anything incompossible with it is a denominative predicate of its own genus, and it excels all of them. If this should be understood of denominated substances, insofar as they are denominated, such a person would likewise say that if such a perfection determines for itself a substance, it determines for itself what is noblest; or if not, it is at least the case that any subject, insofar as it is denominated by that perfection, is better than any other, insofar as the other is denominated by something else incompossible with it.

59. (23) Theorem 4.5: The first cause causes contingently whatever it causes.

(24) This is proved. [*First proof*] That which the first cause causes immediately, it contingently causes (from the third proof of Theorem 4.4[8]); therefore it also causes everything else contingently, because the contingent does not naturally precede the necessary, nor does the necessary depend on the contingent.

(25) [*Second proof*] Another proof comes from willing the end. Nothing is willed necessarily except that which is required for willing the end. God loves himself as the end, and whatever about himself he loves as an end, would remain even if nothing other than God exists, because what is necessary from itself depends on nothing. Therefore, by willing himself as the end, he wills nothing else necessarily; neither, then, does he cause anything necessarily.

(26) [*First objection*] Against this. The First Nature itself is the same as its willing, even its willing something besides itself; therefore its willing something besides itself exists necessarily and therefore is not contingent.

[*Second objection*] Again: if the third proof of Theorem 4.4 holds up (on which the proofs for Theorem 4.5 rest), then there is no contingency in any secondary cause's causing unless there is contingency in the first cause's willing; just as necessity in the first cause's willing implies necessity in everything else's causing, so determination of its willing implies determination of everything else's causing. But the determination of its willing is eternal; therefore every

8. 4.56 above.

secondary cause's causing is determined before it acts, such that it is not in its power to be determined to the opposite.

To explain further, if it is in a secondary cause's power to determine itself to the opposite, then this indeterminacy of its causing is consistent with determination in the first cause's willing, since it is not in a secondary cause's power to make the first cause indeterminate. And just as determination of the first cause is consistent with indeterminacy in the secondary cause, so also it would seem that the first cause's necessity is consistent with the secondary cause's possibility and non-necessity. Thus, either that third proof of Theorem 4.4 has no force, or it appears that our will is not of itself free with respect to opposites.

[*Third objection*] Again, if the first cause, itself determined, determines everything else, how could some secondary cause move toward something that is the opposite of that to which the first cause would move it, if it moved it—as happens in our will when sinning?

[*Fourth objection*] Again, a fourth objection. All effecting will be contingent, since it depends on the efficient causality of the first cause, which is contingent.

These objections are difficult: a full and clear resolution of them requires that many things be described and explained. Let these be sought in the question I have discussed on God's foreknowledge of future contingents.[9]

60. (27) Theorem 4.6: The First Nature is the same as its love for itself.

(28) I prove the theorem in this way: [*First proof*] the causality and causation of the final cause is simply first (from Theorem 2.4); thus the causality and causation of the first final cause is itself totally uncausable, by any causation whatsoever in any type of cause. But the causality of the first final cause is to move the first efficient as something loved, or (which is the same thing) for the first efficient to love the first end. Now, for the final cause to be an object loved by an act of willing is the same as for the will to love it as its object. Thus, the first efficient cause's love for the first final cause is totally uncausable, and so exists necessarily from itself (by Theorem 3.5). Thus, it will be the same as the First Nature (by Theorem 3.6); and the deduction is made clear in Theorem 3.15.

(29) [*Second proof*] The theorem is deduced in another way, which amounts to the same: if the First Nature's love for itself is something different from the First Nature, it therefore can be caused (from Theorem 3.19), and therefore can be an effect (from Theorem 2.5), and therefore an effect of some

9. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* 1.d.39 (Vatican 17:481–510); *Ordinatio* 1.d.38–39 (Vatican 6:303–8 and 401–44); *Reportatio 1-A*.d.38–40 (Wolter and Bychkov, 2:448–91).

per se efficient cause (from the proof of Theorem 4.4), and therefore can be caused by something loving it as an end (by the same Theorem 4.4). Therefore the First Nature's love of itself would be caused by some prior act of love of an end, which is impossible.

61. [*Third proof*] Aristotle shows this in *Metaphysics* 12,[10] concerning the activity of understanding. If the first cause is not the same as its act of understanding, it will not be the best substance, because it is honorable through its act of understanding.

[*Fourth proof*] Also, according to Aristotle, it will be laborious to maintain continuous understanding, since, if it is not the same as its understanding but in a potency of contradiction to it, it must work for it.[11]

(30) These arguments, [i.e., the third and fourth proofs drawn from Aristotle], can be explained. First [concerning the third proof], the ultimate perfection of every being in first act is a second act by which it is conjoined to the best. This is especially so for a being that is active and not just something that is productive. Now, every intellectual being is active, and the First Nature is intellectual, from what has already been said [Theorem 4.4]. It follows that its ultimate perfection is in a second act. Therefore, if that second act is not its own substance, that substance is not the best, because something else is its ultimate perfection.

(31) Second [concerning the fourth proof], only a receptive potency is a potency of contradiction; therefore, etc. But that second argument from Aristotle [i.e., the fourth proof] is not a demonstration but only a probable argument; hence, he prefaces it by saying, "It is reasonable (etc.)."

[*Fifth proof*] In another way the theorem is shown from the identity between power and object; therefore its act is the same as it—but the consequence is not valid. Counterexample: an angel understands itself and loves itself, but its act is not the same as its substance.

62. (32) This theorem is fertile with corollaries. [*First corollary*] It follows first that the First Nature and its will are the same, since its willing is an act of the will; therefore its will is uncausable; therefore, etc. Similarly, an act of willing is understood as though it were posterior to the will, yet the First Nature is the same as its act of willing; therefore, it is all the more the same as its will.

[*Second corollary*] It follows second that the First Nature is the same as its act of understanding itself, since nothing is loved unless it is cognized; therefore its act of understanding necessarily exists from itself. Likewise, its

10. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9.1074b18–21 (Barnes, 2:1698).

11. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9.1074b28–30 (Barnes, 2:1698).

act of understanding is, as it were, even closer to the First Nature than its act of willing.

[*Third corollary*] It follows third that the First Nature is the same as its intellect, just as it was argued before about the will, from the act of willing.

[*Fourth corollary*] It also follows that the First Nature is the same as that by which it understands itself, since this necessarily exists from itself and the First Nature understands it, so to speak, before its act of understanding.

63. (33) Theorem 4.7: No act of understanding can be an accident of the First Nature.

(34) [*First proof*] Proof. The First Nature has been shown to be in itself first in the order of efficient causality. Therefore by itself, excluding any other causes, it can cause whatever can be caused—or at the very least it is the first cause of anything that can be caused. But excluding knowledge of what can be caused, it could not cause from itself everything that can be caused. Therefore its knowledge of whatever can be caused is not something different from its own nature. This last claim is proved in this way: nothing can cause except out of love for the end, by willing the end—otherwise it could not be a *per se* agent, because it could not act for the sake of an end. But willing anything for the sake of an end requires first that the thing willed is understood. Therefore, prior to the first instant at which something causes A or wills A, it understands A; thus, without understanding, nothing can be a *per se* efficient cause of A (or anything else).

64. (35) [*Second proof*] Again, all acts of understanding belonging to the same intellect have a similar relation to that intellect: either essential or accidental identity with it. It is clear that all acts of understanding belonging to any created intellect have the latter sort of relation to it, since all created acts of understanding seem to be perfections within the same genus. Thus, if some acts of understanding are received by the intellect, all are; and if some acts of understanding are accidents of the intellect, all are. Now some acts of understanding of the First Nature cannot be accidental (by Theorem 4.6); therefore none is accidental.

(36) [*Third proof*] Again, if an act of understanding can be an accident, it will be received in the intellect as in a subject. Therefore that act of understanding that is the same as the First Nature—and so more perfect than an accidental act of understanding—will be a receptive potency with respect to a less perfect act of understanding.

(37) [*Fourth proof*] Again, one and the same act of understanding can be of several ordered objects simultaneously, and therefore the more perfect the act of understanding, the more objects it can understand simultaneously. Thus, the most perfect act of understanding, than which there cannot

be a more perfect, will be the act of understanding everything that can be understood. The First Nature's act of understanding is the most perfect (from Theorem 4.2); therefore it is the act of understanding everything that can be understood. Now the First Nature and its act of self-understanding are the same, from what has been said above. Therefore, etc.

Understand this theorem to hold for willing as well as understanding.

65. (38) [*First rejected proof*] Again, it is argued that the intellect of the First Nature is nothing other than a certain act of understanding. But that intellect is the same for everything, such that it cannot be otherwise for one object than it is for another. Thus, neither can its act of understanding; indeed, with one and the same act of understanding it understands everything.

My response to this argument is that it is a fallacy of accident to infer from the identity of things with each other, to their identity with respect to a third thing distinct from them. For example, given that the understanding of the First Nature is its willing, it does not follow that if it understands a thing it also wills it. Rather, the understanding of that thing is a willing. And that act of willing is indeed some act in regards to that same thing, because it is in fact an act of understanding that thing [rather than a willing of it]. So one can make the inference in a divided sense, but not in a conjoined one.

(39) [*Second rejected proof*] Again, it is argued that the intellect of the First Nature has one complete and coeternal act, because its understanding is the same as itself; therefore, it cannot have an additional act. But the consequence is not valid. Someone blessed in heaven sees God, but also sees something else; even if he sees God to his fullest capacity, as is assumed of the soul of Christ, still, he can see another.

(40) [*Third rejected proof*] Again it is argued that the intellect of the First Nature has, in itself, by identity, the maximum perfection of understanding; therefore it also understands everything besides itself. But I respond that this does not follow, since understanding of other, lesser, things can be causable and so would differ from what is uncausable. But maximal understanding is uncausable.

66. (41) Theorem 4.8: (i) The intellect of the First Nature actually understands—always, necessarily, and distinctly—all intelligible things, and (ii) its understanding of these is naturally prior to their actual existence.

(42) [*First proof of (i)*] The first part of the theorem is proved in this way. The First Nature can understand in this way whatever is intelligible, since it belongs to the perfection of intellect as such to be able to understand distinctly and actually; indeed, this is a necessary feature of intellect, since

the object or goal of every intellect is the whole of being understood most generally, as I have elsewhere discussed.[12] But the First Nature cannot have any act of understanding that is not the same as the First Nature itself—from Theorem 4.7; therefore it has an actual and distinct understanding of each and every intelligible thing. And the First Nature and this act of understanding are the same.

(43) [*Second proof of (i)*] The first part of the theorem is also supported in this way: a perfect craftsman distinctly understands anything that is to be done before it comes about; otherwise, it would not act perfectly, since understanding is the measure by which the craftsman acts. Therefore God has distinct and actual—or at least habitual—knowledge of everything he can produce by himself, and this knowledge is prior to the existence of anything he produces. An objection to this argument is that a general skill suffices for the production of individual things.

(44) [*First proof of (ii)*] The second part of the theorem, about the priority of the First Nature's understanding, can be proved in this way: whatever is the same as the First Nature exists necessarily from itself (by Theorem 3.5 and 4.1). But the existence of other intelligible things is not necessary existence (by Theorem 3.6). Necessary existence from itself is naturally prior to everything that does not exist necessarily.

(45) [*Second proof of (ii)*] The second part of the theorem is proved in another way. The existence of everything other than the First Nature depends on the First Nature as on a cause (by Theorem 3.19); and since the cause is a cause of some particular thing, necessarily the cause has knowledge of it; therefore, that knowledge is naturally prior to the existence of the thing known.

Infinity

67. (46) O the depth of the riches of your wisdom and knowledge, God,[13] by which you comprehend every intelligible thing! Will you please empower my small intellect to conclude that:

Theorem 4.9: You are infinite existence and are incomprehensible by what is finite?

(47) I will try to infer this most fertile conclusion which, if it had been proved of you in the beginning, would have made more evident much of

12. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.3.q.2.n.137 (Van den Bercken, 92).

13. Romans 11:33.

what has already been discussed. Therefore, if you are willing, I will seek to infer your infinity from what has already been said about your intellect. Then I will present some additional arguments, inquiring whether or not they are cogent arguments for the theorem.

First proof of infinity: first proof from intellect

68. (48) Lord God, are there not infinitely many intelligible things, actually in the intellect that actually understands everything? Therefore the intellect that actually and simultaneously understands all intelligible things is infinite. You are such an intellect, our God (from Theorem 4.7).[14] Therefore the nature that is the same as this intellect is also infinite.

I show the antecedent and consequence of this enthymeme. The antecedent: things that are potentially infinite—that is, taking one after another they cannot come to an end—all those things, if they are simultaneously actual, are actually infinite. Intelligible things are potentially infinite with respect to created intellect, as is clear; but in your intellect all the things that can be understood only successively by the created intellect, are actually and simultaneously understood. Therefore in your intellect the intelligible things are actually infinite.

I prove the major premise of this syllogism [i.e., the syllogism offered for the antecedent above], although it appears to be sufficiently obvious. Taking all these intelligible things, if they are simultaneously existing, they are either actually infinite or actually finite. If actually finite, then by taking one after another eventually all could be grasped. Thus, if they cannot all be grasped and if they actually exist simultaneously, then they are actually infinite.

I prove the consequence of the enthymeme. When a plurality of things requires or implies a greater perfection than a paucity of things, a numerical infinity of things implies infinite perfection. For example, to be able to carry ten things requires a greater perfection of motive power than to be able to carry five things; thus, to be able to carry an infinity of things implies an infinite motive power. Therefore, regarding this consequence to be proved, since to be able to understand two things simultaneously and distinctly implies a greater perfection of understanding than to be able to understand one thing, the consequence follows. This last claim I in turn prove: understanding an intelligible thing distinctly requires the attention and determinate turning of the intellect toward the intelligible thing; therefore, if an intellect can attend to several, it is not limited by any one of these; and thus, if it can attend to infinitely many intelligible things, it is altogether unlimited.

14. Scotus must have meant Theorem 4.8.

(49) I prove the consequence in a similar way, at least concerning the act of understanding, from which the consequence concerning the intellect follows. Since to understand A is some perfection, and likewise to understand B is a different perfection, it will never turn out that one and the same act understands A and B equally and as two distinct things, unless that act of understanding includes the perfections of the pair; the same goes for three things, and so on.

69. (50) [*First objection*] It will be said that when many things are understood through one and the same concept, a greater perfection of understanding does not follow from the plurality of things understood.

[*Second objection*] Or else it will be said that the argument goes through when applied to the act of understanding, but only when those several acts of understanding naturally have distinct formal perfections and are therefore acts of understanding diverse *species*—of which there is not an infinite number, as there is of *individuals*. But acts of understanding several individuals of the same species do not express different formal perfections, and so do not imply that an act of understanding more such things has a greater perfection.

Against the first [objection]: the same argument applies to the concept as applies to the intellect and its act. For a greater perfection in the concept follows from the plurality of those things of which it is the concept, because it must include eminently the perfections of all the specific concepts [of the different things of which it is the concept], where each concept posits a certain perfection of its own. Therefore an infinite [number of things understood] implies an infinite [concept by which they are understood].

Against the second objection: individuals are understood imperfectly in a universal concept, because they are not understood according to every positive entity in them, as I have shown in the question on individuation.[15] Therefore an intellect that understands every intelligible whatsoever, according to every aspect of positive intelligibility, understands the distinct positive entities of many individuals, which posit a greater perfection in the act of understanding than does the understanding of just one of those individuals. For the understanding of any one of the absolute positive entities—for example, this individual's—is a certain perfection. Otherwise, if it were not present in the intellect, then neither the intellect nor the act of understanding would be less perfect. Then it would not be necessary to posit such an understanding of the individual in the divine intellect, but this conclusion is ruled out by Theorem 4.8.

15. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 2.d.3.p.1.q.1–6 (Spade, 57–113).

Again: numbers and shapes show that there is an infinity of intelligibles in one species, as attested by Augustine in *City of God* 12, chapter 18.[16]

Second proof of infinity: second proof from intellect

70. (51) I show Theorem 4.9 in a second way. A first cause acting with the full extent of its causality, to which a secondary cause adds some perfection to its causing, does not seem to be able to cause its effect as perfectly by itself alone as it could with the secondary cause, because the causality of the first cause alone would be weaker than the causality of both together. Therefore if that which comes to be from a secondary cause and a first cause together would be more perfect if it came to be only from a first cause, the secondary cause adds no perfection to the first. But for every finite thing, something added to it adds some perfection to it. Therefore a first cause, to which a secondary cause adds no perfection to its causing, is infinite.

Regarding the claim to be proved, then: knowledge of any object is generated by the object known as by a proximate cause—most especially that knowledge that comes from vision.[17] Therefore if knowledge belongs to some intellect without the action of any such object, but instead only by the power of another, prior, object whose nature it is to be a higher cause of such knowing, it follows that that higher object is infinite in its power to generate knowledge, since a lower object adds nothing to its power to generate knowledge. The First Nature is such a higher object, because solely by its presence to the First Intellect—with no other object causing along with it—there is in that intellect knowledge of every object whatsoever (from Theorem 4.7),[18] and most perfect knowledge of every object whatsoever (from Theorem 4.2). Therefore no other intelligible thing adds anything to the First Nature with respect to the First Nature's power to generate knowledge. Therefore the First Nature is infinite; so also therefore it is infinite in being, since a thing can generate knowledge only proportionate to its existence.

71. (52) [*First objection to the second proof*] Here it is objected that, from what has just been said, it follows that no secondary cause (each of which

16. Augustine, *City of God* 12.18 (Dyson, 523–26).

17. Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 6.19 (Alluntis and Wolter, 136–37). By "vision," here and following, Scotus means not the sensory power of sight but a type of cognition he calls *intuitive cognition* and describes as "knowledge precisely of a present object as present and of an existing object as existing," and also as "an intuition of a thing as existing and present." With respect to the present context, the intuitively cognized object is a *proximate cause* of the intellect's intuitive cognition.

18. As in his last reference to Theorem 4.7, Scotus must have meant Theorem 4.8.

is finite) could produce knowledge of the thing caused that is as perfect as that knowledge produced by the caused thing itself. But this is false, since knowing a thing through a cause is more perfect than knowing it from itself without its cause.

[*Second objection to the second proof*] Again, from the claim that the primary cause causes equally perfectly without a secondary cause as with a secondary cause, it seems to follow only that the primary cause has the perfection of the secondary cause more perfectly than the secondary cause has it. But this does not seem to imply infinity, since there could be a perfection that is finite yet more eminent in the perfection of the secondary cause.

[*Third objection to the second proof*] Again, granting that nothing adds to the primary cause's causing when it causes with the full extent of its power, how is it proved that nothing adds to its being? For in causing light in a medium, if the sun were to cause as much as the medium could receive, another sun would add no more light to the medium. Nevertheless, there would be addition in being. So too, let it be granted that in the intellect of the First Nature there is as much knowledge as it can have, due to the presence of the First Nature as its object, and therefore a secondary cause adds nothing to the causing of knowledge in that intellect, since it cannot do anything in that already fully actualized intellect—just as the other sun cannot produce any light in the medium. But if this proves that nothing is added in being, it seems that it could be argued likewise that the earth adds nothing to the sun in being, since it adds nothing to the causing of light in the medium.

72. (53) I reply to these objections. To the first objection: since nothing is established scientifically about a thing unless it is first conceived as it is in itself, so in our science, when we know a caused thing through its cause, the cause does not produce the kind of simple knowledge of the caused thing that the caused thing itself would naturally produce. As Augustine says in the last chapter of *On the Trinity* 9: "from the one knowing and the thing known, knowledge is born."[19] Or if the cause could produce simple knowledge of the caused thing, still it could not produce *intuitive* knowledge of it, about which I have written much elsewhere.[20] Hence, beyond all knowing through a cause, something is still longed for, something caused in us only by the object itself. Therefore, if God has intuitive understanding of a stone, in no way caused by the stone, it must be that the stone, with regard to the power to generate knowledge, adds nothing to the First Nature's own power to generate knowledge, through which God intuitively knows the stone.

19. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 9.12.18 (McKenna, 287).

20. Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 6:18–21 (Alluntis and Wolter, 135–37); *Quodlibet* 13.27–47 (Alluntis and Wolter, 290–96).

Therefore, when you insist that no finite cause produces perfect knowledge of the thing caused, I concede that none can produce the most perfect knowledge possible for us. When you say that knowing through a cause is more perfect, I say that such knowledge includes the simple knowledge of the effect caused by the effect itself. Complex knowing is caused simultaneously by knowing the cause and the thing caused, and it is true that what comes from a primary and secondary cause together is something more perfect than what comes from a secondary cause alone. Now it may be said against this that that which is from a primary finite cause alone can be more perfect than that which is from a secondary cause alone, meaning by "that which is from a secondary cause alone" the vision of it. To this I reply that what is from a primary finite cause alone—such as a vision of the primary cause—can indeed be something more perfect than what is from a secondary cause alone; but the primary cause cannot produce the effect naturally caused by that thing which is the secondary cause, considering it either as a secondary cause or even as a primary cause relative to other finite causes—for with respect to causing this particular knowing, the thing that happens to be the secondary cause is only accidentally ordered to its prior finite cause, since a vision of that thing which is the secondary cause does not by its nature exist due to a prior finite cause. That vision would exist even if the thing seen were uncaused by such a prior cause, or were without every other prior finite cause, provided the intellect exists.

73. (54) In reply to the second objection: even if a prior finite cause essentially contained, in its causing, the complete perfection of the secondary cause, and in this way excelled the secondary cause, which has that perfection only formally, still, that perfection possessed both eminently and formally excels—even in causing—that same perfection possessed only eminently. To generalize the point: when a perfection possessed formally adds perfection to that same perfection possessed eminently, then both together excel either on its own. There is such addition when the eminent is finite, since a finite added to a finite makes the latter greater. Otherwise the universe would not be more perfect than the first caused nature alone, postulated by some to contain eminently every inferior perfection (which I denied in Theorem 2.16).[21]

74. (55) In reply to the third objection: that perfection which, where it is causable, *either* can only be caused by something that has that perfection formally and is a sort of first cause of it, only accidentally ordered to prior finite causes, *or* is causable only by other finite things causing together with something that has that perfection formally—such a perfection could never

21. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 9.4.5–6, 11 (Marmura, 328, 330).

exist anywhere except by virtue of something infinite. Something formally having that perfection, if added to this infinite thing, adds nothing to the infinite thing's causing. Therefore the argument offered above [i.e., the second proof for infinity] stands, because if [what has a perfection formally] did add something [to the infinite thing's causing], then its own proper causal character, insofar as it is formally such, would be missing. And the effectible perfection depends either on something else formally possessing that perfection or on that to which something formally such adds nothing to its causation.

Furthermore, neither would what is formally such add anything to its being, because that causation belongs to it according to its formal being. Thus if something were added thereby to the being of the First Nature, without the other the First Nature would lack that proper causality which belongs to the other insofar as it is formally such, and thus the First Nature would not of itself more eminently possess that perfection which by its nature is [only] caused by that which formally has that perfection, insofar as it formally has it.

It is clear therefore that there is nothing in the objection about the sun, for if it pertains to this sun, insofar as it is this sun, to cause something, then the other sun would neither cause it nor have it in itself without the first sun. If the second adds anything to the first—I do not care what recipient you refer to—I say briefly that it adds nothing of the same character as what is causable, and is necessarily from something, and is formally such as it is—"necessarily," I say, in such a way that it cannot otherwise exist, either caused or uncaused, more perfectly than it does in the causable effect, except in the power of something to which what is formally such adds nothing either in causing or in being.

It is clear therefore that there is no merit in that objection about the earth, for light does not by nature depend on it as an effect depends on a cause.

Third proof of infinity: third proof from intellect

75. (56) I show Theorem 4.9 in a third way, thus. No finite perfection that has the same nature as an accidental perfection is a substance. Our act of understanding is an accident, since it is essentially a quality; therefore no finite act of understanding is a substance. But the First Nature's act of understanding is a substance (from Theorems 4.5, 4.6,[22] and 4.7).

The proof of the major premise: things that agree in the formal nature from which their specific difference is received, agree also in genus, if each formal perfection is finite. This is because such a finite difference contracts

22. The second, third, and fourth corollaries.

the same genus, in anything that has that perfection. But it is otherwise when the difference in one is finite, but infinite in the other. In this case, they are of the same nature in some respect, namely, in their formal nature. But where that difference is finite, it contracts a genus, and therefore a thing belongs to a genus through that difference. Where the difference is infinite, it cannot contract anything; thus, a thing with an infinite difference does not belong to a genus.

(57) It is in this way, then, that I understand the claim that species but not genus can be applied to God, since species expresses perfection, but not genus. This claim includes a contradiction if it is understood to be about a whole species, since the essential understanding of species includes its genus. Therefore it ought to be understood instead to be about the difference: it expresses perfection while the genus does not. Understanding it in this way really is possible, for neither difference nor genus as such includes the other. But neither can the difference as difference be applied to God, because as difference it is finite and belongs to a genus necessarily. What can be applied to God is the absolute nature of the difference, which is, absolutely understood, a perfection that is indifferent between finite and infinite; these are modes of perfection of that entity, just as the modes of more and less are modes of perfections of whiteness.

(58) I am aware that some of what is here set forth contradicts others' opinions, but I have not set out here to disprove various opinions; there will be another place for doing that.[23]

76. (59) An argument similar to this third argument can be made, reasoning from the converse. No finite substance is the same as a perfection that by nature is such that if it were finite, it would be accidental. The first substance is the same as its act of understanding. Therefore, etc. Thus the major premise of the third argument can be added: no perfection of the same nature as something accidental is substantial, or the same as a substance, since genera are primarily diverse, and what is an accident in one thing is a substance in nothing. Therefore an act of understanding is not the same as any substance that is in the genus of substance; so if the first substance is finite, it is not the same as its act of understanding; but if it is not finite, the conclusion follows.

23. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.8.p.1.q.3.n.100–109 (Vatican 4:199–203); *Lectura* 1.d.8.p.1.q.3.n.99–105 (Vatican 17:33–36); *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 7.q.19.n.51–53 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 2:322–23).

Fourth proof of infinity: from simplicity

77. (60) I offer a fourth argument, similar to the previous. Every finite substance belongs to a genus. The First Nature does not belong to a genus (from Theorem 4.1). Therefore, etc. The major premise is clear, because a finite substance shares the same feature of being a substance with other finite substances, and yet is formally distinguished from them, as is clear. Therefore that distinguishing feature, which makes a substance distinct, is in some way the same as the entity of substance, but not by complete identity, since their natures are primarily diverse and neither is infinite, and thus neither completely includes the other by identity. Therefore a substance is one thing from these as from a contracting thing and a contracted thing, act and potency [respectively], and so genus and difference [respectively], and therefore a species.

(61) The same thing is argued briefly in this way: everything really agreeing and really differing, agrees and differs by a reality not formally the same. But no reality by which something agrees is identical with a reality by which it differs, unless one of the two is infinite, and then the thing including both will be infinite. But if neither is the other by identity, it follows that they make a composition. Thus, everything agreeing essentially and differing essentially either is composed of formally distinct realities, or is infinite. Everything existing *per se* agrees and differs in this way. Therefore, if a thing is in itself totally simple, it follows that it will also be infinite.

(62) In these four ways it appears that God's infinity can be proved, three from premises about the nature of understanding, and a fourth, just given, from simplicity in essence.

Fifth proof of infinity: from eminence

78. (63) It seems there is a fifth way, from eminence, and I argue accordingly in this way: it is impossible for something more perfect than the most eminent being to exist (from the corollary of Theorem 3.4).[24] But no finite being is such that it is impossible that something more perfect than it exists. Therefore, etc. The minor premise is proved: the infinite is not repugnant to being; the infinite is greater than any finite thing. The same thing is argued in a different way: that to which intensive infinity is not repugnant is most perfect only if it is infinite; if it is finite, it can be excelled, since infinity is not repugnant to it. Infinity is not repugnant to being; therefore the most perfect being is infinite.

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24. 3.33(20) above.

(64) It seems that the minor premise, assumed in the preceding argument,[25] cannot be shown from anything prior to it. For just as a pair of contradictories contradict each other by their own natures, nor can their contradiction be proved through something more manifest than these, so too non-repugnant things are non-repugnant by their own natures, nor it seems can their non-repugnance be shown except with reference to these. Being cannot be explained through anything better known than it. We understand the infinite through the finite, and I gloss this in the common way: the infinite is that which excels any finite thing, not just in a limited way by some finite measure, but excels it in a way that is beyond any condition a finite thing could have.

Nevertheless, the minor premise can be defended in this way: just as anything should be held to be possible that is not found to be impossible, so also two or more things should be held to be compossible that are not found to be incompossible. Here nothing incompossible is found, since being finite is not part of the nature of being, nor is it clear from the nature of being that the finite is a property convertible with being—yet one of these must be true for there to be the aforementioned repugnance between being and infinite. It seems clear enough which primary and convertible properties belong to being.

It can be defended in a third way, thus: the infinite is not repugnant with quantity in its own way, that is, taking part after part. Therefore, neither is the infinite repugnant to entity taken in its own way, that is, in perfectly existing all at once.

A fourth way: if a quantity of power is simply more perfect than a quantity of mass, how will it be possible for there to be an infinity in mass, but not in power? Such a power, if it is possible, is actual (from Theorem 3.4).

A fifth way, thus: intellect, the object of which is being, encounters no repugnance when thinking of infinite being; indeed, it seems to be the most perfect intelligible. But it would be strange if no intellect could detect a contradiction in something pertaining to the intellect's first object, when discord in sound so easily offends hearing. If, I say, what is unfitting is immediately perceived and offends, why does no intellect naturally flee from infinite being, as from something not fitting with, and so destructive of, the intellect's first object?

79. (65) In this way, Anselm's reasoning about the highest thinkable thing can be enhanced. His description should be understood in this way: God is that thing, *thought without contradiction*, a greater than which cannot be

25. That is, "the infinite is not repugnant to being," the minor premise of the argument offered in support of the minor premise of the fifth proof.

thought *without contradiction*.[26] Something the thought of which includes a contradiction is said to be unthinkable, and so it is, for in such a case there are two thinkable but opposed things, which cannot in any way make up one thinkable thing, since neither determines the other. It follows that the aforementioned highest thinkable thing, which is as God is described to be, exists in reality. First, concerning the being of its *essence*, since the intellect finally comes to rest in such a highest thinkable thing, therefore in it, in the highest way, is the nature of the first object of the intellect, that is, of being. Next, concerning its *actual existence*: the highest thinkable thing is not only in the thinking intellect, for otherwise it could exist (because it is thinkable), and it could not exist (because it is repugnant with its nature for it to exist by another) (from Theorems 3.3 and 3.4). Therefore that which exists in reality rather than the intellect alone is a greater thinkable thing—not understanding this to mean that the same thing, if thought, would be a greater thinkable thing were it to exist; but rather that, for anything that is in the intellect only, there is something else that exists and is a greater thinkable thing than it.

Or Anselm's reasoning can be enhanced in this way: something is more thinkable if it exists, that is, it is more perfectly thinkable because it is visible. What does not exist, either in itself or in something nobler than it to which it adds nothing, is not visible. What is visible [by intuitive cognition] is more perfectly knowable than what is not visible [by intuitive cognition], that is, intelligible only through abstraction. Therefore the most perfectly knowable thing exists.

Sixth proof of infinity: from finality

80. (66) The sixth way to Theorem 4.9, taken from the nature of an end, goes like this: for every finite end, our will can desire and love something greater than it, just as the intellect can understand something greater than it. And it seems there is a natural inclination for loving the infinite good supremely; for it is argued on the following basis that there is a natural inclination in the will toward something: namely, that the free will, from itself and without a habit, wills it promptly and with delight. It seems that we experience just this in loving the infinite good; it seems that in nothing else is the will perfectly at rest. If this infinite good were opposed to the will's object, how would the will not naturally hate it, just as it naturally hates non-existence?

26. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2 (Williams, 81–82).

Seventh proof of infinity: from efficiency

81. (67) The seventh way is from the nature of the efficient cause, on which Aristotle touches in *Physics* 8[27] and *Metaphysics* 12:[28] the first efficient cause moves with infinite motion; therefore it has infinite power.

The reasoning can be enhanced, as far as the antecedent is concerned, in this way: the conclusion is equally well established if the efficient cause *can* move through an infinite motion, as it is if the efficient cause *does in fact* so move, since it is equally in act either way. And as far as the consequence is concerned the reasoning can be enhanced in this way: if it moves with an infinite motion from itself, and not by another's power, then it does not receive from another its moving in this way; rather, in its active power it has the total effect all at once, because it moves independently. What virtually has an infinite effect all at once, is infinite; therefore, etc.

The reasoning can be enhanced in another way. The first mover has, all at once, in its active power, all possible effects producible through motion. These are infinite, if motion is infinite; therefore, etc.

82. (68) [*Objection to the first enhancement*] It does not seem that the consequence is proved well. Not the first way, because greater duration adds no perfection: whiteness is no more perfect if it lasts one year rather than one day; therefore motion of however long a duration is not a more perfect effect than the motion of one day. Therefore from the fact that an agent has in its active power an infinite effect all at once, it cannot be established that there is greater perfection here than elsewhere, except that the agent moves for a longer time and from itself. Thus, it remains to be shown that the eternity of an agent establishes its infinity; otherwise its infinity cannot be established from the infinity of its motion. Then the last premise of the first enhancement is rejected, unless it is understood to concern infinity of duration only.

[*Objection to the second enhancement*] The second enhancement, too, is blotted out, because a greater intensive perfection is not established from the fact that any agent can produce successively any number of individuals of the same species as long as it endures, since that which can produce one individual at one time, can produce a thousand by the same power, if it should last for a thousand times. But according to the philosophers, an infinity is not possible except in the number of effects producible through motion—that is, generable and corruptible things—because the philosophers posited only a finite number of species. Should someone else prove that an infinite number of species is possible, by proving that some celestial motions are

27. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.10.266a10–24 (Barnes, 1:444).

28. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1073a3–13 (Barnes, 2:1695).

incommensurable, and so never can return to uniformity even if they endured infinitely, and that an infinite number of celestial conjunctions different in kind from each other would produce an infinite number of generable things different in species from one another—whatever may be said about this view on its own terms—this has nothing to do with the thought of Aristotle, who denied an infinite number of species.

83. (69) [*First objection to the objections*] On the other hand, it is here objected by asking how it is that in the first proof of infinity[29] you labored to establish infinity from the fact that the divine essence is the cause of the *being known* of an infinite number of things, but you here deny that infinity can be inferred from the fact that the divine essence is the cause of the *existence* of an infinite number of things, as though it were greater to make something to be known than to be a true being?

[*Second objection to the objections*] Again, how is it that in the second argument for infinity[30] you wanted to establish infinity from this fact alone: that the First Nature is the total explanation of some other nature's *being seen*, but infinity is not established here, where the First Nature is the total explanation of another nature's *existence*? For it is the total cause of existence, at least of the nature proximate to it.

84. (70) [*Reply to the first objection to the objections*] In response to the first objection, whatever can do many things at once, the doing of each of which requires some distinct perfection, that thing is confirmed as more perfect due to the plurality of its perfections. So it is with understanding an infinite number of things simultaneously. So if you should prove that it can cause an infinite number of things simultaneously—not just successively—I would concede that there would be an infinite power.

[*Objection to the reply*] Against this, it does have the power to cause an infinite number of things simultaneously, and as far as itself is concerned, it can cause an infinite number of things simultaneously. But the nature of the effect does not permit it, just as a power to cause white and black is no less perfect because these cannot be caused simultaneously; for this is due to their repugnance, and not the defect of the agent.

[*Reply to the objection*] I reply that it has not been proved that the First is the total cause of these infinite things and that it has them all in its power at once, since it has not been proved from its efficient causality that it does not need a secondary cause for some causality corresponding to the secondary cause's own nature.

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29. 4.68(48)–69(50) above.

30. 4.70(51)–74(55) above.

[*Objection to the reply*] Against this, it has been well proved that the First Nature has eminently every causality of a secondary cause, even the causality belonging to a secondary cause by its nature, although it has not been proved that that causality as formally possessed adds nothing to it as eminently possessed. The First Nature, therefore, has eminently and all at once every causality in relation to everything that can be effected, even to an infinite number of these—though they can only come about successively.

[*Scotus's own solution, in support of the seventh proof*] I reply that as I see it, this is what finally and truly enhances Aristotle's aforementioned consequence, and from it I prove infinity in this way: if the First Nature were to have every causality formally and simultaneously, although not every causable thing could be granted existence simultaneously, yet it would be infinite because as far as it itself is concerned, it can grant existence to an infinite number of things simultaneously. And power to do a great many things at once establishes a greater intensive power. Therefore, if it has this power even more perfectly than it would have it by possessing every causality formally, so much the more its intensive infinity follows. But it has every causality, as a whole that is in it, in a higher way than would be in it formally. Therefore it is a nature of intensively infinite power.

85. (71) Thus, although I have so far reserved discussion of omnipotence properly speaking (as it is understood by Catholics) for a treatise on the articles of faith, and although omnipotence has not been proved here, still, it has been proved that there is an infinite power that all at once, from itself, has every causality eminently, and that in its own right would be capable of producing simultaneously an infinite number of effects if it did have the same causality formally and if such effects were capable of being produced at the same time. If it is objected that the First Nature cannot, from itself, cause an infinite number of things simultaneously, since it has not been proved that it is in fact the total cause of an infinite number of things, this is of no concern. For if it had all at once what was required to be a *total* cause, it would be no more perfect than it now is when it has what is required to be the *first* cause.

There are two reasons for this. First, if the first cause were simply the first cause and not the total cause, secondary causes would not be needed in order to supplement the first cause's perfection in causing; otherwise a more remote effect would be more perfect, because it would require, for its causing, a more perfect cause; but (according to the philosophers) if the first cause does require, for its causing, a secondary cause, this is due to imperfection in the effect, for the first cause together with an imperfect cause can cause a yet more imperfect thing that, according to them, it could not cause immediately by itself alone. Second, because according to Aristotle, the first cause has the totality of perfections more eminently than it would have these perfections if

it had the formalities of these perfections—if it could have them. So it seems Aristotle's argument about infinite power can reach its conclusion.

(72) [*Reply to the second objection to the objections*] To the second objection, above, I say that since the divine essence alone is the reason for its seeing the stone perfectly, it follows that the stone adds no perfection to that essence. This does not follow if the divine essence is merely the reason for its causing the stone immediately, even as its total cause; for with respect to the highest created nature, the first cause is the total cause, but since this [highest created nature] is finite, it cannot establish the infinity of its first cause; but it has not been proved that it is the total cause of other things; therefore etc.

Eighth proof of infinity (rejected): from creation

86. (73) In line with the above argument for infinity from the nature of efficient causality it is argued that the First Nature creates, and between the extremes between which creation occurs there is an infinite distance.

The antecedent of this argument may be granted as a matter of faith, and it is true that non-existence precedes existence by duration, in a manner of speaking. But if the antecedent is taken in the sense that non-existence precedes existence only, so to speak, by nature, then it is true in the way proposed by the philosopher Avicenna.[31] The antecedent is shown by Theorem 3.19, since at least the first nature after God is from God and not from itself, nor does it receive existence in a subject that already exists. And, as has already been said, being effected does not imply being changed. But if non-existence is understood in this way to be prior in nature to existence, there are not present there the kinds of extremes that would require an infinite power.

[*Rejection of the eighth proof*] But however it may be with the antecedent, the consequence is not proved, since when there is no real distance between extremes, where instead these are said to be distant merely due to the natures of the extremes in themselves, then the distance is only as great as the greater extreme. For example: God is infinitely distant from a creature.

Ninth proof of infinity (rejected): from the lack of intrinsic causes

87. (74) The theorem about divine infinity is shown in a final way, namely, from the denial of an intrinsic cause in the First Nature. Since form is limited by matter, therefore that which by its nature does not exist in matter, is infinite.

[*Rejection of the ninth proof*] This argument, in my opinion, is totally weak. According to the very people who support it, an angel is immaterial but is

31. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 6.2.9 (Marmura, 203).

not infinite. The same people think that existence is posterior to essence, so existence will never limit essence. Hence, any entity has a grade of perfection intrinsic to it and not through another being. And if they argue that form is limited by matter, therefore if it is not limited by matter, it is not limited at all, well then, they commit a fallacy of the consequent. Consider: a body is limited by another body, therefore, if it is not limited by another body, it is infinite—so the highest heaven will be infinite. This sophism is in *Physics* 3.[32] A body is limited in itself; likewise a finite form is limited in itself prior to being limited by matter, because prior to being so limited it just is that kind of thing among beings. The second limiting by matter presupposes the first limiting; it does not cause it. Therefore, in some instant of nature there is the finite essence; therefore existence cannot limit it, and therefore in a second instant of nature it is not limited by existence.

Proving Simplicity from Infinity

88. (75) Theorem 4.10: Every kind of simplicity follows from infinity.

First type of simplicity: no parts

(76) [*Proof of the first type of simplicity*] First is a simplicity intrinsic to the essence, since, supposing the essence is composed of parts, either it is composed from parts finite in themselves or from parts infinite in themselves. If the former, therefore the essence is finite; if the latter, then a part would turn out to be not less than the whole.

Second type of simplicity: no quantitative parts

(77) [*Proof of the second type of simplicity*] Second, the essence is not composed of quantitative parts. This is because infinite perfection does not exist in a magnitude, since, on the one hand, if the magnitude is finite, a greater magnitude would have a greater perfection; and, on the other hand, infinite magnitude cannot exist. This is Aristotle's reasoning in *Physics* 8[33] and *Metaphysics* 12.[34]

(78) [*Objection*] But it is objected that infinite perfection in magnitude would be of the same nature in the whole as in a part and so would not be greater in a greater magnitude, in just the way the intellective soul is the most

32. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4.203b20–22 (Barnes, 1:347).

33. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.10.266a25–266b24 (Barnes, 1:444–45).

34. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7.1073a3–11 (Barnes, 2:1695).

perfect form, and so is as perfect in a small body as it is in a large body, and as perfect in a part of the body as it is in the whole body. If an intellective soul had infinite power, such as the power of understanding infinite intelligible things, it would have it even in a small body, and if the body were bigger the soul's power would not be greater. Therefore, according to this objection, it is denied that every power in a magnitude is greater in a greater magnitude.

[*Reply to the objection*] But Aristotle's reasoning, here enhanced, proves that infinite perfection does not exist in a magnitude so as to be extended *per accidens*, that is, in such a way that a part [of the perfection] is in a part [of the magnitude]. If an infinite perfection were so extended, a greater power of efficiency in acting would be in the whole than in a part—though not in a greater intensity in itself—just as it is with a great fire and one of its parts. So it follows that in a finite magnitude [i] there is not a power infinite in efficiency or extension; therefore, [ii] neither is there a power infinite in itself intensively in such a magnitude.

This second consequence [ii] is clear, since it cannot be inferred that a power is infinite in itself except from the infinity of its efficiency. That the first consequence [i] also follows is shown in two ways. First, there is only a power finite in efficiency in each indivisible part of a finite magnitude; otherwise a part would not have less than the whole. Therefore there is only a power finite in efficiency in the whole, since what is composed of finite parts, finite in number, is itself finite. Second, as magnitude is understood to increase, so increases the power according to its efficiency; therefore, the power was finite before and always will be finite, as long as it is understood to be capable of increasing—and if it is in a finite magnitude, it always can be understood to be capable of increasing. Therefore the power can never be understood to be incapable of increasing, unless it should be in an infinite magnitude—and thus it cannot in any other way be infinite in efficiency, and so neither in intensity.

[*Objection to the reply*] But how is it relevant to the argument that an intensively infinite power is not accidentally extended such that each part of it is in a separate part of a magnitude? How does it follow from this fact that such a power in no way exists in a magnitude?

[*Reply to the objection to the reply*] The ultimate reason is supplied thus: extension extends something that is a subject, and in this case neither that infinite perfection, nor a matter of which it is the form as the intellective soul is of the body, can be a subject for extension, since that perfection is not in matter (by Theorem 4.1); therefore, etc. And so the Philosopher, before this argument, proved that this thing does not exist in matter in *Metaphysics* 12;[35]

35. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.6.1071b19–22 (Barnes, 2:1693).

and in virtue of the conclusions of both arguments the proposed conclusion follows well enough.

(79) The same is proved more briefly in this way: understanding is not a subject of extension; the First Nature is understanding (from Theorem 4.6), and (from Theorem 4.1) is not received in matter (which can be expressed in terms of quantity and so magnitude).

Third type of simplicity: no accidents

89. (80) [*First proof of the third type of simplicity*] Third, it is established that the First Nature cannot make a composition with any accident, since anything that can be perfected lacks in itself its perfecting entity—otherwise it would not be in potency to it. Thus the perfection is added to the perfectible, and the whole is something more perfect than either of the two things so united. But the infinite lacks nothing—that is, there is nothing such that it would add perfection to the infinite, were it united with the infinite—otherwise the infinite could be something greater than it is.

[*Second proof*] Second, material accidents cannot belong to the First Nature, because the infinite is not subject to quantity. And immaterial accidents pertaining to intellect and will are not in the First Nature, either, because acts of understanding and willing—which seem most of all to be accidents—are in fact the same as it, as Theorem 4.6 shows.

(81) In three other ways it is argued that nothing is accidental to the First Nature:

[*Third proof*] what is essential is prior to everything accidental.

[*Fourth proof*] Also, in the First Nature nothing is caused.

[*Fifth proof*] Also, in the First Nature there is no potentiality.

[*Objections to the third, fourth, and fifth proofs*] This trio shows that an accident does not belong to the essence of the First Nature, but it does not show that an accident does not accidentally belong to it. Not the third because while nothing in the essence of the First Nature is accidental, something other than the essence could belong to it accidentally; and thus, in that First Nature there would be something essential prior to what is accidental to it, because the first essence would be prior to that union between it and its accident. Not the fourth because while the first essence would be uncaused, something caused might accidentally inform it; for while no essence of a caused substance is a cause of itself, some such essence might be a cause of its accident. Not the fifth because potentiality to an accident is a potentiality in a qualified way; but how is it shown from this that an accident cannot be in something that in its essence is only act?

90. (82) [*Sixth proof*] It is argued in another way that nothing is in the First Nature except pure perfections (from Theorem 4.2); each of these is the same as that nature, otherwise none would be the best from itself (or else there would be several unqualifiedly best things).

[*First objection to the sixth proof*] This argument does not go through, since (as is clear from what was said in the sixth proof of Theorem 4.4)[36] it is not repugnant to the nature of pure perfections that there should be several pure perfections, each one highest in its own grade, in such a way that nevertheless one highest perfection is better than another—better even than all the others—but the essence of the First Nature is better than any of them, and none is the same as it, but all inhere in it. The reason these are not repugnant is that it does not follow from "there is a denominative perfection better than anything incompossible with it, and it exists in the highest degree to which a perfection of its nature can exist," that "therefore it is unqualifiedly the best nature"; instead, it only follows that "therefore it is the best of the totality of things in the genus that includes both it and the denominative perfections incompossible with it."

[*Reply to the first objection to the sixth proof*] But someone might reply that if all pure perfections include each other by identity, then whatever would have one in some more perfect way, would have the others in the same way.

[*Reply to the reply*] The consequent is false; for matter is more necessary than form, but less actual; and accident depends on substance, but is simpler than it; likewise a celestial body is more incorruptible than a body mixed of the elements, but our animated body (insofar as it is animated) is nobler than a celestial body. So it follows that pure perfections—except those that are properties of being—differ both from each other and perhaps from their subject, while one belongs to its subject intensely, and another does not belong to it intensely or even does not belong to it at all.

[*Second objection to the sixth proof*] The first claim of this argument has not been shown, either, for Theorem 4.2, which is alleged to support it, does not prove anything about inhering accidents, but only about what is intrinsic to the highest nature.

But if some impudent person were to posit an accident in the First Nature, it would be difficult to rebut his claim that such an accident is a pure perfection, since at times nobler natures are denominated by a less noble denominative perfection, and less noble natures denominated by a nobler denominative perfection that is a pure perfection. For example, prime matter is simple, but a man is not simple; simplicity here is just such a denominative perfection.

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36. 4.58(22) above.

(83) [*The inconclusiveness of the third through sixth proofs*] Indeed, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove from these last four arguments that there is no accident contingently and accidentally inhering in the First Nature, on account of which that Nature can undergo accidental change either by itself or by something posterior to it; after all, it is posited that our will, in its willing, is changed by itself (though a first cause of our actions is also posited).

If it were well proved that in the First Nature simplicity is repugnant with being the subject of an accident, the conclusion would be very fruitful. Should anyone be unpleased with the first two proofs of simplicity given here, let him come up with better.

In Praise of God

91. (84) Lord our God, from what has been said here, Catholics can infer the many perfections the philosophers have known about you. You are the first efficient cause; you are the ultimate end; you are supreme in perfection; you transcend everything else. You are altogether uncaused and so cannot come into existence or pass out of existence; indeed it is altogether impossible for you not to exist, because you exist necessarily, from yourself. So also you are eternal, possessing unending and simultaneous duration without the potential to exist successively; for there can be no succession where there is not something continuously caused, or at least dependent on another for being—a dependence alien to something existing necessarily from itself.

You live a most noble life, because you understand and you love. You are blessed, indeed you are in your essence blessedness itself, because you are the comprehension of yourself. You are a bright vision of yourself, and a love surpassingly delightful. And although you are blessed in yourself and fully suffice for yourself, yet you actually understand, all at once, everything that can be understood. Everything that can be caused to exist, you can, all at once, will it contingently and freely, and by willing it cause it to exist. Therefore you are, most truly, infinite power. You are incomprehensible, infinite; for nothing omniscient is finite, no infinite power is finite, neither the most Supreme Nature nor the ultimate end is finite, nor is the altogether simple, essentially existing nature.

You are simplicity in the extreme, having no really distinct parts, having no realities in your essence that are not really the same. In you there is no quantity; no accident can reach you; thus you cannot suffer accidental change; you are in fact immutable, as I have declared above.

You alone are unqualifiedly perfect: not a perfect angel, or a perfect body, but perfect being; of the being possible for anything whatsoever to have, you

lack nothing. It is not possible to have *formally* all the being possible for anything whatsoever to have; but it can be had *formally or eminently*, in just the way you have it, God, who are the highest of beings—indeed, among beings, the only infinite.

92. You are good without limit, communicating the rays of your goodness most liberally; to you, the most lovable, each individual thing in its own way returns, as to its final end.

(85) You only are the first truth. Now the false is what is not as it appears to be. But if the nature of the false thing itself were the only cause of its appearing as it does, it would appear as it really is. Therefore, there is something besides the false thing itself, which explains why it appears as it does. But nothing besides yourself is a cause or explanation of how things appear to you, since your own essence is originally apparent to yourself, and for this reason, nothing posterior to your essence causes or explains how things appear to you.

In that essence, I say, every intelligible thing is present to your intellect in the most intelligible way possible. You are therefore the brightest intelligible truth, and infallible truth, and the one who comprehends with certitude every truth that can be understood. For other things that appear in you, do not for that reason appear to you in such a way as to deceive you, because this cause of how they appear does not prevent their proper nature from being revealed through it and appearing to your intellect. Our vision is deceived when an alien appearance prohibits something else from appearing as it is, but it is not like this in your intellect; rather, everything appearing in your essence, shining out from it with most perfect clarity, appears to you according to its proper nature.

For what I have set out to accomplish, there is no need to write at greater length about your truth and your ideas. Many things may be said about the ideas, but if nothing at all were said, and the ideas not even named, no less of your perfection will be known. This remains, that your essence is the perfect object for knowing everything that can be known, in every way it can be known. Let whoever wants to do so call this "an idea," but here I do not intend to fixate on that Greek and Platonic word.

93. (86) Beyond all that has been said up to now, which concerns what the philosophers have said about you, Catholics often praise you as omnipotent, immense, omnipresent, just and merciful, providing for all creatures and especially for intellectual creatures. All of these attributes are deferred for a subsequent treatise.[37] Obviously, in this first treatise I have only attempted to see how metaphysical claims about you might in some way be established by

37. There is no such treatise.

natural reason. In a following treatise will be set forth the claims believable by faith, in regard to which reason is held captive, but which, nonetheless, are more certain for Catholics because they firmly rest on your most solid truth and not on our blinded intellects, vacillating about so many things.

The Uniqueness of God

94. (87) Yet there is one more thing, which I place here and in which I will consummate this little book.

Theorem 4.11: You are one God, besides whom there is no other, as you have said through the Prophet.[38]

(88) I do not think that reason is inadequate to prove this theorem, so I propose five propositions, any of which, once it has been proved, yields the theorem.

First: There is only numerically one infinite intellect.
Second: There is only numerically one infinite will.
Third: There is only numerically one infinite power.
Fourth: There is only numerically one necessarily existing thing.
Fifth: There is only numerically one infinite goodness.

It is clear enough that the theorem follows from any of these. They are proved in order.

First proof of uniqueness: from infinite intellect

95. (89) First, the first: an infinite intellect most perfectly understands anything to the extent that it is intelligible; and in so understanding depends on nothing else—otherwise it would not be infinite. If there were two infinite intellects—let them be A and B—both would fail to have perfect and independent understanding. For A, if it understands B through B, depends for its understanding of B on B itself, just as an act depends on its object when these are not the same. But if A understands B through A itself and not through B, it does not understand B as perfectly as B can be understood, since nothing is most perfectly present except either in itself or in something containing it most eminently. But A does not contain B. If you say that it is just like B, I answer to the contrary: knowing a thing through something like it is only knowing it under a universal, insofar as the two things are similar. The peculiar properties of things, by which they are distinguished from one another, would not be known in this way. Also, this knowing under a universal is not

38. Isaiah 45:5.

intuitive, but abstractive, and intuitive knowing is more perfect. Again, one and the same act does not have two adequate objects; A is its own adequate object; therefore it does not understand B [adequately].

Second proof of uniqueness: from infinite will

96. (90) Second, the proposition about infinite will is proved: an infinite will loves most what is most lovable; but A does not love B the most; first, because it naturally loves itself more, therefore likewise it loves itself more with a free and upright will; next because it would be blessed in B, but if B were destroyed, A would be no less blessed. Thus it is impossible for the same thing to be able to have blessedness in two things, but this follows given two infinite wills: for B is not used by A, therefore B is enjoyed by A; therefore A is blessed in B.

Third proof of uniqueness: from infinite power

97. (91) Third, the proposition about infinite power is proved in this way. If there were two infinite powers, each would be first with respect to the same things, because essential dependence is dependence on the *nature*, and what depends essentially on it depends equally on anything having that nature. But one and the same thing cannot depend on two firsts (from Theorem 3.16). A plurality of supremacy is therefore not good, since either it is impossible or each ruler will be diminished and only partially foremost; and then it remains to ask: by whose power are they conjoined in their headship?

Fourth proof of uniqueness: from necessary existence

(92) Fourth, the proposition about necessary existence is proved in this way. A species that can be multiplied is, as far as its own nature is concerned, infinitely multipliable; therefore if necessary existence could be multiplied, there could be infinitely many necessarily existing things; therefore there are, since anything the nature of which includes necessity cannot exist at all if it does not exist in fact.

Fifth proof of uniqueness: from infinite goodness

(93) Fifth, the proposition about the good is shown. Many goods are better than one, when one adds goodness to another; to an infinite good nothing better can be added. In the same vein it is argued in this way: any will is totally at rest in one infinite good; but if there were another, a will could rightly will for both to exist rather than just one; therefore it would not be totally at rest in the one highest good.

Other ways could be adduced, but the foregoing suffice for the present.

Closing Prayer

98. (94) Lord our God, you are one in nature and one in number; truly you have said that besides you there is no god. For even if there were many putative gods or things called gods, yet you are unique in nature, the true God, from whom, in whom, and through whom are all things;[39] you are blessed forever. Amen.

Here ends the treatise on the first principle by John Scotus.

39. Romans 11:36.

Commentary

Chapter 1

The Divisions and Types of Essential Orders

1.1(1)–(2) *Opening prayer*. Scotus's opening prayer places his own efforts in philosophical theology squarely within the tradition of St. Anselm, who began one of his own arguments for God's existence with the prayer, "Lord, you who grant understanding to faith, grant that, insofar as you know it is useful for me, I may understand that you exist as we believe you exist, and that you are what we believe you to be."[1] Scotus and Anselm were in turn inspired by St. Augustine's method of addressing God in prayer as he sought God in thought (e.g., *Confessions* 1.1.1).

I Am Who I Am. In the Bible, in the book of Exodus, Moses encounters a burning bush in the desert. God speaks to Moses through the bush, instructing him to liberate God's chosen people from slavery in Egypt. Moses asks for God's name, and God replies, "I am who I am" (*Exodus* 3:14). The English is a literal translation of the Latin, which Scotus directly quotes from the commonly used Latin Bible of the day, St. Jerome's Vulgate—which in turn accurately translates the original Hebrew. Scotus's invocation of this "blessed name" sets the stage for his own approach to demonstrating God's existence.

You are true existence. The precise meaning of the expression, "I am who I am," is elusive. But it is on the basis of this name that Scotus immediately addresses God as "True Existence" and "Total Existence." As Scotus understood the divine name, it represents God as totally unlimited. Scotus in fact is the great philosopher of God's infinity, devoting a substantial portion of Chapter 4 to various proofs that God is infinite (4.67(46)–87(74)). God's infinity in turn helps us understand what Scotus means by "true existence" and "total existence." God is "true existence" not in a sense of "true" that implies all other existence is fake. Instead, as Scotus explains much later on, in 4.92(85), God is "true existence" in the sense that he is the ideal or standard against which everything else is measured. Our thoughts are true by conforming to reality; but God's thoughts are true on their own, and the rest of reality is true by conforming to God's thoughts. Likewise, God is "total existence" not in the sense that everything that exists is God or a part of God.

1. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2 (Williams, 81).

Instead, as Scotus also explains in 4.92(85), God's existence is "total" because God is the exemplar of every possible way of being.

The being you have predicated of yourself. The conclusion of the opening prayer proposes a starting point for coming to know God: being. The justification Scotus offers for the method is that God predicated being of himself: *I am who I am*.

1.2(3)–3(5) Introducing Essential Order

1.2(3) *Properties of being*. Having alighted on *being* as the starting point of his rational route to know God, Scotus then specifies that starting point more precisely. He claims that being has *properties*, that *essential order* is among these properties, and that essential order is a "more fruitful" way to proceed. So the inquiry will focus not on being in general, but on the essential order of being.

The properties of being (*passiones entis*) are those properties or attributes that pertain to being as such. The most well known of these properties of being are goodness, truth, and unity. Properties like these are called *transcendentals*, because they are found across all categories of being (e.g., substance, quality, quantity, etc.), and can pertain even to God, who does not belong to any category of being. On Scotus's understanding of transcendentals, a transcendental property of being is the sort of property that belongs to no genus—it is not "contained" under a genus, as Scotus puts it—and hence is the sort of property that can pertain to any being, just because it is a being—in Scotus's words, a transcendental property has no "predicate above it except for being."[2] This requires some unpacking. Consider that for something to be blue, it must also be colored, and for something to be colored it must also be extended. Being colored here stands as genus with respect to being blue, and being an extended thing stands as genus with respect to being a colored thing. Or again, consider that for something to be human, it must also be an animal, and for something to be an animal it must also be a substance. Here being an animal stands as genus with respect to being human, and being a substance stands as genus with respect to being an animal. Then these two properties, being blue and being human, are "contained" under higher genera and so are not transcendental properties. By contrast, for something to be good, it need not be anything besides a being. Of course, for a *human* to be good it must be a human, and so an animal, etc. But for a *thing* to be good, it

2. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.8.p.1.q.3.n.114 (Vatican 4:206).

need not be contained under any genus. The same goes for all transcendental properties of being.

One of the most innovative features of Scotus's metaphysics is his doctrine of the *disjunctive transcendentals*. A disjunctive transcendental is a property of being that comes in *pairs of disjuncts*, for example, *finite or infinite*, and is such that any being is one or the other: in this case, finite or infinite. A being is characterized by a disjunctive transcendental just in case it is characterized by at least one of its disjuncts. Some disjunctive transcendentals are *exclusive*, such that if a being is characterized by one of the disjuncts, then it is not characterized by the other: finite and infinite, again, is a good example of just this sort of exclusive disjunctive transcendental. But other disjunctive transcendentals are *inclusive*. For example, *cause or effect* is a disjunctive transcendental, but one and the same being may be both a cause of an effect, and an effect of some cause.[3]

Essential order is one of the disjunctive transcendentals. The two disjuncts of this disjunctive transcendental are *essentially prior* and *essentially posterior*. (Scotus begins to say what he means by these disjuncts in 1.3(5)). Therefore, any being whatsoever is either essentially prior or essentially posterior. But essential order is one of the *inclusive* disjunctive transcendentals. One and the same being may be prior to one being but posterior to another being. In fact, Scotus thinks that most of the beings we know about are both prior and posterior. God, Scotus goes on to argue, is prior to all other beings in at least three types of priority; and there is nothing to which God is posterior.

Essential priority and posteriority. As the name suggests, *essential order* is an order due to essence. Not all orders are due to essence: for example, spatial and temporal ordering is rarely essential. If I am prior to you in a line (say, at a concert or theme park), or was born prior to you in time, then you are indeed posterior to me in these two ways. But these sorts of orders are not relevant to Scotus in the *Treatise*. What exactly *essential* order is becomes clearer as we go on.

1.2(4) *Explication of a division*. So far we have seen Scotus's focus move from *being*, to *properties of being*, to one particular (disjunctive) property of being: *essential order*. Now the focus gets even more fine-grained, zooming in on essential order in order to reveal several different types of essential order. In the remainder of Chapter 1, Scotus divides essential order four times.

Repugnance. Two things resulting from a division (the *dividentia*) are repugnant to each other, in the relevant technical sense of "repugnant," when they

3. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.8.p.1.q.3.n.115 (Vatican 4:206–7).

are really different from each other, and one is neither included in nor follows from the definition of the other, and it is not possible for something to have or to be both *dividentia*. For example, the genus fruit divides into apples and bananas (etc.), which are really different from each other, and being an apple neither includes nor entails being a banana, and nothing can be an apple and a banana simultaneously.

Scotus uses this concept of repugnance frequently in the *Treatise*, where it has more general application. Two things (in the broadest possible sense of "thing") are repugnant when they are really different from each other, and one is neither included in nor follows from the definition of the other, and it is not possible for something to have or to be both.

1.3(5) *Both posterior and prior are ordered.* Before beginning these divisions, however, Scotus asserts that in essential orders, if there is an absolute first in some type of order, that absolute first is rightly said to be *prior* to whatever is posterior to it. At first glance, this looks like a trivial point: essential order clearly implies relations: the relations of *priority* and *posteriority*. However, it was common for medieval philosophical theologians to *deny* that God has any *real relations* to creatures. The basic reason for denying real relations of God to creatures is that relations are a kind of accidental property, but God has no accidental properties; whatever God is, he is essentially. Scotus is therefore anticipating an objection to his method, an objection that holds that essential order cannot really apply to God, because God cannot have a real relation of priority to anything posterior to God. Scotus is unmoved by the objection. He asks us to attend just to the "common sense" meanings of *posterior* and *prior*: if *x* is posterior to God, then God is prior to *x*.

1.4(6)–(8) First Division of Essential Order
Eminence and Dependence

1.4(6) The first division of essential order yields the two orders of *dependence* and *eminence*. Of the seven total types of essential orders Scotus explicates, the first is the essential order of eminence and the remaining six are types of essential dependence.

1.4(7) *Essential eminence: absolute ranking.* Scotus's understanding of eminence is meant to be an *absolute* ranking: not better or worse relative to some particular kind of standard, but better or worse absolutely speaking. This absolute ordering would rank not just beings belonging to the same or similar kinds, but belonging to any kind whatsoever, such as humans and

tarantulas, stars and giraffes. Scotus argues that beings really can be ordered in this absolute way, in 3.39(35)–(36).

1.4(8) *Essential dependence: correcting Aristotle.* Scotus subdivides the essential order of dependence three times over the remainder of the chapter. Before considering these divisions it is important to focus on an example Scotus draws from Aristotle to make his point. Aristotle implies that one thing, A, depends on another thing, B, just in case B can exist without A but A cannot exist without B.[4] Whatever Scotus might have thought about this as a description of some instances of dependence, he does not think that this is adequate as a definition of priority in the order of dependence, and still less of *essential* dependence.

Before giving his own definition of essential dependence, Scotus criticizes Aristotle's definition of dependence. Suppose B *necessarily* causes A. In such a circumstance, B could not exist without A; nevertheless, B would not thereby *depend* on A for its existence—an effect depends on its cause and not *vice versa*. Thus, Aristotle's definition of dependence is inadequate.

Scotus then offers his own definition of essential dependence. If there is no *contradiction* between "B exists" and "A does not exist," but there is *contradiction* between "A exists" and "B does not exist," then B is essentially prior to A in an order of dependence, and A is essentially posterior to B in the same order. The full significance of Scotus's definition of essential dependence cannot be fully appreciated until 3.26(6), in which Scotus tells us that in his arguments for the First Principle he will reason from premises about what is *possible*, rather than what is *actual*. To foreshadow a bit more: Scotus will assert that if we abstract from actual existence and consider just possible beings, we can see that some possible beings can exist only if something else causes them to exist. From here he will mount an argument for the conclusion that there is a possible being that, if it exists, is not caused by anything—and go on to argue that this possible being exists in fact. Granting his reasoning, it follows that there really would be a *contradiction* in supposing that an essentially caused thing exists but that an essentially uncaused thing does not.

1.5(9)-(12) Second Division of Essential Order
Causal and Non-Causal Dependence

Causal and non-causal dependence. The second division is between types of essential dependence, causal and non-causal. Non-causal essential

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.11.1019a1–4 (Barnes, 2:1609).

dependence itself divides into two, and this is the third division, explicitly discussed at 1.6(13). For clarity's sake I describe both types of non-causal essential dependence under the third division, immediately below.

1.6(13)-(14) Third Division of Essential Order
Two Orders of Non-Causal Dependence

Scotus discerns two ways in which beings may be non-causally essentially ordered in such a way that one is essentially dependent on the other: what we will call *proximate non-causal dependence* and *remote non-causal dependence*.

Proximate non-causal dependence. In proximate non-causal dependence, two effects, A and B, which are effects of one and the same cause C, are essentially ordered to *each other* if C can produce A only if C first produces B. Scotus offers a plausible example later on in 2.18(36): if an efficient cause produces a material substance that has a certain quality, say, being blue, that efficient cause could not make that substance blue unless it first made it a body having some extension. This is because a thing must be extended in order to be blue. Therefore, even if both the extension and the color of the substance are dependent on one and the same cause, there is an essential ordering between the extension and the color: the color depends on the extension. Let the extension of the substance be B, and the color be A. Then we can say that A essentially depends on B, even though B is not the cause of A. Figure 1 visualizes this non-causal dependence:

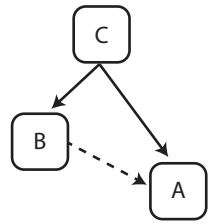

Figure 1

In the figure, the solid arrows represent causal relations, and the dotted arrow represents the proximate non-causal dependence relation. B is above A to represent the direction of the essential dependence: A essentially depends on B.

Remote non-causal dependence. In remote non-causal essential dependence, A essentially depends on B, and A and B have a common cause, D. But D produces A by first producing an intermediate effect C, which is also a cause of A. In this type of essential dependence, therefore, A is more remote from the common cause it shares with B. The idea here is that in order for D to

produce A, it must produce both C, which is one of A's causes, along with B, which is not one of A's causes. In this case, A is remotely non-causally essentially dependent on B (whatever additional essential dependences it may have on C and D). Unfortunately, Scotus does not give any examples of this rather elaborate type of essential dependence. Figure 2 helps illustrate the schema Scotus has in mind:

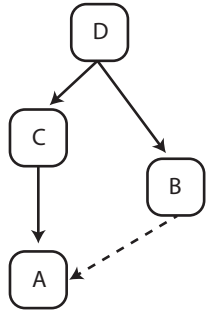

Figure 2

Again, solid arrows represent causal dependence, whereas the dotted arrow represents the remote non-causal essential dependence of A on B. B and C are above A in order to represent the fact that in order to produce A, D must first produce C and B—even though B is not a cause of A.

1.7(15) Fourth Division of Essential Order

Four Orders of Causal Dependence

The fourth division divides causal essential dependence into four types of causes: final, efficient, formal, and material. Scotus has a lot to say about these types of causes throughout Chapter 2, so I will not discuss them here.

1.8(16)–(17) Conclusion

Harvesting the fruits. In this concluding section Scotus sums up the four divisions and the several types of essential order that he has distinguished by means of these divisions (see Figure 3 below). Here he counts the two types of non-causal essential dependence as one type of essential order. One explanation of this conflation is that, as he himself admitted, it is not so easy to see how non-causal essential dependence really is divided up into these two distinct types. Thus, while he technically distinguished seven total types of essential orders, here at the end of Chapter 1 he says he has distinguished just six.

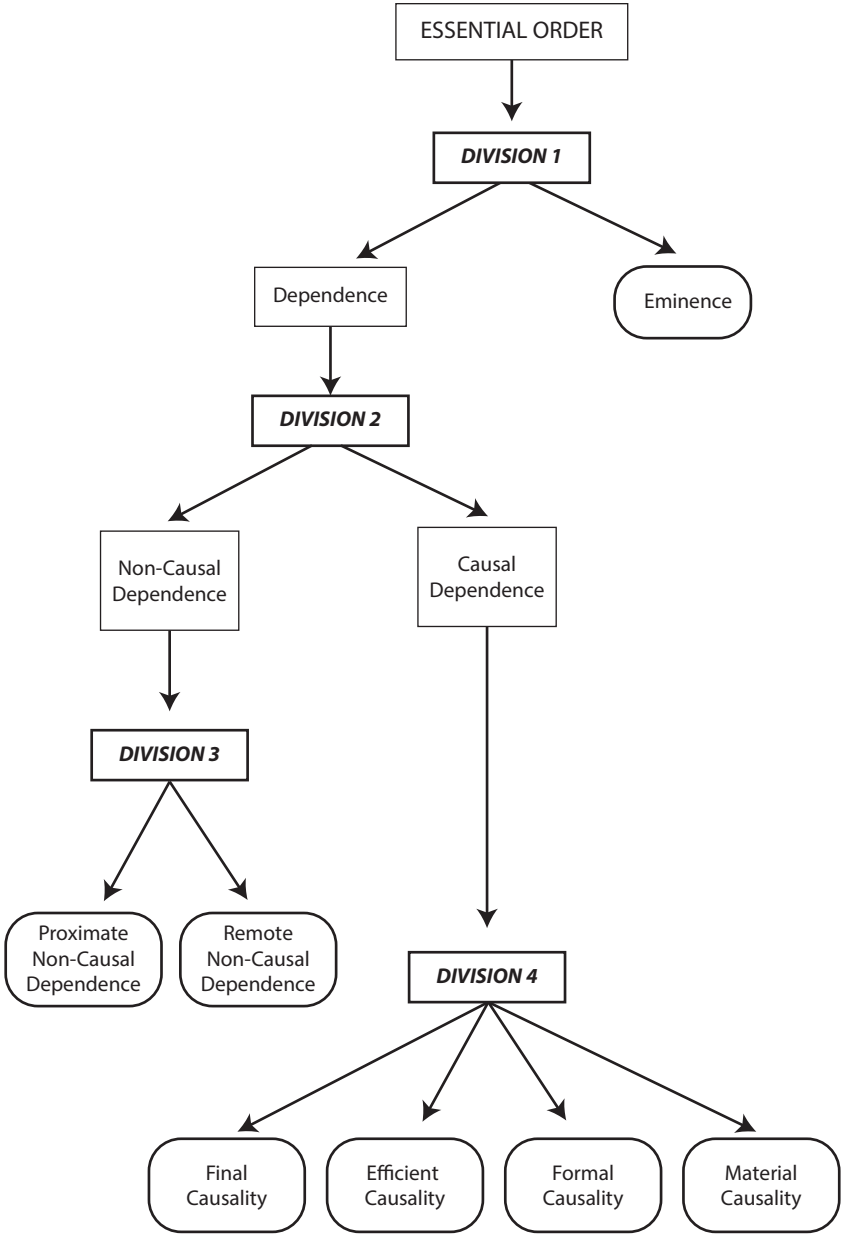
ESSENTIAL ORDER
DIVISION 1
Dependence
Eminence
DIVISION 2
Non-Causal Dependence
Causal Dependence
DIVISION 3
Proximate Non-Causal Dependence
Remote Non-Causal Dependence
DIVISION 4
Final Causality
Efficient Causality
Formal Causality
Material Causality

Figure 3

Chapter 2

The Relations Between the Types of Essential Order

2.9(1) In this chapter Scotus proves various theorems about the types of essential order and the relationships between these types. Most of these theorems are used in Chapter 3 when Scotus finally turns his attention to arguing for the existence of a nature that is first in the orders of efficiency, finality, and eminence.

2.9(2)-9(7) Description of Essential Order (Theorems 2.1-2.3)

Scotus never offers, in this book or elsewhere, a definition of essential order. Instead, in Chapter 1 he says that essential order is a disjunctive property of being whereby natures are ordered by priority and posteriority, and then goes on to distinguish seven types of essential orders. Then, here at the beginning of Chapter 2 he argues that all essential orders have three additional features: they are *irreflexive* (Theorem 2.1), non-circular and therefore *asymmetrical* (Theorem 2.2), and *transitive* (Theorem 3.3). These do not define essential order, however, because other types of order have these properties but would not count as essential order. Consider, for example, temporal order (before and after), and some kinds of spatial order (e.g., in front of and behind). So it is best to understand Scotus here at the beginning of Chapter 2 as adding further description of essential orders, rather than a definition.

2.9(2)–(3) Theorem 2.1: Nothing whatsoever is essentially ordered to itself.
Scotus thinks this is self-evident. If something could be essentially ordered to itself, then it could be either more eminent than itself, or dependent on itself (or both). But the consequents are absurd, so nothing can be essentially ordered to itself.

2.9(4)–(5) Theorem 2.2: In any essential order a circle is impossible.
If essential order is irreflexive (by Theorem 2.1) then it is also non-circular. Consider an essentially ordered triple: C, B, and A. If C is essentially prior to B and B is essentially prior to A, then C is essentially prior to both B and A.

But if C is identical with A, it follows that C is both essentially prior and essentially posterior to itself—which is contrary to the already established Theorem 2.1. No matter how many additional things there are in an essentially ordered series, nothing that is posterior to C can be prior to C in that same series.

2.9(6)–(7) Theorem 2.3: What is not posterior to the prior, is not posterior to the posterior.
The gist of the theorem is that essential orders are transitive. It is perhaps easier to understand through its contrapositive: what is posterior to the posterior is posterior to the prior. Intuitively, if A is posterior to B, and B is posterior to C, then A is also posterior to C. Note that transitivity, along with non-circularity (asymmetry), only holds across priority and posteriority of the same type: for example, if C is an efficient cause of B and B is an efficient cause of A, then C is an efficient cause of A; but if C is, say, the material cause of B and B is an efficient cause of A, it does not follow that C is the material (or efficient) cause of A.

2.10(8)-17(33) Fourth Division of Essential Order

2.10(8) *Comparing essential orders*. In the remainder of Chapter 2, Scotus proves various theorems about the relationships between different types of essential orders. He organizes these theorems according to the four divisions of Chapter 1, but follows a reverse order, starting with theorems of the fourth division and moving down.

The four causes. Theorems 2.4–2.9 concern the fourth division, that is, the four causal types of essential dependence. The four types of causes are the famous Aristotelian causes: material, formal, efficient, and final.[1]

Here is a brief review of the four causes. Where there is some material object, there is (i) something it is made out of (material cause), (ii) its form (formal cause), (iii) someone or something else that made it (efficient cause), and (iv) that for the sake of which it was brought into existence (final cause). This pair of scissors, for example, is stainless steel (material cause) shaped into two handled blades fixed together (formal cause). Someone or something machined or forged these parts and put them together (efficient cause), and did so with a goal or end in mind (such as cutting), an end that moves or motivates the efficient cause to produce the scissors, and this end is the final cause of the scissors.

1. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3.194b16–195a3 (Barnes, 1:332–33).

2.11(9) Theorem 2.4: What is not ordered to an end, is not an effect. Whatever has an efficient cause also has a final cause. Scotus gives three arguments for this theorem.

2.11(10) *First proof*. Everything produced by a *per se* efficient cause is produced for the sake of an end. Every effect is produced by a *per se* efficient cause. Therefore, every effect is produced for the sake of an end.

Per se and per accidens causes. In order to understand the argument, we need to know what Scotus means by a *per se* efficient cause, and we need to know why he thinks that every effect has at least one *per se* efficient cause. Scotus himself refers to Aristotle's *Physics* 2 twice in this proof, so we do well to look there. Adapting Aristotle's own example, consider a man who is a housebuilder, a musician, and pale-skinned. Then, of one of the houses he built, we could say correctly that (i) a housebuilder built the house, (ii) a musician built the house, and (iii) a pale-skinned thing built the house. (i)–(iii) are all true, but (i) is a much more sensible thing to say than (ii) and (iii): being a housebuilder is more relevant to building a house than being a musician or pale-skinned. There is nothing about musicianship or paleness that offer any explanation of how a house comes to be. Being musical or pale are, we might say, *accidental* to the housebuilder's ability to build houses. By contrast, housebuilding is the feature of the man that explains how he was able to build the house.

With all this in mind, we can see a little better what Scotus means when he talks about *per se* efficient causes. A *per se* efficient cause may be contrasted with a *per accidens* efficient cause. A housebuilder builds a house *per se*—that is, through what housebuilding itself is—while a musician and a pale-skinned thing build a house *per accidens*—that is, because they are qualities attached to someone who also happens to be a housebuilder. The housebuilder therefore is a *per se* efficient cause of the house, while the musician and the pale-skinned thing are *per accidens* efficient causes of the house.

By now it should not be difficult to see why Scotus thinks every effect has a *per se* efficient cause. A good efficient causal explanation of the existence of some caused thing will pick out something that has the right sort of character to be the efficient cause of that effect, and the right sort of character will have something to do with the power to bring about effects of just that kind.

Acting for ends. Scotus also claims that every effect of a *per se* efficient cause is produced for the sake of an end. And from this it follows that every effect of a *per se* efficient cause has a final cause, since the end of a thing (in a strict sense of "end" distinguished at 2.12(16)-(17)) just is that thing's final cause. So why does Scotus think that every effect of a *per se* efficient cause is produced for the sake of an end? He does not offer a clear answer, but I suspect

he thought it was self-evident—that is, true by the meaning of the relevant terms—that a *per se* efficient cause acts for the sake of an end. In order to state what a *per se* efficient cause is doing, at the moment of its causing, we must state the end, or goal, or purpose of the activity—without such an end (e.g., the finished house), the activity (e.g., housebuilding) is unintelligible.

2.11(11) *Second proof.* An end is a final cause precisely insofar as it "metaphorically" moves an efficient cause to produce its effect for the sake of that end. Every effect has at least one efficient cause that is "metaphorically moved" by an end. Therefore every effect has a final cause.

Scotus has a distinctive understanding of the nature of final causation, which he elaborates in the two corollaries to Theorem 2.5 (discussed below). On this understanding, the final cause is prior to what it causes only insofar as it is an end that is loved by some agent that, out of its love for that end, efficiently causes its effect. An agent's love for an end explains the sense in which an agent is "metaphorically moved" by an end: we often talk about desire or love *moving* or *motivating* us to act, but since our acts involve a will, this motion is not strictly speaking *causal* (the way in which a locomotive engine moves its train of cars or the way in which fire heats up the water in the pot); hence the motion is metaphorical. As Scotus explains in the second corollary to Theorem 2.5 (2.12(18)), the final cause is the final cause of the *effect* of the efficient cause, and is not any kind of cause of the efficient cause's *causing* of its effect.

2.11(12)–(13) *Third proof.* Every efficient cause produces its effect for a reason. The reason an efficient cause produces its effect is the final cause of its effect. Therefore every effect has a final cause.

2.12(14) Theorem 2.5: What is not an effect, is not ordered to an end. Whereas Theorem 2.4 holds that whatever has an efficient cause has a final cause, this theorem says that whatever has a final cause has an efficient cause.

2.12(15) *Proof.* Here is a heavily reworked version of the proof, offered for clarity's sake. By definition, the end (*finis*, *telos*) of a thing is the final cause of that thing. When a cause and the thing it causes are essentially ordered, the cause is essentially prior to what it causes. Therefore the final cause of a thing is essentially prior to that thing. And therefore the end of a thing is essentially prior to that thing. But the end of a thing is essentially prior to that thing only if the end is loved by something that efficiently causes that thing for that end. Therefore the end of a thing is loved by something that efficiently causes that thing for that end. Therefore everything that has an end has an efficient cause.

2.12(16) *First corollary: on final causes.* Here Scotus rejects what he considers to be a "false opinion" about the nature of the end and final cause. This opinion holds that the final cause of a thing is its natural end, that is, whatever it is that is achieved through the properly functioning, characteristic activity of a thing. For example, if all goes well for the acorn, it becomes an oak tree. The mature living oak is thus, on the view Scotus rejects, the final cause of the acorn.

The problem with this view is that the end of the acorn is achieved too late to be a final cause. Remember, for Scotus, every final cause is essentially prior to what it causes. Since the mature oak is *temporally posterior* to the acorn, it cannot be *essentially prior* to the acorn.

Assuming that this really is as problematic as Scotus thought it was, there are at least three choices: reject final causes altogether, or grant that something temporally posterior to x could indeed be essentially prior to x, or come up with some alternative way of understanding final causes, according to which they are essentially prior to what they cause. Scotus takes this third option.

His solution involves distinguishing two senses of "end." Strictly speaking, the end is the final cause, and so is essentially prior to its effect. But more loosely speaking, the end is the state at which the characteristic activity of a thing is aimed. In the loose sense of end, therefore, the mature oak tree is the end of the acorn, but (according to Scotus) it does not follow from this that the mature oak is also the final cause (that is, the end in the strict sense of "end") of the acorn.

An end, in the strict sense, can be a final cause only if it is essentially prior to what it causes. And this fact seems to have inspired the most innovative aspect of Scotus's understanding of the final cause: an end, *insofar as it is loved*, can be essentially prior to the thing that has that end. Imagine a carpenter with a table in mind, who, before he makes the table, has a desire to make the table. In this case, the table as loved by the carpenter exists before the table. Therefore an end, insofar as it is loved, can be a final cause.

From this view of final causes it follows that the only things that can be finally caused are things with at least one efficient cause that is *personal*, that is, capable of thinking and loving, and so loving the end for the sake of which it brings about its effect. This personal efficient cause might not be the most immediate efficient cause of some effect, but somewhere along the essentially ordered chain of efficient causes that bring about the effect, there has got to be at least one personal efficient cause.

It also follows from this view of final causes that the final cause, strictly speaking, is whatever end the efficient cause loves such that, for the sake of that end, the efficient cause produces its effect. This end need not be the

same as the loose-sense end of a thing, that is, the "last operation" of a thing or what its natural activity aims to achieve. Scotus recognizes this possibility.

2.12(17) *Aristotle and eternal dependence*. Scotus then offers some interpretation of Aristotle. Aristotle thought that the celestial intelligences exist eternally and have a final cause (the First Mover). Some think it follows from the intelligences' eternal existence that they have no efficient cause. But according to Theorem 2.5, everything that has a final cause also has an efficient cause. So if these other interpreters of Aristotle are correct, then Scotus contradicts Aristotle. But Scotus does not understand his own view to be in contradiction with Aristotle's. According to Scotus, something can exist eternally but still be efficiently caused. From his reading of Avicenna, Scotus distinguished between two sorts of priority: priority according to time, and priority according to essence or nature. In many instances of efficient causation, the efficient cause exists temporally prior to its effect. Since the celestial intelligences exist eternally, clearly they do not have an efficient cause that is temporally prior to them. But on Scotus's understanding of essential order, when an efficient cause and its effect are essentially ordered, the efficient cause's causal activity is simultaneous with its effect. So imagine an efficient cause that is eternally causing an effect that is essentially ordered to it. Then its effect eternally exists and exists simultaneously with the causal activity of its efficient cause. In such a case, the efficient cause is essentially prior to its effect, even though it is not temporally prior. And in just this way, Scotus thinks, Aristotle held (or perhaps would have held) that the First Mover is both the final and the efficient cause of the celestial intelligences.

The paragraph about what Aristotle held, or would have held, ends with an important distinction about the possible: the possible is that which is opposed to the impossible, but also that which is opposed to what is necessary *from itself*. For Avicenna (and Scotus who followed him) some things are necessary from another, and such things are *not* opposed to the possible.[2]

2.12(18) *Second corollary*. Here Scotus clarifies that when an end as loved is a final cause, it is the final cause of the *efficient cause's effect*, and not the final cause either of the efficient cause itself or the efficient cause's causal activity. Scotus elaborates on this in the proofs of Theorem 2.9 at 2.17(33), below.

2.13(19) Theorem 2.6: What is not an effect, is not made of matter.
This theorem says that whatever is not an effect of an efficient cause, is not made of matter—or, to state the contrapositive, whatever is made of matter

2. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 1.6.1–10 (Marmura, 29–33).

is an effect. This implies that there are no uncaused material things. Scotus offers three proofs.

Before explicating these arguments, note that this theorem does not say or imply that *matter itself* is not or cannot be uncaused. Instead the focus is on things *made of matter*. If it is possible for matter to exist all on its own, without any form at all, then as far as this theorem goes, matter could exist and not be the effect of any efficient cause. But later on, at 2.16(32), Scotus clarifies that matter itself is caused.

2.13(20) *First Proof*. Everything made of matter is composed of matter and form. Matter has "contradictory potency," that is, it can make a composition with any form whatsoever. But matter cannot cause itself to make a composition with any form. Therefore if matter composes something with form, something besides matter is the cause of that composition. A form itself can only be the formal cause once matter and form are united; therefore something besides form is the cause of that composition. Therefore there is an efficient cause of every composition of matter and form.

The argument clearly relies on Scotus's understanding of hylomorphism, that is, the view that material objects are composites of matter and form. The key premise is that matter cannot cause itself to make a composition with any form. This is due to the nature of matter's potency to form: it is "contradictory potency," that is, considered in itself, it can be united with any form, but likewise considered in itself, there is no more reason why it should be united with one kind of form than another. Thus, if it is united with a form, there is nothing about the nature of matter that explains why there is this particular composition of matter and form. So something besides matter must explain this. Form cannot explain it, either. So Scotus reaches for some other cause, an efficient cause, which unites matter and form into a composite. If you wonder why he picks the efficient cause instead of the final cause, note that he has already shown both that anything which has an efficient cause has a final cause, and that anything which has a final cause has an efficient cause. So either way he gets his conclusion—everything made of matter has an efficient cause.

Consequence. In this section Scotus uses the word "consequence" (*consequentia*) for the first of many times. As he uses the term, "consequence" refers to a relation between sentences or propositions, namely, that one follows logically from the other. It is, we might say, the *following-from* relation between a sentence that functions as a premise and another sentence that functions as a conclusion. Do not confuse "consequence" with "consequent" (*consequens*): "consequent" refers to a statement in a conditional sentence (the part that follows the "then" in an "if/then" sentence)—or perhaps, more generally,

a consequent (*consequens*) is simply the conclusion of any consequence (*consequentia*).

2.13(21) *Second proof*. The argument can only make sense if we suppose there is an implicit assumption that whatever is made of matter has a final cause. Then we can reason that whatever has a final cause has an efficient cause (by Theorem 2.5). And for anything that has a final cause and an efficient cause, any other causes it has are posterior to its final cause and efficient cause. Anything made of matter has a material cause. Therefore anything made of matter has an efficient cause.

Scotus offers no support here for his key premise that if something has a final cause and an efficient cause, then any other causes it has are posterior to its final cause and efficient cause. This premise follows from the second proof of Theorem 2.4 (on the priority of the final cause to the efficient cause) and the first proof of Theorem 2.6 (on the priority of the efficient cause to the material and formal causes), but then the second proof is not independent from the first proof of this theorem.

2.13(22) *Third proof*. Anything made of matter is a composite of matter and form. A composite of matter and form is itself one entity that is not reducible to its matter and form—in colloquial terms, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Anything that is one entity yet composed of several parts, is caused to be one by something besides its parts. Matter and form, as parts of the composite, cannot cause the composite to be one. Therefore the cause of the composite's being one is neither its material cause (matter) nor formal cause (form). Therefore the cause of the composite's being one is at least one of its extrinsic causes: its efficient cause or its final cause. Anything that has a final cause also has an efficient cause (Theorem 2.5). Therefore anything made of matter has an efficient cause.

Extrinsic and intrinsic causes. Scotus here uses the expression "extrinsic cause" for the first time. Efficient and final causes are "extrinsic" because they are not parts of the thing they cause, whereas material and formal causes are "intrinsic" because they are parts of the thing they cause.

2.14(23) Theorem 2.7: What is not composed of matter, is not composed of form; and what is not composed of form, is not composed of matter.
Essential parts. Scotus offers one proof for this theorem, according to which whatever is composed of matter is also composed of form, and *vice versa*. In the proof, the key idea is *essential part*. Whereas "integral" parts are what we might think of as ordinary parts of a composite such as the paws, fur, and teeth of a mole, "essential" parts are the matter and form(s) of a composite,

in this case prime matter and the various forms that compose the substance of the mole.

2.14(24) *Proof.* By its nature, matter is a potency to receive form and thereby to be the matter of a composite substance. So for some actually existing matter, if it is a part of a composite then there is at least one form that is the actualization of matter's potency. By some miracle, matter might exist all on its own without form, and form might exist all on its own without matter, but in these cases matter and form would not be parts of a composite. Thus, wherever one is part of a composite, the composite has the other as a part too.

2.14(25) To supplement the proof, Scotus here invokes an intuitive principle about the nature of parts and wholes, namely, that there is only a genuine or proper part of a whole when there are two or more parts of the whole. Nothing can be composed of just one thing. So if matter composes a substance, then that substance has some other part. The sort of part that, with matter, composes a substance, is form.

When Scotus appeals to Theorem 2.1 in support of his claim that something existing from just one element would not really be an element, I suggest that he understands being an element to imply being a part; then, if a part is essentially ordered to the whole, and by Theorem 2.1 nothing can be essentially ordered to itself, then something existing from an element—that is, being nothing more than an element—would not in fact be an element at all.

2.15(26) Theorem 2.8: What is not caused by extrinsic causes, is not caused by intrinsic causes.

The theorem says that if something lacks a final cause and an efficient cause, then it also lacks a material cause and a formal cause. The theorem follows from the conjunction of Theorems 2.4, 2.6, and 2.7, since by 2.6, whatever lacks an efficient cause lacks a material cause, and by 2.4, whatever lacks an efficient cause lacks a final cause, and by 2.7, whatever lacks a material cause also lacks a formal cause. This is why Scotus says that Theorem 2.8 is "clear enough from the preceding four theorems." Nevertheless, he adds two additional proofs.

2.15(27) *First proof.* It is probably not possible to make sense out of this proof. In the first two sentences Scotus says that the *causality* of the extrinsic causes is more perfect than the intrinsic causes. In the second sentence Scotus says that the extrinsic causes are prior to intrinsic causes *in their causing*, as the perfect is prior to the imperfect. Now the difficulty here is that the several uses both of *perfection* and *causality* make it unclear whether Scotus is relying on the notion of essential order of *eminence* or essential order of

dependence. If dependence, then it is hard to see how this first proof differs from the second proof immediately following it. But, if eminence, then it does not seem that the argument can succeed.

2.15(28) *Second proof*. Intrinsic causes are essentially posterior to extrinsic causes in the order of dependence. Thus, whatever has intrinsic causes has extrinsic causes. Therefore, whatever lacks extrinsic causes must also lack intrinsic causes.

2.16(29) Theorem 2.9: The four types of causes are essentially ordered in their causing of one and the same thing.

2.16(30) The theorem holds that the four causes are essentially ordered in their causing of one and the same thing. It can be proved from Theorems 2.4–2.8 and their proofs, in several different ways. Here is one way: by Theorem 2.7, whatever has a material cause also has a formal cause; by Theorem 2.6, whatever has a material cause also has an efficient cause; and by Theorem 2.4, whatever has an efficient cause has a final cause. Thus, every material thing is caused by all four types of causes. In addition to this general appeal to earlier theorems, Scotus offer two proofs.

First proof. In the first, Scotus reasons from the unity, or oneness, of the thing caused by all four causes, to some principle of unity among the four causes, insofar as they jointly cause whatever they cause. Recall Scotus's third proof of Theorem 2.6, at 2.13(22), which maintained that whatever is made of matter and form must have an efficient cause, on the grounds that matter and form alone are insufficiently unified to be the cause of the unity of the composite. Here Scotus tells us that all four causes must be sufficiently unified in order to cause an effect that is itself unified. If several things produce one thing, the several things must be unified in some way, and the sort of unity Scotus has in mind for the four causes is the unity that things have insofar as they are essentially ordered. Here and elsewhere (3.36(26)) Scotus says that it is in this sense of unity that the entire universe is one thing.

2.16(31) *Second proof*. Here Scotus relies on three earlier theorems of the fourth division: by the second proof of Theorem 2.4 (2.11(11)), the final cause is the first among the causes in their causing; by the second proof of Theorem 2.6 (2.13(21)), the efficient cause is second among these causes; and by Theorem 2.8, the material and formal causes are posterior to the efficient cause.

2.16(32) Next, Scotus tells us that he is not interested in determining the right ordering of the material and formal causes in this unity of essential order that the four causes have in their causing. Instead, it suffices simply that the material and formal causes are posterior to the final and efficient causes. Nevertheless, he offers some brief remarks, speculating that matter is prior to form in a type of non-causal essential order of dependence, while form is prior to matter in the essential order of eminence.

2.17(33) Finally, Scotus offers a very important distinction. It is one thing, he tells us, for causes to be essentially ordered *in their causing*, and another thing for the *things* that are causes to be essentially ordered. When Scotus says that the four causes are essentially ordered in their causing, he does not wish to imply that the final cause is a cause of the *existence* of the efficient cause, or again that the efficient cause is a cause of the *existence* of the material and formal causes. Instead, what he means is that the efficient cause depends for its *causality* on the causality of the final cause, and again that the material and formal causes depend for their *causality* on the causality of the efficient cause.

2.18(34) Third Division of Essential Order

The third division divides the non-causal essential order of dependence into two types: proximate and remote. See 1.5(11)–6(14). Scotus has nothing much to add here.

2.18(34) Theorem 2.10: When two things are related to the same cause, that cause is either proximate or remote.
This theorem, offered without proofs, asserts that when two things are essentially ordered to the same cause, where neither of these two is a cause of the other, then one of the two is more proximate to the cause than the other. Intuitively, relative proximity or remoteness is determined by how many links in a causal chain separate a cause from what it causes. For example, imagine a cause that initiates two independent causal chains, 1 and 2. In Chain 1, let's say there are three links: D1, C1, and B1; and in Chain 2 there are four links, D2, C2, B2, and A2. Figure 4 below makes these chains easier to visualize:

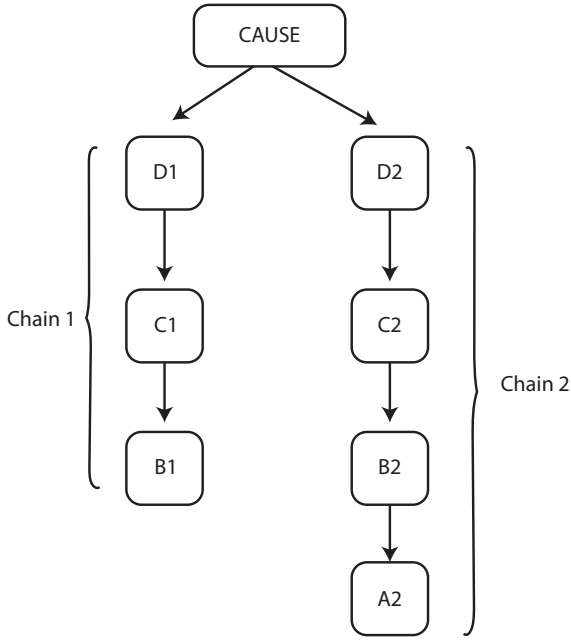

Figure 4

In the figure, B1 is more remote than C1, C1 is more proximate than B1, and D1 is more proximate than both C1 and B1. Likewise, D1 is more proximate than C2, C2 more proximate than B1, and so on.

Scotus would agree with this intuitive understanding of proximity and remoteness, according to which relative proximity is simply a matter of counting links in a chain. But when it comes to essential orders, he recognizes an additional way in which one thing can be proximate to a cause relative to another thing. In non-causal essential orders of dependence, one thing essentially depends on another thing, but is not caused by that thing. Suppose, for example, that D2 essentially depends on D1 but is not caused by D1. As far as counting links goes, D2 is neither more nor less proximate than D1. Nevertheless, in this case, Scotus thinks that D1 is more proximate to the cause than D2, precisely because D2 essentially (non-causally) depends on D1. Figure 5 illustrates this in the following way:

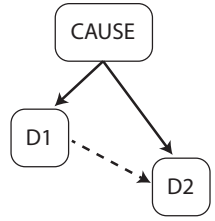

Figure 5

Here the dotted arrow represents the essential (non-causal) dependence of D2 on D1.

2.18(35)-19(40) Second Division of Essential Order

The second division divides the essential order of dependence into two: causal and non-causal essential orders of dependence. See 1.5(9)–(12). Scotus includes two theorems under this division.

2.18(35) Theorem 2.11: It is not the case that each thing [B] more proximately caused by a cause [C] is itself a cause of a more remote thing [A] caused by that same cause [C]. Therefore, it [B] is something caused prior [to A], but it is not causally prior [to A].
This theorem says that two things can be more or less proximate to their common cause, without themselves being causally related. Or, more precisely: where two things, A and B, are caused by the same cause, C, and where B is more proximate to C than A (and A more remote from C than B), it does not for that reason obtain that B is a cause of A. Therefore, B might be caused prior to A, but need not for that reason be a cause of A.

Consider Figure 4 again. There, D1 is not a cause of C2, yet D1 is more proximate to the cause that is common to D1 and C2.

2.18(36) Scotus offers as an example a quality's dependence on quantity. For commentary on this example, see the entry under 1.6(13)-(14) above. Consider Figure 6:

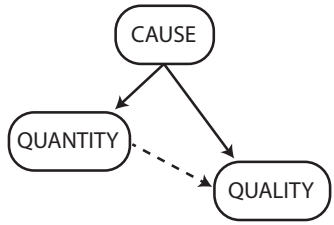

Figure 6

Here quantity and quality are represented as immediately caused by one common cause. The dependence of quality on quantity is represented by the dotted arrow.

Scotus begins to introduce a proof of the theorem ("This is proved also by reason"), but the actual proof has been omitted—by Scotus himself or by a later scribe, we do not know. But see 1.5(12), not exactly for a proof of the Theorem but for an elaboration of what he has in mind.

2.19(37) Theorem 2.12: A thing essentially depends only on a cause or on something caused that is more proximate to some cause.
Scotus tells us that this theorem is advanced in order to show the sufficiency of the second division. In this division he has divided essential dependence into just two types: causal and non-causal. The division is "sufficient" only if there can be no more types of essential dependence than these two. As we have seen in the third and fourth divisions, the two types of essential dependence distinguished in the second division themselves divide into further types. The point, however, is that if the second division is sufficient, any type of essential order of dependence will be either causal or non-causal.

Put this way, the answer is obvious, since "non-causal" is simply the negation of "causal." Yet these are my words, not Scotus's. In the theorem itself Scotus puts it like this: a thing essentially depends only on a cause or on something caused more proximately by a cause. By "something caused more proximately by some cause," Scotus has in mind just the sort of essential dependence discussed under Theorem 2.11 above, namely, a sort of essential dependence that obtains when one thing non-causally depends on another, and when both share a common cause (however remote). To show the sufficiency of the division, then, he needs to show that there cannot be essential dependence where the posterior non-causally depends on the prior but the prior and posterior have no cause in common.

2.19(38) *Proof.* The goal of the proof is to show that in every instance of non-causal essential dependence the dependent thing and that on which it depends share a common cause. (To avoid confusion, it should be said that while in his earlier use of "A" and "B" at 2.6(14), A depended on B, here at 2.19(38) and following, B depends on A; I have followed Scotus's shift in the commentary.) We can explicate it as follows. Suppose for *reductio* that B essentially depends on something, call it A, which is neither a cause of B nor is a more proximate effect of one of B's causes. If such a case were possible, A would be in a causal order totally independent of B, and yet B would nevertheless essentially depend on A. Thus, if A does not exist then B does not exist. Now, suppose A does not exist. In such a circumstance, everything in B's causal order—both B's causes and the things more proximate to B's causes on which B essentially depends—would together be the sufficient cause of everything immediately prior to B, yet B would not exist, because A does not exist. But, Scotus asserts, whatever is sufficient to cause the essentially prior is sufficient to cause the essentially posterior. Therefore B would exist, even if A does not exist.

The argument might be faulted for begging the question, specifically when it holds that B's causes and the things more proximate to B's causes on which B essentially depends are *sufficient* to cause B. After all, this seems

to be precisely what is disputed by anyone inclined to reject the theorem. Whatever the merits of the argument, the gist seems to be that there is simply no need to posit anything beyond B's causes and the things more proximate to B's causes on which B essentially depends. To do so is theoretically wasteful.

2.19(39) *First objection.* Here Scotus imagines someone objecting that if A itself could be caused by B's causes, then B could depend on A.

Reply. But Scotus points out that *ex hypothesi*, A is something independent of the order of B's causes. Thus the objection is futile.

2.19(40) *Second objection.* Scotus considers a second objection. Natural efficient causes do not cause prime matter to exist. Yet the composite effect of the efficient cause is made of matter and so essentially depends on matter. So here it seems we have something on which a composite essentially depends but which is not in the order of causes that cause the composite.

Reply. Scotus responds that while some particular efficient cause might not produce prime matter, some more remote efficient cause does produce prime matter. Moreover, prime matter is not a good candidate for A, because prime matter is caused and is therefore part of the total network of causes that brings about B, and also (though Scotus doesn't say this), prime matter itself is a (material) cause of the composite (that is, the substance composed of matter and form) and so is one of its causes.

2.20(41)–23(50) First Division of Essential Order

Theorems 2.13–2.16 finish off the chapter and concern the first division, that is, the first division of essential order into the orders of dependence and eminence.

2.20(41) Theorem 2.13: Not everything that is excelled essentially depends on that which is more eminent than it. Therefore the first member of the first division does not entail the second member.
This theorem says that being posterior to something in the order of eminence does not entail being posterior to it in the order of dependence.

2.20(42) *Proof.* Inductively, many things are evidently independent of what is nobler than they are. For example, arguably, a human is nobler than a grasshopper, but grasshoppers do not essentially depend on humans either for their existence or their activity.

2.20(43) Theorem 2.14: Not every dependent thing is excelled by that on which it depends.

2.20(44) This theorem says that being posterior to something in the order of dependence does not entail being posterior to it in the order of eminence. *Proof.* The key example here in the proof is that a composite substance is prior in eminence to its matter, but is posterior to its matter in the order of dependence—it depends on it as its material cause.

2.21(45) Theorem 2.15: Plurality is never to be posited without necessity. This theorem is simply an assertion of the common Aristotelian methodology that plurality is not to be posited without necessity.[3]

2.21(46) As he makes clear, Scotus posits this theorem in order to show the sufficiency of the first division: he discerns no need to divide essential order beyond the orders of eminence and dependence. By the same token, he claims to see no need to posit more than six total types of essential order (one of eminence, one of non-causal dependence, and four of dependence). This claim is confusing, since the official tally is seven: one of eminence, two of non-causal dependence, and four of dependence.

2.22(47) Theorem 2.16: Everything ordered to an end is excelled. Theorems 2.13 and 2.14 maintained the mutual non-entailment of eminence as such and dependence as such. But in Theorem 2.16 Scotus claims that in one type of essential order of dependence, namely final causality, there is an entailment: whatever has a final cause has something prior to it in the order of eminence. Scotus offers two proofs for the theorem, then considers an important objection.

2.22(48) *First Proof.* Scotus claims that the end, call it A, is prior in eminence to that which is for the sake of the end, call it B. Then he offers a proof for this claim. He does this in a roundabout way, by proving that A is neither less good than B nor equally as good as B. Suppose B were equally as good as A. Then B would be equally as lovable and desirable as A. But then an efficient cause would have no more reason to produce B for A's sake than to produce B for B's sake. But, Scotus alleges, this would violate Theorem 2.1: since B would be the final cause of itself. Similar reasoning establishes that A is not less good than B. Therefore A is better than B, that is, prior in the order of eminence.

3. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 1.25 (86a34–36).

2.22(49) *Second proof*. Here Scotus reasons by way of a double analogy: as the end is to that which is for the sake of an end, so the principle of artisanal knowledge (e.g., the relevant knowledge and skill) is to works of art, and so the premises of a practical syllogism (e.g., the relevant principles of practical reasoning) are to the conclusion. Since the principle of artisanal knowledge is better than works of art, and since the premises of a practical syllogism are truer than its conclusion, so the end is better than that which is produced for the sake of the end.

2.23(50) *Objection*. The objection is aimed at the theorem itself and not to either proof in particular. It reasons from bad actions. Frequently we bring something about for the sake of a bad end. In such cases it's easy to see how the end can be less good than that which is brought about for its sake. Suppose I create a musical masterpiece, but do so entirely to make my rival jealous. Then the end of my action (making my rival jealous), is less noble than that which I bring about for the sake of that end (the masterpiece).

First reply. Scotus's reply relies on the notion that final causes, like efficient causes, are transitive. An individual bad agent acts for the sake of ends that, in some real sense, are under its control (e.g., it is my fault that I acted for the sake of making my friend jealous), but no individual agent except God has the final say about what additional, higher, ends any action is ordered to. Scotus seems to be saying that my bad end does not offer a genuine counterexample to the theorem, provided that there is some higher end that moves some higher efficient cause to bring about my musical composition for the sake of that higher end. For example, while *I* might have an evil end, *God* (let's say) intends me to compose the masterpiece for the sake of making many people happy. Thus, despite my bad end, there is *some end* (in this case, God's) which is nobler than that which is brought about for the sake of the end.

Second reply. Scotus considers, but then rejects, a second sort of response to the objection. According to this response, the inferior end is only the end for the sake of which the efficient cause acts in a qualified way. There is some additional end for the sake of which the efficient cause acts, and it is more fundamental to an overall explanation of what the efficient cause is doing. Yet Scotus rejects this response, because he sees no reason to suppose that, in every case, an agent acting for a bad end is really acting for a good end.

Chapter 3

On the Triple Primacy of the First Principle

3.24(2) This opening prayer announces Scotus's goal to show by reason what he believes by faith: that there is a unique, actually existing nature that has Triple Primacy: it is first in the essential orders of efficient causality, final causality, and eminence, where "first" here means *posterior to none and prior to all others, if there are others.*

3.24(3) In Theorem 3.6, Scotus argues that there can be only one nature that is first in the essential order of efficiency. In Theorem 3.15 he proves that the unique first in the order of efficiency is the same as the unique first in the order of finality, which in turn is the same as the unique first in the order of eminence. In other words, one and the same nature is first with respect to all three. But it is not until the end of Chapter 4, in Theorem 4.11, that Scotus argues that God alone has this nature (by identity with it).

Each primacy argument follows the same basic structure: for each of the three essential orders, (i) establish the possibility of a first in each order, then (ii) establish the actuality of a first in each order.

The arguments for a first in efficiency and a first in finality *are not* arguments for a first efficient cause and a first final cause. To be a first cause (in either order), something else must exist. Therefore being the first cause of everything else is the sort of feature a thing can have only if other things exist. "First cause" therefore does not belong to the divine nature as such—even though only the divine nature could be the first cause. But being the first in the essential orders of efficiency and finality does not require that there be anything else but the first. In Theorem 3.2, Scotus tells us exactly what he means by "first" in the essential order of efficiency: a first "cannot be produced, and can produce its effect without the power of anything else." Similar formulations hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for a first in the orders of finality (Theorem 3.8) and eminence (Theorem 3.12).

3.25(4)–37(26) The Primacy of Efficiency

3.25(4) Theorem 3.1: Among beings, some nature can produce an effect. By "beings" and "nature," Scotus does not here mean actually existing things. He explains what he does mean two paragraphs below, at 3.26(6). For now, suffice it to say that he means something like *possible beings*. So here in the theorem he is saying that at least one possible being can produce an effect. But of course, he does not mean that, as a merely possible being, it can produce an *actual* effect. Nor does he mean that, as a merely possible being, it can produce only a *possible* effect. Instead, he means that there is at least one possible being, or nature, such that, if actual, it can produce an effect. The shorthand way of expressing this sort of complicated modal claim is simply to ascribe properties to natures, properties like *being able to produce an effect*.

3.25(5) *Proof.* Something can be produced. Therefore, something can produce. The consequence—that is, that the conclusion follows from the premise—is established by the nature of the "correlatives," producible (*effectibile*) and able to produce (*effectiva*). Note that something still can produce an effect even if it never in fact produces an effect. Similarly, something could have, necessarily and by its very nature, the *ability* to produce an effect, while its *actual production* of an effect (if it produces an effect) could be totally contingent. Eventually we will see that Scotus thinks that the first in the order of efficiency is just such a nature: it is by nature the first *effectiva*—the first thing able to produce an effect—and it actually exists necessarily, but it is totally contingent whether it in fact produces any effects; thus it would have been first in the essential order of efficiency even if it had never produced any effects.

Scotus then offers two arguments in support of the claim that "something can be produced," which is the "antecedent" of his one-premise proof.

First argument for the antecedent. Something is contingent. What it is to be contingent is to be able to exist after not existing. Nothing can produce itself (by Theorem 2.1). Therefore whatever can exist after not existing, if it exists, is produced by another. Therefore whatever is contingent is producible. Note here that for Scotus "contingent" does not mean or imply *actually existing*. It just means *being able to exist after not existing*. The argument fails if "contingent" means or implies actually existing. Scotus is here talking about possible beings, not actual beings.

Second argument for the antecedent. Something, *x*, can lack a perfection it can have. Therefore *x* can undergo change (i.e., the acquisition of the perfection *x* lacks). Therefore the thing resulting from the change can begin to exist (i.e.,

the acquired perfection or, better, *x so perfected*). Whatever can begin to exist, if it exists, is produced by another. Therefore whatever can undergo change is producible.

3.26(6) *From premises about the possible.* Here Scotus makes explicit an argumentative strategy he has already been using. He will argue, he says, from premises about the *possible* rather than the *actual*. He gives an example of an argument that reasons from a premise about the actual: something is effected (*effecta*); therefore something is effective (*efficiens*). This is a type of argument familiar to readers of Aquinas' First and Second Ways: each begins with a fact that is "evident to the senses," and so actual: respectively, some things undergo change and some things begin to exist.[1] Scotus does not criticize this type of argument. Instead, he offers three reasons why he prefers to argue from premises about the possible. (i) Possibility is inferred from actuality, but not actuality from possibility. (ii) Premises about actual things are contingent while premises about possible things are necessary. (iii) Premises about actual things are about existent being, while those about possible things are about being as such. I'll say something about each of these in turn.

(i) If Scotus can establish his own arguments for God's existence from necessary premises, then his efforts supplement, do not compete with, and are logically independent of, other arguments for God's existence that reason from premises about actual things.

(ii) Aristotle had made the necessity of the premises a criterion for successful demonstration.[2] The knowledge we can derive through syllogistic reasoning stands on a firmer basis if the premises are necessary rather than contingent. Also, and I think more fundamentally, by reasoning in this way Scotus will show, if he is successful, that being first in the orders of efficiency, finality, and eminence, does not at all depend on there being any contingently existing things. God has this Triple Primacy just by what God is, and not at all by what God has done.

(iii) My speculation here is that this reason is important to Scotus because it makes the search for the First Principle truly an endeavor in metaphysics, which he says is the study of being *qua* being.[3] That he thinks of the *Treatise* as metaphysics is clear toward the end of Chapter 4, where he explicitly says that his book has reasoned only from metaphysical claims (4.93(86)). Why metaphysics should matter so much to Scotus, in his efforts to prove God's

1. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a.q.2.a.6.corp. (Hause and Pasnau, 53).

2. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 1.12.32a6–14 (Barnes, 1:51).

3. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 1.q.1.n.160–61 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 1:58–59).

existence, may have something to do with Aristotle's own assessment of the superiority of metaphysics (the "divine science") to other sciences.[4]

3.27(7) Theorem 3.2: Something able to produce an effect is simply first—that is, it cannot be produced, and it can produce its effect without the power of anything else.

The theorem states that there is a first in the order of efficiency, and clarifies what being first means: it cannot be produced, and it can produce its effect without dependence on any other efficient cause. This clarification is important: at this point in the book, Scotus is not assuming that if there is a first in the order of efficiency then there is just one nature that is first. (He argues that there is just one in Theorem 3.17.) Also, here we are still in the possibility phase of the argument: Scotus is not trying to establish the *existence* of such a nature, but rather that such a nature is *possible*, that is, that there is nothing incoherent, or "repugnant," about the conceptual components involved in being first in the order of efficiency. If the proof of Theorem 3.2 is successful, it establishes that there is in fact a *nature* the total intelligible content of which includes *being first in the order of efficiency*, but it does not establish that there is in fact an *actual thing* that has that nature.

Scotus offers one proof of the theorem, then offers an extended defense of one its key premises, namely, that there cannot be an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes.

3.27(8) *Proof*. Something—call it A—can produce an effect (by Theorem 3.1). A is either first or not first. If A is first, then the theorem is proved. If A is not first, then A essentially depends (in the order of efficiency) on something else—call it B—for A's existence or activity. B is either first or not first. If B is first then the theorem is proved. If B is not first, then B essentially depends (in the order of efficiency) on something else. And so on. There cannot be an ascending infinite series of things able to produce an effect. There cannot be a circle of things able to produce an effect (by Theorem 2.2). Therefore there is a first in the essential order of efficiency.

3.28(9) *Objection*. The objection asserts that an ascending infinite series of causes is indeed possible. By "*ascending* infinite series" Scotus means a series such that for every member of the series there is another member of the series *prior* to it. A *descending* infinite series would be a series such that for every member of the series there is another member of the series *posterior* to

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2.982a3–982b10 (Barnes, 2:1553–54); Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 1.Prol.n.16 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 1:6–7).

it. (There is nothing here to suggest that Scotus would deny the possibility of a "descending" infinite series, that is, a series such that for every member of the series there is another member of the series *posterior* to it.)

Note, in keeping with Scotus's strategy of arguing from premises about the possible, that what is here at issue, strictly speaking, is *not* whether there can be an ascending infinite series of causes. Remember, he is prescinding from existence and considering the nature of being as such. So instead, at issue is whether there can be an ascending infinite series of things *able to produce an effect*, such that something able to produce an effect essentially depends on something able to produce an effect, which itself essentially depends on something able to produce an effect, and so on. That said, Scotus writes somewhat loosely in his response to the objection, framing the response in the objector's own term (cause) rather than Scotus's own (thing able to produce an effect). As he says in the first proof of Theorem 3.4, below (3.33(19)), all the arguments he gives here against the possibility of an infinite series of essentially ordered causes can be understood as concerning "nature, essence, and possibility."

3.28(10)-(11) *Essentially ordered causal series*. Now Scotus in fact thinks that there is a kind of causal series, a series ordered *per accidens*, which can have an ascending infinity, but that this kind of series is not at issue in the proof for Theorem 3.2, which denies that there can be an ascending infinite series of causes ordered *essentially* (or *per se*).

Before arguing against the possibility of an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes, he offers three characteristics of an essentially ordered series of causes—to which he will refer when arguing against the possibility of an infinity in such a series.

First feature of essentially ordered causal series. An essential order of causes orders the *causality*—the very activity of causing—of the causes so ordered. It does not order their existence. Thus, if A, B, and C are three causes essentially ordered, and if A is prior to B and B prior to C, then A is a cause of B's *causing*, not B's existence, and A and B are causes of C's causing, not C's existence, and so on, down to the effect produced by the whole series of causes.

Second feature of essentially ordered causal series. In an essential order of causes, the prior cause is both *different in nature* from and *more eminent than*, the posterior cause. It is *different in nature* because no cause essentially depends for its causing on a cause of the same nature as itself. The point makes some sense if we understand it very narrowly (always a good hermeneutic while interpreting Scotus): two substances of the same specific nature may well be essentially ordered in their causing, as man and woman are essentially ordered in their

production of a child,[5] but of course the causality of the man is of a different nature from the causality of the woman. It remains a mystery to me why Scotus also thinks that in an essential order of causes, the prior is *more eminent* than the posterior, especially in light of Theorem 2.14, which says that not every essentially dependent thing is excelled by that on which it depends.

Third feature of essentially ordered causal series. In an essential order of causes, the prior's causing of the posterior's causing is *simultaneous* with the posterior's causing. That is, C's causing, B's causing of C's causing, and A's causing of B's causing of C's causing, all occur simultaneously. This is because Scotus really does mean that the prior causes the *causing* of the posterior. He doesn't mean that the prior causes the posterior to be able to cause its effect (say, later on). Thus, the only moment available for the prior to cause the posterior's causing is the very moment of the posterior's causing.

3.29(12) *Against ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes*. To establish the crucial premise that there cannot be an ascending infinite series of things able to produce an effect, Scotus argues for three closely related claims, which he labels A, B, and C: (A) An infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible. (B) An infinity of accidentally ordered causes is impossible unless an essentially ordered series of causes comes to an end (i.e., has a first prior member). (C) If there is no such thing as an essentially ordered series of causes, an infinite series of causes is impossible.

3.29(13) Scotus offers five proofs of (A).

First proof of (A): *An infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible.* The totality (*universitas*) of essentially ordered caused things is itself caused; so it is caused by something that is not a member of that totality.

Scotus does not offer any support for the premise that the totality of essentially ordered caused things is itself caused. And in general it does not follow merely from the fact that all the parts of a whole have a property, F, that the whole has F too. Some readers might fault Scotus here for committing a fallacy of composition—that is, the fallacy of inferring that a whole has a property that all of its parts have, from the fact that all its parts have that property. But this would be hasty. He does not tell us why he supports the premise. In any case, it is not always unreasonable to infer a property of the whole from a property of the parts. (Every part of Michelangelo's *David* is made of marble, and so is *David*, and, plausibly, *David* is made of marble *because* every part of *David* is.)

5. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.3.p.3.q.2.n.496–98 (Van den Bercken, 225–26).

Another puzzle about this argument is that it is not at all obvious how it is supposed to support (A). This is because, at first glance, nothing in the argument rules out the possibility of an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes. Here is why. Suppose, *contra* Scotus, that there is an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes. But also suppose, *with* Scotus, that the totality of (infinitely many) essentially ordered causes is itself caused. Then it follows that there is an uncaused cause of an infinite series of essentially ordered causes. Then the argument might help to establish that there is something that is first in the essential order of efficient causality, but it would not rule out the possibility of an infinite series of essentially ordered causes—as Scotus clearly intended it to do.

But I think that closer inspection reveals something plausible about how Scotus thought that this argument supports the conclusion that there can't be an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes. First, consider what it must mean for an uncaused cause outside the totality of caused things to cause that totality: the cause outside the totality causes that totality by immediately causing at least one member of the totality. But it does not immediately cause *every* member of the totality, because then the totality would not be a causal *series*. Now let's make a leap, in a spirit of theoretical parsimony (Theorem 2.15): suppose that the uncaused cause outside the totality of essentially ordered caused causes, causes that totality by immediately causing only one member of that totality. Then there is one member of that totality that has an uncaused cause. But then this one member would not have a caused cause. Then this one member is the first caused cause, and its cause is the first cause. But then the order of caused causes is not infinite (in an ascending order).

It seems to me that this extrapolation helps us see how this first proof of (A) is supposed to rule out the possibility of an infinite series of essentially ordered causes. *Assuming* the totality of caused things is itself caused, *then* the totality is not an infinite series. But it does not give us any reason to support the crucial premise that the totality of caused things is itself caused. I wonder if Scotus thought that that premise is obviously true and not in need of argument—the sort of claim that one simply sees to be true whether or not one has a proof, as one sees that 2+2=4, or that a surface cannot be white and black simultaneously.

Second proof of (A). If an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes is possible, then an actual infinity of essentially ordered causes is possible. An actual infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible. Therefore an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes is impossible.

The antecedent of the first premise holds, as Scotus says, from the fact that in essentially ordered causal series, every member of the series causes simultaneously. So if there are infinitely many members of the series, then at

one and the same moment there is an actually infinite number of essentially ordered causes. Scotus follows Aristotle[6] in rejecting the possibility of an actual infinity—except in the mind of God (as evidenced by his discussion of divine ideas in 4.68(48)-69(50), and at the end of 4.91(85)).

Third proof of (A). If something is prior in an essentially ordered series of causes, then it is closer to a beginning. If there is an infinite series of essentially ordered causes, then there is no beginning. Assume for *reductio* that there is an infinite series of essentially ordered causes. Therefore, there is no beginning. If there is no beginning, nothing in the series is closer to a beginning than anything else in the series. Therefore nothing is prior in an essentially ordered series of causes. But something is prior. Therefore there is not an infinite series of essentially ordered causes.

This argument appears to beg the question in its first premise. The *goal* of the argument is to show that an essentially ordered series of causes implies a first in the series, that is, a beginning. It therefore seems illicit to assert that priority in such a series implies being closer to a beginning. I leave it to readers to find a more favorable reading of this third proof of (A), if one can be found.

Fourth proof of (A). The higher up a member in an ascending series of essentially ordered causes, the more perfect it is in its causing (by the second feature of essentially ordered causal series offered at 3.28(11)). Therefore the infinitely higher in such a series is infinitely perfect in its causing. If something is infinitely perfect in its causing, then it causes whatever it immediately causes independent of any other cause's causing. Therefore it is an uncaused cause. Therefore there is not an infinite series of essentially ordered causes.

The gist of the argument is this: an infinitely perfect nature would be infinitely perfect in its causing, and since infinite perfection in causing implies being able to cause without being caused, it follows that an infinitely perfect nature would be a first in an essential causal order. Since there is no repugnance between *infinite* and *perfect* and *cause* (assumed here but more or less argued for in the fifth proof of infinity given at 4.78(63)-79(65)), it follows that there is a nature infinitely perfect in its causing and so first.

Here Scotus does not offer support for the premises that the infinitely higher in such a series is infinitely perfect in its causing, and that if something is infinitely perfect in its causing, then it causes whatever it immediately causes independent of any other cause's causing. But see Scotus's seventh argument for divine infinity, developed at length in 4.81(67)–85(72).

Fifth proof of (A). If being able to produce an effect can belong to a nature perfectly, then the nature to which it so belongs can produce an effect without

6. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.5.204a20–206a8 (Barnes 1:348–51).

dependence on a prior cause. Being able to produce an effect can belong to a nature perfectly. Therefore the nature to which it so belongs can produce an effect without dependence on a prior cause.

The main idea here is that perfect ability to produce an effect is the sort of property that is possible for some nature to have. For Scotus this means that there is some nature—some possible being—that has that property. And having this ability, Scotus thinks, entails the ability to produce an effect independent of any other cause—and so to be first in the order of efficiency.

But, strictly speaking, if such a thing actually exists, its existence alone does not rule out the possibility of an ascending infinite essentially ordered series: for suppose that being with perfect ability to produce an effect in fact produces nothing, but other causes, which depend for their causing on other causes, do produce effects. Then there could be a causally lazy being with the ability to produce effects uncaused by other causes, existing side by side with causally active beings all depending on other causally active beings for their causing. Scotus doesn't address this possibility. But see the proof of Theorem 3.19 (3.46(58)) for an implicit reply to this concern.

3.30(14) *Proof of* (B)*: An infinity of accidentally ordered causes is impossible unless an essentially ordered series of causes comes to an end (i.e., has a first prior member).* The gist of the argument is that a cause in a series ordered *per accidens* itself depends for its causing on a causal series ordered essentially. In a causal series ordered *per accidens*, a cause does not depend, for its causing, on its cause(s) (i.e., its cause(s) in its *per accidens* causal series). But this does not mean that its causing is completely uncaused. Instead, each cause in a *per accidens* causal series is, at the moment of its causing, dependent on an essentially ordered causal series. So while a *per accidens* series might ascend (or descend) to infinity, each and every causal link in the series is a terminus of an essentially ordered series originating in an uncaused cause (since, by the arguments for (A), there cannot be an infinite ascending series of essentially ordered causes). For example, a family tree represents a *per accidens* causal series: grandparents cause parents who cause children, but parents do not depend on grandparents at the moment they cause their children. Nevertheless, parents do depend on other causes at the moment they cause their children; the whole causal series on which they depend at that very moment is essentially ordered, and terminates in a first. Thus, while a *per accidens* causal series may well extend infinitely up and down, it can only do so if the causal activity of each member of the series is linked up with a finite essentially ordered causal series.

3.31(15) *Proof of* (C)*: If there is no such thing as an essentially ordered series of causes, an infinite series of causes is impossible.* Here Scotus argues that an infinite causal series ordered *per accidens* is possible only if an essentially

ordered causal series is possible. The argument begins with Theorem 3.1 as a premise: some nature (call it N) can produce an effect. Suppose there are no essentially ordered causal series. Then, when an individual with nature N (call it an N-individual) causes its effect, it does not depend for its causing on something else's causing. An N-individual is either caused to have N, or not caused to have N. If there is an N-individual that *is not caused* to have N, then it has its ability to produce its effect independent of any cause giving it that ability—therefore there is no infinite causal series through which it has N. If there is an N-individual that *is caused* to have N, then it is dependent on at least one cause for its having N. Then the whole series of causes on which it depends for having that nature, is itself either finite or infinite. But it is not infinite, because there cannot be an infinite series of causes ordered *per accidens* if there is no finite series of causes ordered essentially (by the argument for (B), above), and *ex hypothesi* there are no essentially ordered causal series. Therefore the series ordered *per accidens* is finite. Therefore, on the denial of essentially ordered causal series, there can be no infinite causal series.

The upshot of (A), (B), and (C) taken together is that if there are essentially ordered causal series then they are finite and so have a first member, and if there are no essentially ordered causal series but only accidentally ordered causal series, then the latter are finite and so have a first member.

3.32(16) Theorem 3.3: That which can produce an effect in a way that is simply first is uncausable, because it cannot be the effect of anything else and it can produce an effect independent of anything else.
The theorem states that a nature that is first in the order of efficiency—that is, a nature that cannot be produced and can produce its effect without depending on anything else—is uncausable. As Scotus notes in the short proof, the theorem follows from Theorem 3.2.

3.32(17) The theorem is not trivial, as it might at first appear, because Theorem 3.2 states merely that what is first in the order of efficiency cannot be *produced*, that is, cannot be the *effect* of an efficient cause. But Theorem 3.3 adds that a nature first in the order of efficiency is not *causable* in any way: it has no final cause (by Theorem 2.5), no formal cause (by Theorem 2.7), and no material cause (by Theorem 2.8).

3.33(18) Theorem 3.4: Something able to produce an effect in a way that is simply first exists in actuality, and some actually existing nature can produce an effect in this way.
Here we move from possibility to actuality.

3.33(19) *Proof.*

1. For any nature, if it can exist then either it can exist by another or it can exist of itself.
2. A nature first in the order of efficiency can exist (by Theorem 3.2).
3. Being first in the order of efficiency is repugnant with being able to exist by another (by Theorem 3.3).
4. Therefore, a nature first in the order of efficiency can exist of itself (by premises 1–3).
5. A nature first in the order of efficiency cannot cause itself to exist (by Theorem 2.1).
6. A nature first in the order of efficiency cannot be caused to exist by another (by premise 3).
7. Therefore, if such a nature does not in fact exist, it cannot exist (by premises 5 and 6).
8. But it can exist (by premise 2).
9. Therefore a nature first in the order of efficiency actually exists (by premises 7 and 8).

Suppose that a nature first in the order of efficiency does not exist. Since nothing can cause itself to exist, and since a first in the order of efficiency cannot be efficiently caused to exist, nothing can bring it about that the nature in fact exists. So it can't exist. But it was supposed to have been shown that such a nature *can* exist, in Theorem 3.2. So we can derive a contradiction that such a nature both is and is not possible. Given the contradiction, we have a choice: *accept* with Scotus that such a nature *actually exists*, or *deny contra* Scotus that such a nature is *possible*.

3.33(20) *Corollary*. The first in the order of efficiency does not just *happen* to exist and be prior to everything else in the order of efficiency; it is *contradictory* that anything should be prior to it in the order of efficiency.

3.34(21) Theorem 3.5: What is uncausable exists necessarily from itself. Here we move from actuality to necessity.

Specifically, Scotus argues that an uncausable possible nature has necessary existence "from itself." Necessary existence "from itself" is to be distinguished from necessary existence "by another." For Avicenna, from whom Scotus gets the distinction, a being is necessary by another when it cannot fail to exist, but is caused to exist (by a cause that could not fail to cause it and could not fail to cause what it causes).[7] Everything necessary in this sense

7. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 1.6.4–6 (Marmura, 31–32).

ultimately depends on something necessary from itself, that is, something that could not fail to exist and is uncaused. Scotus himself denies that there is anything that has necessary existence by another, because he denies that any creature exists necessarily.

3.34(22) *Proof.* If nothing incompatible with the first in the order of efficiency can exist, then the first in the order of efficiency cannot fail to exist. Nothing incompatible with the first in the order of efficiency can exist. Therefore the first in the order of efficiency cannot fail to exist. Therefore it is necessary—and not by another, but from itself.

Scotus defends the antecedent in roughly the following way. Suppose that something incompatible with a nature first in the order of efficiency can exist. Then, if it exists in fact, it exists either of itself, or by another. But not of itself, since the first in the order of efficiency exists of itself and is incompatible with it. But not by another, since no caused thing is powerful enough to cause, by its coming into existence, the non-existence of the uncausable. So nothing incompatible with the first in the order of efficiency can exist. Therefore it cannot fail to exist.

3.35(23) Theorem 3.6: Existing necessarily from itself pertains to only one nature.

Here we move from necessity to uniqueness.

Having established that there is at least one nature that is first in the order of efficiency and that exists necessarily, Scotus now argues that there is and can only be *one* nature that is first in the order of efficiency. He offers three main arguments, all of which rely on Theorem 3.5, that the first in the order of efficiency has necessary existence from itself.

3.35(24) *First proof.* If more than one nature has necessary existence (from itself, not by another), then necessary existence is a common (i.e., universal, shareable) nature. Then, in each necessarily existing nature, there will be at least two essential features: the shareable nature they have in common and in virtue of which they have necessary existence, and some distinguishing features (*formalitates*) in virtue of which they are distinguished from each other. Two impossibilities follow from this:

The two impossibilities. Both impossibilities involve reasoning about necessary existence as a shareable property (or common nature, as Scotus puts it). If necessary existence is a property shared by (at least) two individuals, then necessary existence is *insufficient* for something with necessary existence to exist in fact; its necessary existence must be further specified by its distinguishing features. But then—the first impossibility—necessary existence

would not be the most actual feature of a thing; instead, necessary existence would be in potentiality to distinguishing features. And also—the second impossibility—it contradicts the meaning of necessary existence that it be insufficient on its own for some necessarily existent thing to exist.

3.35(25) *Second proof*. Here Scotus assumes that for any two natures that share something in common, one is more eminent than another. But if two natures had necessary existence in common, it would be insufficient to make one better than the other (since they both have it). So some other property would make the better nature better than the other. But nothing can make something better than necessary existence can make it. So necessary existence cannot be a shareable nature.

3.36(26) *Third proof*. If two natures shared necessary existence, neither would essentially depend on the other. Therefore neither would be essentially ordered to the other. But the unity of the universe consists in the essential order of things in the universe. So one of the two natures with necessary existence would not be a part of the universe—but there is no need to posit more than one universe, as Scotus argues below in 3.37(26).

Objection to the third proof. There could be an essential order of eminence between them, and this would be sufficient for both to be parts of the universe.

First reply. Nothing is more perfect than necessary existence. Therefore two natures with necessary existence would not be essentially ordered with respect to eminence. See also 3.34(25) above.

Second reply. If there were two natures each of which is a first in the order of efficiency, then what is immediately essentially posterior to one is *either* (i) immediately essentially posterior to both, *or* (ii) immediately essentially posterior just to that one. If (i), then any subsequent essentially ordered posteriors will also be essentially ordered to both firsts. Then there will be a redundancy of essential order throughout the universe. If (ii), then either the second first has nothing essentially posterior to it, or it does and it composes a second universe with whatever is essentially posterior to it.

3.37(26) *Second reply continued: against both (i) and (ii)*. There is no theoretical need to postulate two firsts, or two universes, or redundant essential orders in one and the same universe. So we should assume there is just one first and just one universe with just one order.

38(27)-38(34) The Primacy of Finality

The arguments for a first in the order of finality (Theorems 3.7-3.10) are extremely compressed, relying (as Scotus tells us) on much of the work done to establish a first in the order of efficiency (Theorems 3.1-3.6). In the arguments for efficiency, the key *relata* were *effectiva* (can produce an effect) and *effectibile* (can be produced). Here, the key *relata* are *finitiva* (can be an end) and *finibile* (can be ordered to an end).

3.38(27) Theorem 3.7: There is some nature among beings such that it can be an end.
Some nature among beings can be an end. Note that here we begin with possible beings, just as in Theorem 3.1. To be ordered to an end is to be the *causatum*—the *finitum*—of a final cause. And to be an end is to be the *causa finalis* itself—provided we understand being an end in the strict sense that Scotus discusses in Theorem 2.5. Therefore to be able to be ordered to an end is to be *finibile*, that is, able to be a *finitum*; and to be able to be an end (in the strict sense) is to be *finitiva*, that is, able to be a final cause.

3.38(28) *Proof.* Something can be produced (by the proof of Theorem 3.1). Therefore, something can be ordered to an end (by Theorem 2.4—whatever has an efficient cause has a final cause). In the text, Scotus does not actually draw the conclusion, which is implied: since something can be ordered to an end, therefore something can be an end—as the theorem states.

3.38(29) Theorem 3.8: Something that can be an end is simply first, that is, it cannot be ordered to some other end, and not by anything else's power is it the end of other things.
Some nature is first among natures that can be an end. Here, too, as in Theorem 3.2, Scotus clarifies just what being first means: it does not mean that there is some actually existing thing that is in fact the first final cause. Instead, to be first in the essential order of finality means to be a nature that cannot be ordered to an end, and that is independent of anything else for its being the end of other things.

3.38(30) Scotus tells us the theorem is proved by five arguments similar to those offered for Theorem 3.2. He is most likely referring to the five arguments offered in support of proposition (A) in 3.29(12); (A) says that an ascending infinity of essentially ordered causes is impossible. These arguments were offered in turn in order to support the proof of Theorem 3.2. It is reasonable to suppose that the proof itself is implied when Scotus here tells us to look to the five arguments of (A). Briefly, the five arguments for (A) are:

(i) from the need for a cause outside the totality of caused things; (ii) from the impossibility of a simultaneous actual infinity; (iii) from the conceptual connection between priority and a beginning; (iv) from infinite causal perfection; (v) from the possibility of independent causing. Each argument can be formulated as an argument against the possibility of an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered *final* causes, and each argument, *mutatis mutandis*, would have the same strengths (or weaknesses, as the case may be) of the original versions.

3.38(31) Theorem 3.9: The first among beings that can be an end, is itself uncausable.
What is first in the essential order of finality is uncausable.

3.38(32) What is first in the essential order of finality has no final cause, by the meaning of first. It has no efficient cause, by Theorem 2.4. Also, see Theorem 3.3 and its proof. Note, as in Theorem 3.3, we are still in the possibility stage of Scotus's argument for the actual existence of a first in the order of finality.

3.38(33) Theorem 3.10: The first among beings that can be an end, actually exists, and this primacy belongs to some actually existing nature.
Here we move from possibility to actuality.

3.38(34) See the proof and the corollary of Theorem 3.4.

Scotus does not provide additional theorems that take us from actuality to necessity and from necessity to uniqueness, as he did in the theorems about the order of efficiency. Plausibly, however, it is implied that suitably modified versions of those Theorems and their proofs establish the necessity and uniqueness of the nature that is first in the order of finality. In any case, Theorem 3.15, which establishes the sameness of the first in efficiency with the first in finality and the first in eminence, makes additional theorems and proofs unnecessary.

3.39(35)-39(42) The Primacy of Eminence

3.39(35) Theorem 3.11: Among the natures of beings there is something that excels.
By now the strategy should be familiar. The theorem states that among (possible) beings, something excels or exceeds (*excedens*). This is the analogue in the order of eminence of *effectiva* in the order of efficiency, and *finitiva* in the order of finality.

3.39(36) *Proof.* The correlative of excelling (*excedens*) is being excelled (*excessa*). That some nature is excelled follows from Theorems 3.7 and 2.16.

3.39(37) Theorem 3.12: Some eminent nature is simply first in perfection. Here, again, we argue from the fact of priority within an essential order (i.e., something can produce, something can be an end, something excels), to a first in that order, all the while remaining in the possibility stage—considering natures as such, prescinding from actual existence.

3.39(38) *Proof.* Scotus again refers back to Theorem 3.2 and the five arguments against the possibility of an ascending infinite series of essentially ordered causes. But since the order of eminence is not a causal order, the first of these five arguments is not relevant. The fourth and fifth arguments can be made relevant with some heavy modifications.

Recall that the fourth argument reasoned that an infinitely perfect nature would be infinitely perfect in its causing, and since infinite perfection in causing implies being able to cause without being caused, it follows that an infinitely perfect nature would be first in an essential causal order. Modified to show that there is a most eminent nature, the argument could go like this: an infinitely perfect nature implies being unsurpassed in eminence and surpassing all other natures in eminence. Therefore an infinitely perfect nature is first in the order of eminence. Both the original fourth argument and the modified version rely, it seems to me, on an implied premise, namely that *infinite* and *perfect* are non-repugnant, such that there is an infinitely perfect nature.

The fifth argument is rather similar to the fourth, both in its original and modified versions. The original argument asserted that *being able to produce an effect* does not imply any imperfection, and thus some nature has this ability perfectly. But perfect ability to produce an effect implies being independent of any other cause. Therefore that nature in which being able to produce an effect is perfectly realized is a nature that is first in the order of efficiency. To modify this argument for eminence, we start with the following premise, which is practically trivial: *being eminent* does not imply any imperfection. Thus, some nature has eminence perfectly. But perfect eminence implies being unsurpassed in eminence and surpassing all others. Therefore the nature that is perfectly eminent is first in the order of eminence.

For additional support, Scotus claims that forms are related to each other as numbers are related to each other, citing Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 8 as the source of this comparison.[8] I have not been able to make a judgment about

8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 8.3.1043b33–1044a14 (Barnes, 2:1648).

what Scotus hoped to illustrate through the analogy. From what he says elsewhere, larger numbers *depend* on smaller numbers, and all numbers depend on the number one. So while numbers "ascend" to infinity, they do have (literally) a first. Yet he also says that the number one is less perfect than larger numbers.[9]

3.39(39)-(40) Theorem 3.13: The Supreme Nature is uncausable.
Remaining in the possibility stage, Scotus argues that the first in the order of eminence is uncausable.

3.39(40) *First proof.* Scotus argues exclusively from previously established theorems that the nature that is first in the order of eminence is uncausable. Since, by Theorem 2.16, an end is better than that which is for the sake of an end, the first in eminence cannot be for the sake of an end, and so cannot have a final cause. But then it cannot have an efficient cause, either (by Theorem 2.4), and therefore it cannot have a material or formal cause (by Theorem 3.3).

Second proof. A second proof refers the reader back to the proof of (B) in Theorem 3.2 (see 3.30(14)). This is the argument for the claim that an ascending infinite series of causes ordered *per accidens* is possible only if an ascending infinite series of causes ordered *per se* is impossible. In that argument Scotus implies that every caused cause in a *per accidens* series depends for its causing on at least one efficient cause to which it is ordered *per se*. Thus, nothing can be an effect of a *per accidens* series unless it is always an effect of a *per se* series. But the first in eminence cannot be an effect of a *per se* series (by Theorem 2.4). So it cannot be an effect of a *per accidens* series, either.

3.39(41) Theorem 3.14: The Supreme Nature is something actually existing.
Here we move from possibility to actuality.

3.39(42) *Proof.* See the proof of Theorem 3.4. The corollary holds that the actually existing most eminent nature doesn't just happen to be the most eminent thing, but is unsurpassably eminent in the strongest sense: it is *contradictory* that something else should be more eminent than it. The corollary foreshadows his later reference, in 4.79(65), to Anselm and his clarification of Anselm's famous argument that reasons from a description of God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."

9. Duns Scotus, *Reportatio 1-A* d.2.p.1.q.1–3.n.33 (Wolter and Bychkov, 1:124).

3.40(43)-40(44) The Triple Primacy

3.40(43) Theorem 3.15: To one and the same unique and actually existing nature belongs the triple primacy within the three types of essential orders discussed in this chapter, namely, efficiency, finality, and eminence.
In Theorem 3.6, Scotus argued that there could be only one nature that is first in the order of efficiency. He had already argued, in Theorem 3.4, that this nature actually exists. Here he argues that one and only one nature is first in all three orders: efficiency, finality, and eminence. Since he has already argued for the actual existence not only of the first in efficiency but also the first in finality (Theorem 3.10) and eminence (Theorem 3.14), it follows that the unique nature with Triple Primacy actually exists.

3.40(44) *First proof.* As noted, Scotus offers a proof of necessary existence (from itself, that is, not from another) only for a first in the order of efficiency. Here he makes explicit what has been implicit, namely, that from the actual existence and uncausability of the first in finality and the first in eminence, their necessary existence follows. But, by Theorem 3.6, necessary existence belongs to just one nature. Therefore one and the same nature has the Triple Primacy.

Second proof. Each First Nature is uncausable. There cannot be a multitude of uncaused things. Therefore one uncausable nature is first in all three orders. Scotus evidently thinks it is obvious that there cannot be a multitude of uncaused things, since he states the premise as a rhetorical question—*how will a multitude exist of itself?*

3.41(45)-45(56) The Uniqueness of the First Nature

3.41(45) *The intensely pregnant theorem.* Describing Theorem 3.15 as "intensely pregnant," Scotus claims that it implies six additional conclusions, which he discusses (in a disorderly manner, it must be said) in the remainder of Chapter 3. These six *conclusions* cannot be identified with the remaining *Theorems* (16-19) of Chapter 3, since there are only four remaining theorems. Scotus himself uses the term *conclusio* throughout the *Treatise* both for the theorems that structure the treatise, and also for conclusions of arguments offered as proofs of the theorems. This is rarely confusing, but it is confusing here, especially because Scotus nowhere says what exactly these "six conclusions" are. The reader is made to guess.

The six additional conclusions. The first three conclusions (1-3), he tells us, are about the *unity*, or oneness, of the nature that is first in each of the three

essential orders. But this is ambiguous: it could mean (i) that there is one and only one nature that is first in all three orders (as Theorem 3.15 says) or it could mean merely (ii) that each order has one and only one first (which leaves it open that each order has its own first and none of these three firsts is identical with any of the others). In favor of (i) is that this is exactly what Scotus has just shown, in Theorem 3.15, so we might expect him to elaborate on this unity in a more fine-grained way. Nevertheless, I favor (ii), for the following reasons. First, the proofs of Theorems 3.17 and 3.18, which he offers in support of 1-3, make sense on (ii), but not on (i). Second, (ii) fits better with what I take to be the best way to understand the second three conclusions (4-6).

About 4-6, Scotus says that they concern the *identity* of the nature that is first in one order with the natures that are first in the other orders. In these conclusions Scotus seems to return to what was established in Theorem 3.15—that one and the same nature has the Triple Primacy—but strengthens the view; while he does not argue for divine simplicity until Chapter 4 (Theorems 4.1 and 4.10), here he takes a first step toward simplicity.

We can enumerate 1–6 on Scotus's behalf in the following way:

1. Only one nature is first in the order of efficiency.
2. Only one nature is first in the order of finality.
3. Only one nature is first in the order of eminence.
4. The nature first in efficiency is identical with the nature first in finality.
5. The nature first in finality is identical with the nature first in eminence.
6. The nature first in eminence is identical with the nature first in efficiency.

Some disorganization. The final two sentences of 3.41(45) do not flow well with the first part of this section. It is indeed true that Theorem 3.15 follows from Theorem 3.6, but why Scotus says this here is unclear. Also, while it is indeed befitting to state the major premises of the arguments for 1-6, he never states them. It is possible that these two sentences represent mere notes and therefore some unfinished business in the *Treatise*. Be that as it may, as confusing as Theorems 3.16-18 are for the reader who is looking for clear statements of and arguments for the "six conclusions," there is nothing fundamentally incomplete or unsubstantiated in the remainder of Chapter 3. To this remainder I now turn.

3.42(46) Theorem 3.16: It is impossible for one and the same thing to depend essentially on two things in such a way that its dependence terminates wholly in each.

The first two conclusions. The purpose of the theorem is to add support for 1 and 2 (listed under 3.41(45), above). It says that one and the same thing

cannot essentially depend on two things in the same order of dependence in such a way that its dependence "terminates wholly" in each. Where B depends on A, for B's dependence to "terminate wholly" in A is *not* for B to depend on nothing besides A, but instead for A to be the last term, or terminus, of B's dependence; there is nothing prior to A in an essential order of dependence, on which B depends.

3.42(47) *Proof.* Scotus first argues that nothing can depend on two causes *in the same order of causation* (e.g., two efficient causes) in such a way that its dependence wholly terminates in each. This is because, according to Scotus, causation cannot be redundant or overdetermined. He then applies this principle of non-redundancy to each type of essential dependence.

In Theorem 3.6 Scotus had established that there could be no more than one first in the order of efficiency; he established this through necessary existence (itself established by Theorem 3.5). Then, in Theorem 3.15, the oneness of the first in the order of efficiency was extended to the first in the orders of finality and eminence. So strictly speaking there is no need for Scotus here to offer an alternative demonstration that there can only be one first in the orders of efficiency and finality. Nevertheless, good arguments love company. Also, Theorem 3.16 establishes the oneness of these firsts through the nature of dependence itself, rather than through the nature of necessary existence; there is therefore something more direct about the proof here than in Theorems 3.6 and 3.15.

3.43(48) Theorem 3.17: To only one nature belongs each primacy of any type of extrinsic cause.

The first three conclusions. Explicitly, the purpose of this theorem is to add support for 1 and 2 (listed under 3.41(45), above), the two conclusions about the "extrinsic" causal essential orders. Nevertheless, somewhat confusingly, the fourth proof of the theorem is about the essential order of eminence, which is not a causal order, and the first proof works just as well for eminence as for efficiency and finality.

The theorem as stated is ambiguous: it could be either a repetition of Theorem 3.15: one and only one nature is first in all three orders; or it could be saying something weaker: only one nature is first in efficiency, only one nature is first in finality, and (implicitly, given the fourth proof) only one nature is first in eminence. But the first proof makes clear that this second, weaker, reading is intended.

3.43(49) *First proof.* Suppose there were two firsts in an essential order and suppose that each first had at least one thing posterior to it. Call all the things

posterior to either first "the posteriors." Then for every posterior, it is posterior to both firsts or only to one. But not to both firsts (by Theorem 3.16). But not to only one, either, since it would follow that there would be two distinct essential orders and so two distinct universes. But there is no need to posit more than one universe. So there is not more than one universe (by Theorem 2.15). So there are not two firsts in an essential order. The argument works for each of three types of essential order under discussion. Therefore: (1) only one nature is first in the order of efficiency, (2) only one nature is first in the order of finality, and (3) only one nature is first in the order of eminence.

Additional probable proofs. Scotus then tacks on five brief "probable" proofs in support of 1-3. The second proof supports 1-3; the third supports 1 and 2; the fourth supports 3; the fifth supports 2; and the sixth supports 1-3.

3.44(50) *Second proof.* Here he reasons that since ascending essential orders advance from plurality to paucity, it is plausible that each terminates in just one first.

3.44(51) *Third proof.* The higher up a cause in a causal essential order, the more things it can cause. Plausibly, then, there is a first in each causal essential order, which can cause all other things. If so, there is just one first in each causal essential order.

3.44(52) *Fourth proof.* Natures are like numbers (see 3.39(38)): for each pair of natures, one is greater than the other. If there were two firsts in the order of eminence, one would not be greater than the other. Therefore there is just one first in the order of eminence

3.44(53) *Fifth proof.* It is unintelligible that there is no single final end in which everything comes to rest. Therefore there is just one first in the order of finality.

This is a startlingly hopeful view about what we might call the unity of goodness: while the ends pursued here and now often appear irreconcilably competitive, the reality is that they all point to the same ultimate end.

3.44(54) *Sixth proof.* If, for any of these three essential orders, more than one nature is first in it, then one of the firsts in that order does not virtually contain the perfection of the other firsts in that order. But the unsurpassably perfect nature is such that it virtually contains the perfection of every other nature. Therefore there is just one first in each order.

A "perfect being" argument. It seems to me that this argument makes most sense if we take it as establishing a stronger conclusion than Theorem 3.17: not just that there is one first for each primacy, but that one and only one nature has all three primacies. (Of course, Theorem 3.17 follows from the stronger conclusion.) If there is at least one most perfect (i.e., eminent) nature, it would virtually contain the perfection of every other nature. For a nature, N, to "virtually contain" the perfection of every other nature is for N to be such that, for every perfection a nature can have, either (i) N has that perfection, or (ii) N can cause something else to have that perfection, or both (i) and (ii). There is a most perfect nature (by Theorem 3.12). Being first in the order of efficiency and the order of eminence are perfections a nature can have. But these perfections are not causable (by Theorems 3.3 and 3.9). Therefore the most perfect nature has these two perfections and cannot cause anything else to have them. Therefore there is only one first in each of the three orders and the first in one order is also the first in the other two.

3.45(55) Theorem 3.18: The First Nature that can produce an effect is most actual because it virtually contains every possible actuality. The first in finality is the best, virtually containing every possible good. The first in eminence is most perfect, eminently containing every possible perfection.

The last three conclusions. In this theorem, Scotus turns his attention to 4–6 (listed under 3.41(45), above). In supporting these last three "conclusions," he bolsters support for Theorem 3.15. Yet Theorem 3.18 as stated does not obviously have anything to do with 4–6. So this requires some unpacking.

Within the theorem, Scotus lists each type of order, and for each type, attributes a superlative to it and offers a reason for the superlative: the first in efficiency is the most actual, the first in finality is the best, and the first in eminence is the most perfect.

The first in efficiency is the most actual because it has the causal power to produce whatever can be produced. The first in finality is the best because all action of an agent acting *per se* is for the good, and the first final cause is, ultimately, that for the sake of which all *per se* action is undertaken. The first in eminence is the most perfect because it lacks no perfection possible for a nature to have.

3.45(56) *Proof.* Scotus then explores conceptual connections between these superlatives and finds them unified by the concept of goodness, or *goodness in the highest degree*. Each superlative expresses an aspect (*ratio*) of goodness in its highest degree: the most actual (the first in efficiency)

expresses the highest communicability (i.e., ability to share what it has with others), the best (the first in finality) expresses the highest lovability, and the most perfect (first in eminence) expresses the highest integrity or wholeness. The highest goodness, Scotus says, has each of these inseparably from the others—inseparably in the strong sense that the nature of the highest goodness entails being all three. Therefore whatever nature has one of these aspects is the highest goodness and has all three aspects. Therefore (4) the nature first in efficiency is identical with the nature first in finality, (5) the nature first in finality is identical with the nature first in eminence, and (6) the nature first in eminence is identical with the nature first in efficiency.

3.46(57)–48(63) Everything Is Ordered

3.46(57) Theorem 3.19: One actually existing nature is first in the three aforementioned orders with respect to any other nature, such that any other nature is posterior to that First Nature in these three ways.
Theorem 3.15 had already established the actual existence of a nature that is first in all three orders. Theorem 3.18 established again that one and the same actually existing nature is first in all three orders. Here in Theorem 3.19 Scotus repeats these previous theorems but adds that *anything* besides this one triply First Nature is essentially posterior to this nature. Instead of proving it, he introduces a powerful objection to the theorem and then offers several replies to the objection.

3.46(58) *Objection*. Scotus introduces an impudent person who might object that even if there is a unique nature that is first in all three orders, it does not follow that every other nature is posterior to this First Nature. This echoes an objection I myself raised to the fifth argument for (A), in 3.29(12).

3.46(59) *First reply*. Scotus replies by appealing to Theorem 3.6, which holds that only one nature has necessary existence from itself. By Theorem 3.15, the one nature that has necessary existence from itself has the triple primacy. Thus, any other nature is posterior in all three orders to this unique First Nature. Scotus's own route to the conclusion goes through the uncausability theorems for each primacy argument (Theorems 3.3, 3.9, 3.13). His idea is that being uncausable (and possible) entails being necessary from itself, and since there can only be one such nature, any other nature is either necessary from another or not necessary at all—either way, any other nature is essentially posterior to the First Nature.

Similar to Theorem 3.17, Scotus goes on to add five brief replies, perhaps, like those of Theorem 3.17, also offered as "probable proofs." Each focuses on one type of order and aims to show that there can be nothing besides the first in that order that is not essentially posterior to the first.

3.47(60) *Second reply.* What is neither an end nor ordered to an end exists in vain. Therefore everything is either an end or ordered to an end (and so belongs to the essential order that terminates in the first final cause). I know of no way to make the notion of "existing in vain" philosophically precise that doesn't appeal to the notions of being an end or being ordered to an end, so I am not sure what exactly is supposed to be philosophically problematic about existing in vain. But the fourth reply, which appeals to the fact that anything with an efficient cause has a final cause and *vice versa,* offers a promising way forward: if there were anything that is neither an end nor ordered to an end, it would be neither the first in finality or efficiency nor—since nothing without a final cause has an efficient cause—something essentially posterior to anything in the order of efficiency. But this is impossible, given the fourth reply, below.

Third reply. This proof assumes that everything has some degree of eminence, that is, nothing is wholly bad—only what is not a being at all has no goodness. But what is neither the most eminent nor excelled by something else has no degree of eminence. Therefore everything is either the most eminent or is excelled by something (and is therefore essentially posterior to the most eminent nature).

3.47(61) *Fourth reply*. Whatever has a final cause has an efficient cause (by Theorem 2.4), and whatever has an efficient cause has a final cause (by Theorem 2.5). What is first in the order of efficiency is first in the order of finality (by Theorem 3.18). By the second proof of Theorem 3.19, everything is either an end or ordered to an end. Therefore everything is either an efficient cause or an effect (and so belongs to the essential order that terminates in the first efficient cause).

3.47(62) *Fifth reply*. Everything is either the most eminent or is excelled by something (by the third proof of Theorem 3.19). But whatever is ordered to an end is excelled (by Theorem 2.16), and whatever is ordered to an end is an effect. Therefore everything is either the first in efficiency or posterior to it.

Sixth reply. It is irrational, because theoretically unnecessary (see Theorem 2.15), to postulate a being with no essential order to the unique triply First Nature. Therefore there is no such thing. See the first proof of Theorem 3.17

and the second response to the objection to the third proof of Theorem 3.6 (3.36(26)).

3.48(63) Having argued that every actual or merely possible thing is either the First Nature or essentially ordered to it in the orders of efficiency, finality, and eminence, Scotus praises God. Here, implicitly, Scotus identifies God with the *Supreme Nature* uniquely picked out by its possession of the triple primacy. In Chapter 4 Scotus proves various theorems about attributes of the Supreme Nature; through these theorems the divinity of the Supreme Nature comes more and more into focus.

Chapter 4

On the Simplicity, Infinity, and Intellectuality of the First Being

Concerning the First Nature. The focus of Chapter 3 was the necessary existence of the Supreme Nature, triply first in the orders of efficiency, finality, and eminence. Chapter 4 concerns the attributes or *perfections* of this nature. Specifically, Scotus argues that the Supreme Nature is simple (Theorems 4.1, 4.2, and 4.10), has all pure perfections in the highest degree (Theorems 4.2 and 4.3), has intellect and will (Theorems 4.4-4.8), is infinite (Theorem 4.9), and is unique (Theorem 4.11). In Chapter 4 Scotus most frequently refers to the Supreme Nature, or the nature that has triple primacy, as the *First Nature*. Except for his prayers, Scotus does not start using the word "God" to refer to the First Nature until Theorem 4.4, on the intellect and will of the First Nature.

4.49(1)-(2) Scotus begins with simplicity, and returns to simplicity much later, after the long section on infinity. Here he tells us that the reason for breaking up the arguments for simplicity in this way is to avoid a circular argument. This suggests that there is a danger of proving infinity through simplicity, and then proving simplicity through infinity. In fact he does prove simplicity through infinity (Theorem 4.10), and infinity through simplicity (the fourth proof of Theorem 4.9). But the arguments for simplicity in Theorem 4.1 do not rely on infinity, and none of the other arguments for infinity relies on simplicity. So Scotus avoids the circle.

4.50(3)-51(6) Simplicity

4.50(3) Theorem 4.1: The First Nature in itself is simple.

4.50(4) The theorem states that the First Nature is simple "in itself," and here Scotus says that by this he means that the *essence* itself is simple. Therefore Theorem 4.1 does not rule out the possibility that the First Nature has accidents, that is, properties that are not essential properties and so, if possessed by a simple nature, would imply a composition of essence and accidental

properties in the First Nature. Scotus does not attempt to argue that the First Nature cannot have accidents until 4.89(80).

First proof. The First Nature is uncaused (by Theorem 3.3); therefore it is not composed of matter and form (by Theorems 2.6 and 2.7).

Second proof. The First Nature exists necessarily from itself (by Theorem 3.6 and 3.15). If the perfections of the First Nature were really distinct from each other, then the First Nature would have necessary existence through at least one of its perfections.

But it cannot have necessary existence through only one of its perfections, for two reasons: first, if it did, then the rest of the perfections of the First Nature would exist necessarily only derivatively from the perfection through which the First Nature has necessary existence; second, the First Nature itself would exist necessarily only derivatively from the perfection through which it has necessary existence. The problem with this is that either some part of the First Nature or the First Nature as a whole would be dependent for its necessary existence on its property of necessary existence—and so the First Nature would fail to be truly first (i.e., dependent on nothing and that on which everything else depends).

And it cannot have necessary existence through more than one of its perfections, for two reasons: first, if it did, then it would have several necessary existences—but this is redundant; second, the various necessary existences could not form a unity—since, as necessary existences, none would be in potency to another and would not be in potency together to compose something else.

Therefore its perfections are *not really distinct* from each other. Where some perfections belong to one and the same thing and are not really distinct from each other, they are *really the same* as the thing to which they belong, and *really the same* as each other, even if they are *formally distinct* from the thing to which they belong and *formally distinct* from each other.

Formal distinction. Scotus is well known for this subtle type of distinction. In his most mature description, formal distinction occurs where there is real identity but also difference in *ratio* (i.e., content, account, concept, notion, meaning).[1] As Blander puts it: "*x* is formally distinct from *y* [if and only if] (a) *x* is really identical to *y*; (b) the account [*ratio*] of what it is to be *x* is not the same as the account of what it is to be *y*; and (c) the account of what it is to be *y* is not included in the account of what it is to be *x*."[2]

1. Duns Scotus, *Reportatio 1-A* d.33.q.3.n.63 (Wolter and Bychkov, 2:330).

2. Josh Blander, "Same as It Never Was: John Duns Scotus' Paris *Reportatio* Account of Identity and Distinction," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2020): 236.

4.50(5) *Corollary*. The First Nature is not in a genus. To belong to a genus is to have a nature that belongs to a *species* and can therefore be *defined*. A species is constituted by its *genus* (e.g., animal), and *difference* (e.g., rational), and a *definition* expresses the species (e.g., "rational animal," the classical definition of man). In a real definition, the difference term cannot express content that is expressed by the genus term. If it does—that is, if the genus term expresses any of the content that the difference term expresses—then a definition has "vain repetition." To borrow one of Aristotle's examples,[3] which Scotus discusses elsewhere,[4] "biped" cannot be a difference of the genus of animals with feet, since "biped" itself means "with two feet," resulting in the vainly repetitive definition "animal with feet and two feet." By contrast, in the definition "rational animal," the difference and genus terms express totally diverse content.

Scotus's point here is that the reasoning of the second proof, above, shows that no two perfections of the First Nature are totally diverse: there is not one perfection by which the nature exists necessarily from itself, and another by which it is wise, and yet another by which it is powerful. Instead, the First Nature is all these things (and more!) by itself alone. Therefore it cannot be defined—that is, no well-formed definition could apply to it.

4.51(6) *Objections to the second proof*. As Scotus himself would grant, the First Nature has various perfections that are not *formally* the same as each other: for example, divine wisdom is not formally the same as divine power. So the perfection through which the First Nature has necessary existence is not formally the same as every other perfection of the First Nature. The second proof argues that there cannot be *really distinct* perfections in the First Nature, but the objection asserts that the argument offered against really distinct perfections in the First Nature works equally well as an argument against *formally distinct* perfections in the First Nature.

Moreover, in Christian doctrine, God is one divine essence in three divine persons. Each divine person shares exactly the same divine essence. So one divine person cannot be distinct from another divine person by the essence they share. So they are distinct by at least one property that is peculiar to each divine person. So a divine person has two (formally distinct) constituents: the divine essence and the personal property. Applied to this Trinitarian context, then, the objection is that since the distinguishing property of a divine person is formally distinct from the divine essence, and since the

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.12.1038a19–24 (Barnes, 2:1639).

4. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 7.q.19.n.7–10 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 2:310).

divine person has necessary existence through the essence and not through the personal property, a divine person would have its necessary existence derivatively.

Scotus's reply relies on his understanding of the nature of infinity, which he does not discuss until Theorem 4.9—see the third and fourth proofs of infinity in 4.75(56)–77(62). But, briefly for now, he denies the objector's claim that his second proof works equally well against the view that there can be formally distinct perfections in the First Nature. He denies this on the grounds that, where formally distinct perfections belong to one and the same thing, and at least one of these perfections is *infinite*, then these formally distinct perfections belong to that one thing by *identity* rather than by *composition* (i.e., parts to whole).

With respect to the divine persons, then, since the divine essence is formally infinite, the divine essence and the personal property belong to the divine person by identity, not composition.

4.52(7)–54(11) Pure Perfections

4.52(7) Theorem 4.2: Whatever is intrinsic to the highest nature is the highest such thing.

Intrinsic perfections. The First Nature has *intrinsically* that which it has just by virtue of what it is, independent of the existence of anything else. For example, being wise is an intrinsic perfection, but being the creator of the world is an extrinsic perfection, since nothing can be a creator unless there is some creation.

Note, however, that the three primacies proved in Chapter 3 are all intrinsic perfections: Scotus proves that there is a unique first in the order of efficiency (which does not imply that it has any actual effects), not that there is a unique first efficient cause (which would imply that it has actual effects); similarly for the other two primacies.

Theorem 4.2 says that whatever perfection the First Nature has intrinsically, exists in the First Nature in the highest possible degree to which that perfection can exist. So if the First Nature is intrinsically wise, then its wisdom is the most perfect wisdom possible. And so on for all the intrinsic perfections of the First Nature.

4.52(8) *Proof.* Assume an intrinsic perfection of the First Nature could be greater than it is. Each intrinsic perfection of the First Nature is the same as the First Nature (by Theorem 4.1). Therefore the First Nature could be greater than it is. But the First Nature is unsurpassably great (by Theorems

3.14 and 3.15). Therefore no intrinsic perfection of the First Nature could be greater than it is.

4.53(9) Theorem 4.3: Every pure perfection belongs to the highest nature necessarily and in the highest degree.
Here Scotus argues that the First Nature has every "pure perfection," a type of perfection he picks up from Anselm.[5] But before arguing for the theorem, he adds precision to Anselm's description of pure perfection.

4.53(10) *Anselm on pure perfection*. Anselm had said that a pure perfection is that which, in anything whatsoever, is better than what is not it. Scotus takes issue with this description, for two reasons. The first concerns the ambiguity of the negation (i.e., what is *not* it). Strictly speaking, the negation of wise is not-wise, and it is impossible to tell whether being wise is better than being not-wise, since not-wise includes *everything* that is not wise, such as love and justice but also caninity and furriness. The second concerns the compatibility of a proposed pure perfection with the subject that is, by Anselm's description, supposed to be better by having that perfection. Being wise might be better than any property of a dog, but a dog cannot be wise, so being wise cannot be good in a dog, and hence it cannot be better for a dog to be wise than not-wise.

Correcting Anselm. These objections to Anselm's description of pure perfection lead Scotus to add some precision. He settles on this: a pure perfection is a perfection that is better than anything incompossible with it. Thus, being wise (let's suppose) is incompossible with being a dog or being furry, but compossible with being loving or just. Therefore, so far as we can tell from these examples alone, being wise, loving, and just are still candidate pure perfections (because they are compossible), but caninity and furriness are no longer candidate pure perfections (because they are not compossible with being wise and being wise is better than being canine and furry).

Denominative predication. Aristotle says that denominative (or paronymous) predication occurs "when things get their name from something, with a difference of ending," as the grammarian gets his name from grammar and the brave from bravery—here grammarian and brave are the denominative terms.[6] Thus, "Socrates is a grammarian" predicates grammar of Socrates

5. Anselm, *Monologion* 15 (Williams, 21–22).

6. Aristotle, *Categories* 1.1a.13–15 (Barnes, 1:3); Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 9.q.3–4.n.19 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 129).

denominatively, and "Socrates is a wise (thing)" predicates wisdom of Socrates denominatively.

With this in mind, we can make a little sense of what Scotus means when he says that the *incompossibility* in his revised definition of pure perfection "ought to be understood according to denominative predication." Anselm originally said that a pure perfection is that which is better than what is not it, *in anything whatsoever*. This led to the puzzle about wisdom in a dog: wisdom seems to be better than any property of a dog but also incompossible with some essential canine properties. So Scotus's new definition scraps the "in anything whatsoever" and simply has "better than anything incompossible with it," with the instruction to take the incompossibility to hold between denominatives (i.e., the things denominated by denominative terms). Thus, the fact that a dog can't be made better by wisdom shouldn't make us wonder whether wisdom is a pure perfection. Instead, on Scotus's procedure, we simply compare *wise thing* and *canine thing* and ask which is better to be.

Importantly, however, Scotus expresses some skepticism at 4.58(22) about our ability to intuit which perfections are pure perfections—even using wisdom (or, taken denominatively, *wise thing*) there as an example of a perfection we cannot know (independently of other argumentation) is a pure perfection.

4.54(11) *Proof.* With respect to anything incompossible with it, a pure perfection is prior in the essential order of eminence (e.g., a wise thing is more eminent than a dog). The First Nature is first in the order eminence (by Theorems 3.14 and 3.15). Therefore no pure perfection is incompossible with it (by the definition of pure perfection). Therefore the First Nature has all pure perfections.

Scotus then argues that the First Nature has all pure perfections necessarily (and so essentially), rather than contingently (and so accidentally). The First Nature is first in the order of eminence. If being necessary were incompatible with pure perfections, then the First Nature could have no pure perfections. But if it could have no pure perfections it would be excelled (by the definition of pure perfection). The First Nature cannot be excelled (by Theorem 3.15). Therefore it can have pure perfections. It does have pure perfections (by the proof of Theorem 4.3). Therefore it has them most perfectly (by Theorem 4.2). It is better to have a pure perfection necessarily than to have it contingently. Therefore the First Nature has all pure perfections necessarily. Therefore it has them essentially. Therefore it has them by identity (by Theorem 4.1).

Scotus here assumes that what the First Nature has necessarily, it has essentially. In general it does not follow that if a thing has something necessarily it has it essentially. But in the case of the First Nature it does: the First

Nature exists necessarily (by Theorems 3.5 and 3.15), and the First Nature is simple (by Theorem 4.1). So whatever belongs to that essence belongs to it necessarily.

There is a possible quibble here. Theorem 4.2, strictly speaking, was about the degree of the First Nature's intrinsic perfections (namely, the highest degree). But here the argument requires that the First Nature's *way of having* its intrinsic perfections is in the highest degree. On the surface it is conceivable that something could have a perfection in the highest degree, but not have in the highest degree a perfection (where "in the highest degree" modifies "perfection" in the former but "have" in the latter). For example, suppose something is maximally wise but not identical with wisdom: then it has the highest degree of wisdom but doesn't have in the highest degree that perfection. But the nature that is first in eminence surely not only has its intrinsic perfections in the highest degree, but has in the highest degree its pure perfections. So I don't think the quibble should be a matter of concern.

Scotus does not offer support for the premise that it is better to have a pure perfection necessarily than to have it contingently. But the premise is plausible: if it's a *pure perfection*, how could it be better to be able to lose it than to be unable to lose it?

4.55(12)-66(45) Intellect and Will

4.55(12) Theorem 4.4: The first efficient cause understands and wills. This first of five theorems about the intellect and will of the First Nature states that the first efficient cause understands and wills. Since the First Nature is first in the order of efficiency (and therefore the first efficient cause of anything that exists besides itself), to show that the first efficient cause thinks and wills is sufficient to show that the First Nature thinks and wills.

4.55(13) *First proof.* The first efficient cause is a *per se* agent (see the proofs of Theorem 2.4). Every *per se* agent acts for the sake of an end (by Theorem 2.4). A natural agent (that is, an agent lacking intellect and will) acts for the sake of an end only if it is essentially dependent in the order of efficiency on an agent with intellect and will loving that end. The first efficient cause is not essentially dependent on anything. Therefore it has intellect and will.

See the two corollaries to Theorem 2.5 (2.12(16)-(18)) for Scotus's reasons for thinking that a natural agent acts for the sake of an end only if it is essentially dependent in the order of efficiency on an agent with intellect and will (and see the commentary on the same).

Skepticism about final causes? In this paragraph, Scotus seems to entertain the possibility that a natural (non-intelligent) agent might be an efficient cause

and yet not act for the sake of an end: such an agent "would act just as it does even if it were independently acting for the sake of no end at all." On the surface, this admission appears to express some skepticism about Theorem 2.4 itself, which says that what is not ordered to an end is not an effect—or, everything that has an efficient cause has a final cause too.

Yet I do not think a skeptical interpretation of this puzzling passage is warranted. So what could Scotus mean? Recall that Scotus distinguishes two senses of "end": end as final cause, and end as that species-relative perfecting state that an agent seeks by nature (2.12(16)-(17)). My suggestion is that when Scotus says here that a natural agent would act just as it does even if were acting for no end, he means "end" in the strict sense. Then we can read his comment in this way: a natural agent, whether or not it is finally caused, acts for the sake of whatever ends are built into it by its nature. Reading it this way, then, whatever puzzle remains has to do with Scotus's reasons for thinking that ends can only be causes insofar as they are loved by intelligent agents—for that, see 2.12(16)-(18).

4.55(14) *Second Proof.* (This proof begins in 4.55(13) and then spills over to 4.55(14).) The first efficient cause is a *per se* agent (see the proofs of Theorem 2.4). Every *per se* agent acts for the sake of an end (by Theorem 2.4). The end moves the first efficient cause to act, and the first efficient cause moves its effect to its end, either (i) as loved by an act of will, or (ii) naturally. But not (ii). Therefore (i). Whatever is capable of loving an end, and moving an effect to its end by an act of will, has both intellect and will. Therefore the first efficient cause has intellect and will.

To see why Scotus denies (ii), consider that everything acts for the sake of its final end—even the First Nature. But the First Nature is dependent on nothing else for its perfection (by Theorem 3.15), and lacks nothing that would increase its perfection (Theorems 4.2 and 4.4). So if this First Nature efficiently causes something besides itself, it *does not* do so in a natural (and therefore necessary) pursuit of its final end—it already has whatever it would seek. So here Scotus says that if the end for the sake of which the first efficient cause acts, moves it to act *naturally*, it would not in fact efficiently cause anything—it would simply go on being and enjoying itself. But then it wouldn't in fact be the first efficient cause (it would simply be the First Nature). So assuming this First Nature is the first efficient cause, it efficiently causes something, and therefore does so by an act of will, freely, non-necessarily. The first efficient cause wills its final end in all it efficiently causes, but there is nothing about the First Nature that *determines* it to efficiently cause anything.

4.56(15) *Third proof.* The proof has two "consequences": from the first to the second premise and the second premise to the conclusion. *First consequence*.

Something causes contingently; therefore the first cause causes contingently. *Second consequence*. The first cause causes contingently; therefore it causes by willing. Scotus offers short proofs for both consequences.

Scotus thought that it is obvious that something is contingent. Echoing Avicenna, he tells us that those who deny contingency should be "beaten until they confess that it is possible for them not to be tormented."[7] He thought it almost as evident that the will is the power of contingency. There are two basic types of powers, he says: a natural power, which produces its effect necessarily, and a rational power, which produces its effect contingently. On his understanding, a rational power *just is* a will.[8]

Proof of the first consequence. The first efficient cause causes the causing of every secondary efficient cause. So if it causes necessarily, they all do. But they don't all cause necessarily. So it causes contingently. *Proof of the second consequence*. Will is the explanatory principle of contingency.

4.56(16) *First objection.* If will is the explanatory principle of contingency, then even if the first efficient cause causes necessarily, any created will causes contingently, just insofar as it is will. So we need only posit created wills to account for contingency. *Second objection.* According to Aristotle, we could account for contingency by holding that while God moves necessarily, contingency arises from the plurality of effects far down the causal chain. *Third objection.* Contingency can be explained as a natural motion impeding the natural motion of something else.

4.56(17)–(19) *Reply to the first objection*. Scotus grants that the will explains contingency, but here denies that there could be wills at all if the first efficient cause causes necessarily. The pith of the reply is in the last sentence: it is impossible for the will to cause *necessarily* what it causes by *willing*. So where the objector asserts that there could be other wills and so contingency, even if the first cause is not a will, Scotus counters that if the first cause is not a will there could be no contingency and so no other wills. This reply leaves Scotus and his objector at a stalemate. *Reply to the second objection*. Scotus denies that a plurality of diverse effects, all coming ultimately from necessary causes, could give rise to contingency. *Reply to the third objection.* An impediment to a natural motion cannot explain contingency because the impediment itself is caused by necessary causes.

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7. Duns Scotus, *Reportatio 1-A* d.39–40.q.1–3.n.30 (Wolter and Bychkov, 2:473; Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 1.8.11–13 (Marmura, 42–43). Avicenna in turn may be echoing Aristotle, *Topics* 1.11.105a3–7 (Barnes, 1:175).

8. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 9.q.15.n.22–25 (Wolter, 371–73).

4.57(20) *Fourth Proof.* A natural cause (i.e., a cause lacking intellect and will), causes to the full extent of its causal power—impediments, not the cause itself, always explain why some particular cause fails to produce effects to the full extent of its power. But the first cause would have no impediments. So we would expect a first cause lacking intellect and will to make things as perfect as they can be. But the universe evidently is not as perfect as it can be. Therefore its *lack of perfection* cries out for *personal* explanation: a cause with intellect and will could make a choice to make the universe less perfect than it could be. Note the limited scope: this is not a proof of God's goodness, just his intellect and will.

Matter does not obey. The point of this quick rejoinder is to offer an alternative explanation of why there is badness in the world. Scotus's reply is that a sufficiently powerful agent could keep matter in line, and therefore a first cause without intellect and will—acting to the utmost of its power—would create a world in which matter is never unruly. Elsewhere, Scotus says that matter is in "obediential potency" to a sufficiently powerful agent.[9]

4.57(21) *Fifth proof.* The First Nature is the most eminent nature (Theorem 3.15). Intelligent things are better than all other non-intelligent things. If the First Nature were non-intelligent, then any intelligent thing would be better than it in some respect. But what is first in eminence cannot be surpassed in eminence. Therefore the First Nature is an intelligent thing.

The argument is odd, since at first glance it treats "intelligence" as a pure perfection and attributes it to the First Nature on that basis. But Scotus criticizes this method of arguing for attributes of the First Nature immediately below, in his objections to the sixth proof. Now, strictly speaking, the fifth proof as glossed here does not make use of the concept of pure perfection. Nevertheless, it seems to me to succumb to the same sort of criticism Scotus offers against the sixth proof. So I'll return to the fifth proof after considering Scotus's reasons for rejecting the sixth.

4.58(22) *Sixth proof.* Here Scotus formulates but rejects a sixth proof. Understanding, willing, wisdom, and love are pure perfections. The First Nature has all pure perfections (by Theorem 4.3). Therefore it has understanding, willing, wisdom, and love.

But Scotus doesn't see how we can know that understanding, willing, wisdom, and love are indeed pure perfections, independent of other reasons for thinking that these are perfections of the First Nature. So he rejects

9. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 9.q.12.n.11 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 2:552).

the sixth proof. His reasoning goes something like this. We know that the First Nature is the first in eminence (Theorem 3.15) and therefore contains every pure perfection (Theorem 4.3). The most eminent nature contains no imperfection, cannot be surpassed in perfection in any way, and all of its perfections are compatible with each other. Therefore every perfection of the First Nature is a pure perfection. But we don't know which perfections are pure perfections and which are not, except those perfections we have independently established belong to the First Nature—by, for example, the first five proofs of Theorem 4.4, which Scotus does accept. So we can't just assume that some perfection is a pure perfection and then attach it to the First Nature *via* Theorem 4.3.

Wisdom and the first angel. Consider Scotus's first pair of examples from this section: wisdom and the nature of the first angel. Comparing a wise thing (*qua* wise) to the first angel (*qua* first angel), we cannot know which is better. But we can know that the First Nature is incompossible with the nature of the first angel (since the latter is by nature causable and finite). So we know the nature of the first angel is not a pure perfection—if it were, then the First Nature would lack a pure perfection, which is impossible by Theorem 4.3. Since no perfection that is not a pure perfection can be better than a pure perfection, it follows that we cannot tell whether or not wisdom is a pure perfection (merely by comparing wisdom and the first angel).

Scotus moves on to consider several attempts to show that we can know, by comparing it with other perfections, that wisdom is a pure perfection. These attempts try to show that if some perfection such as wisdom would make anything better if it had it, then it is a pure perfection. But Scotus is unmoved, for reasons already given in his correction of Anselm's definition of pure perfection considered in 4.53(10). Wisdom cannot make a dog better, because wisdom is incompatible with canine nature. Granted, if a dog could be wise, it would be better if it were wise. But then again, if a dog could be the first angel it would likewise be better. For that matter, if the angel could be a dog (remaining what it is), it would be better, since being a dog is a perfection. The point seems to be that we cannot identify what the pure perfections are simply by thinking about what would (even if *per impossibile*) make a thing better. Instead, to know whether some perfection, P, is a pure perfection (and so belongs to the First Nature), we need to know both (i) that to have P is better than to have any other perfection incompatible with P, *and* (ii) P is compatible with the First Nature. And (ii) is the hard part.

The fifth proof reconsidered. The fifth proof does not invoke pure perfections, but it is an argument from eminence, or a "perfect being" argument, since it attributes intelligence to the First Nature on the grounds that it is better to

be intelligent than otherwise (and the First Nature is most eminent). In an argument from eminence of the sort given in the fifth proof, we judge that something that has some perfection, P (e.g., intelligence) is, precisely because it has P, better than everything that lacks P. For example, an intelligent thing, precisely because it is intelligent, is better than everything that is not intelligent. Then, since the First Nature is most eminent, we infer that it is intelligent. The problem, as the objection to the sixth proof suggests, is that unless we already know that the First Nature is intelligent, we don't know that each intelligent thing is better than every non-intelligent thing. For suppose the First Nature is non-intelligent. Then, since it is the most eminent nature, at least one non-intelligent thing is better than every intelligent thing.

In light of the vulnerability of the fifth proof to the criticism of the sixth, readers may wish to consider whether Scotus might have *intended* the criticism of the sixth proof to apply to the fifth proof as well, notwithstanding that the most natural way to read the text is that Scotus accepts the fifth proof but not the sixth.

4.59(23) Theorem 4.5: The first cause causes contingently whatever it causes.

4.59(24) *First proof.* Theorem 4.4 established that the First Nature causes by willing rather than by the necessity of its nature. The third proof of Theorem 4.4 asserted a link between willing and contingency: there is contingency if and only if there is willing. So just as we can infer contingency from the fact that something comes about by willing, so too we can infer willing from the fact that something comes about contingently. This first proof of Theorem 4.5 may be seen as an extension of this line of reasoning: however far down a causal chain you move away from that first, contingent causing, every cause in the chain causes contingently whatever it causes. Remember, in essentially ordered causal series, all causes in the series cause simultaneously (see 3.28(11)); therefore the contingency of the first cause in such a series imparts contingency to the whole series.

4.59(25) *Second proof.* God loves himself necessarily as his final end. But he succeeds in loving himself whether or not he causes anything. Therefore he need not cause anything. So if he does cause anything he does so contingently.

4.59(26) *Objections to the second proof. First objection.* The first objection reasons that since the First Nature's existence is necessary (by Theorem 3.5) and since that nature is simple (by Theorem 4.1), its willing is the same as its necessary existence and so is itself necessary, not contingent.

Second objection. The second objection concedes for the sake of argument that the First Nature's willing is contingent, but then infers that since the First Nature's willing determines what every created will wills, no created will wills what it wills contingently. *Third objection.* The third objection draws on the conclusions of the first two objections. If, as the first objection argues, the First Nature's willing is necessary, and if, as the second objection argues, no created will wills contingently, then how does it come about that people sin? It seems that a most perfect first cause would not determine people to will sinfully. *Fourth objection.* The fourth objection is what we might call the problem of *too much* contingency.

Scotus concedes these are difficult objections. Rather than answer them, he refers us to his discussion of God's knowledge of future contingents[10]—possibly the *Reportatio* version (Scotus's latest *Sentences* commentary), for the following reasons. What we might call the "standard view" of Scotus's solution to the problem of God's knowledge of future contingents is this: God knows future contingents by willing the truth value of propositions that, by the meaning of their terms alone, are neither true nor false. So God knows that the Antichrist will come because he wills the proposition "The Antichrist will come," to be true. But God's willing is contingent. So it is contingent that the Antichrist will come. But in the *Reportatio* Scotus came to see that his standard view could not account for God's knowledge of sinful actions—since God cannot will evil.[11] Since the third objection to Theorem 4.5 raises the problem of God's causation of sinful actions, there is reason to think he was aware of the tension in his standard view when he wrote this section of the *Treatise*, which at least raises the possibility that the *Treatise* was composed after the *Reportatio examinata*.

4.60(27) Theorem 4.6: The First Nature is the same as its love for itself.

4.60(28) *First proof.* The gist here is that the First Nature's love for itself is not the sort of thing that can be caused; it is the ultimate reason why anything else is caused. But what is uncausable and exists, exists necessarily (by Theorem 3.5), and there can only be one necessarily existing thing (see the first proof of Theorem 3.15 and the second proof of Theorem 4.1). Therefore the First Nature and its self-love are identical.

10. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* 1.d.39 (Vatican 17:481–510); *Ordinatio* 1.d.38–39 (Vatican 6:303–8 and 401–44); *Reportatio 1-A* d.38–40 (Wolter and Bychkov, 2:448–491).

11. Duns Scotus, *Reportatio 1-A* d.46.q.1–2.n.21 (Wolter and Bychkov, 2:562–63); Gloria Frost, "John Duns Scotus on God's Knowledge of Sins: A Test-Case for God's Knowledge of Contingents," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48, no.1 (2010): 15–34.

4.60(29) *Second proof*. As Scotus says, this proof is similar to the first.

4.61(29)–(30) *Third and fourth proofs*. These proofs invoke aspects of Aristotle's discussion of the First Mover's intellectual activity in *Metaphysics* 12. Aristotle held that the First Mover not only has itself as the *object* of its intellectual activity (since it is the best thing to think about) but is *identical* with its intellectual activity—if it were not, it would be dependent on something besides itself for its continual achievement of the best state to be in, and so would not after all be the best a substance can be.[12] Likewise, if it were not identical with its intellectual activity but in a "potency of contradiction" to it (that is, it could either be or not be engaged in that activity) then it would take some work to continually achieve the best state—and this work would detract from it in some way.[13] Note that Scotus calls the fourth proof a merely probable argument, not a demonstration.

The third and fourth proofs are about the First Nature's intellectual activity, not its love for itself; therefore they function better as proofs for the sameness of the First Nature and its *self-understanding*, than the sameness of the First Nature and its *self-love*. The corollaries of the theorem (4.62(32)) show that Scotus means to prove both here.

4.61(31) *Fifth proof (rejected)*. The First Nature's power (to love) and the object of that power (itself) are the same; hence the act of that power (loving) is the same as the First Nature. Scotus rejects the proof because it doesn't generalize to other wills, both angelic and human.

4.62(32) *Some corollaries. First corollary*. The first and second proofs argued for the identity of the First Nature and its love for itself. Its love for itself is an act of the will. Therefore the will itself—that by which it wills—is also identified with the First Nature. *Second corollary*. Identity holds between the First Nature and its act of understanding itself, since understanding is a precondition for loving and so, as the First Nature's self-love is uncausable (and so necessary and so identical with the First Nature), its self-understanding is uncausable (etc.). *Third corollary*. The First Nature is the same as its intellect, for more or less the same reasons that it is the same as its will. *Fourth corollary*. When the First Nature understands itself, it does not understand itself *through* or *by means* of some additional entity such as a concept. If it did so, it would be dependent for its self-understanding on this additional entity. Since it is not dependent in any way, it must be the same as that by which it understands itself.

12. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9.1074b18–21 (Barnes, 2:1698).

13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.9.1074b28–30 (Barnes, 2:1698).

4.63(33) Theorem 4.7: No act of understanding can be an accident of the First Nature.

4.63(34) *First proof*. The First Nature can efficiently cause whatever can be caused, things like oaks and ants and planets and plums. Since God efficiently causes his effects by his willing (by the third proof of Theorem 4.4), and since willing entails knowledge, prior to willing, of what is willed (by the second corollary of Theorem 4.6), God has knowledge of oaks, ants, and so on, prior to causing them. In the first proof Scotus gives us a partial explanation of *how* God knows things like these prior to creating anything. He knows them by knowing himself: God's knowledge of what can be caused is somehow included in his self-knowledge.

4.64(35) *Second proof*. Here Scotus reasons that since, by Theorem 4.6, one of the First Nature's acts of understanding is the same as the First Nature (and so not accidental to it), all of the First Nature's acts of understanding (if there are more than one) are the same as it. Perhaps Scotus's thought is that it is *theoretically simpler* to suppose that an intellect is related to all of its acts in the same way (e.g., by identity, by subject to accident, etc.) than to suppose that it might be related in one way to some and another way to others.

4.64(36) *Third proof*. This proof seems to rely on a general principle that the more noble cannot be in potency to what is less noble. Alternatively, it might be relying merely on a less general premise that one act of understanding simply cannot be the subject of an additional act of understanding.

4.64(37) *Fourth proof*. The key claim here is that the most perfect act of understanding—that act of understanding than which there could be none more perfect—will be the act of understanding of everything that can be understood. Since the First Nature has an act of understanding (by Theorem 4.4) and since whatever perfections it has, it has perfectly (by Theorem 4.2), it follows that it has this perfect act of understanding. Since it is the same as this act of understanding, it follows furthermore that none of its acts of understanding is accidental to it. God has exactly one act of understanding.

The theorem holds for willing as well as understanding. We could construct arguments analogous to the four proofs just given that show that no act of willing can be an accident of the First Nature. It can will whatever can be willed, prior to causing anything to exist (first proof); one of its acts of willing is non-accidental to it (second proof); one act of will cannot be the subject of an additional act of will (third proof); and the most perfect act of will is that act of willing everything that can be willed (fourth proof). Probably we could

construct analogue arguments that Scotus would be happy with—with the exception of the fourth, since willing everything that can be willed does not follow from perfect willing, the way that understanding everything that can be understood does follow from perfect understanding.

4.65(38) *First rejected proof*. The attempted proof says that the intellect of the First Nature is "the same for everything." I take it that this means that its intellect stands in no sort of potency to any intelligible thing: it cannot be affected or modified by the things it understands, as our intellects are (e.g., when they passively receive sensory information). The proof then infers from the identity of the First Nature's intellect with its act of understanding, that its act of understanding likewise is "the same for everything."

Fallacy of accident. Scotus objects by offering a counterexample. The First Nature's will and intellect are the same (by Theorem 4.1). But it does not follow from this that what the First Nature understands it also wills. After all, it understands the proposition "There are humans on Venus" but evidently does not will there to be humans on Venus. So too, from the premises that the First Nature's intellect is the same for everything, and that the First Nature's intellect is the same as its act of understanding, it does not follow that the First Nature's act of understanding is the same for everything. The fallacy in both the proof and the counterexample is the fallacy of accident, which is, roughly, the fallacy of inferring that a property of a property also belongs to the subject of the latter property, or as Aristotle puts it, a fallacy of accident occurs "whenever any attribute is claimed to belong in like manner to a thing and to its accident."[14]

4.65(39) *Second rejected proof*. The proof reasons that since the First Nature understands everything by one act, any additional act would simply duplicate what is already understood—and such duplication is not in fact possible. But the soul of Christ sees all things in God and yet can have additional acts of understanding; so too can the blessed in heaven. Still, one might wonder whether these additional acts in the case of the soul of Christ and the blessed are due to limitations imposed by their finite natures, and therefore whether these can really serve as counterexamples to what otherwise looks like a pretty good argument.

4.65(40) *Third rejected proof.* This rejected proof echoes some of the reasoning of the fourth proof, a proof that Scotus accepts. The fourth proof reasoned that a most perfect act of understanding would encompass everything that can be understood, and since God has understanding in the most perfect

14. Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations* 5.166b29–36 (Barnes, 1:281).

way, it follows that God has this perfect act of understanding. The problem with the rejected proof might be that it does not define or describe "the maximum perfection of understanding" explicitly in a way that yields the conclusion—as Scotus does describe "the most perfect act of understanding" in the fourth proof.

4.66(41) Theorem 4.8: (i) The intellect of the First Nature actually understands—always, necessarily, and distinctly—all intelligible things, and (ii) its understanding of these is naturally prior to their actual existence. Scotus's proofs for this theorem take the theorem piecemeal: two proofs for (i) and two for (ii).

4.66(42) *First proof of (i).* The intellect of the First Nature *can* understand everything intelligible. But it *cannot* have an act of understanding that is not the same as itself (by Theorem 4.7). Therefore by that act it *does* understand everything intelligible—since, given the premises, if it *did not* it *could not*.

Scotus's support for his premise that the intellect of the First Nature can understand everything intelligible is generalizable to any intellect; there is nothing about being the intellect *of the First Nature* that makes it able to understand everything intelligible. Instead, the proper object of *intellect as such* is being as such, and (implicitly) being as such is intelligible, such that there can be no unintelligible beings.

4.66(43) *Second proof of (i).* Here Scotus draws on the venerable image of God as a craftsman. Since anything that exists other than the First Nature, exists because the First Nature caused it to exist, and since the First Nature creates, if it creates, by intellect and will, the First Nature is like a craftsman with respect to anything that can be made. But if it is like a craftsman with respect to *everything* that can be made, then it must understand everything that can be made.

Scotus raises a brief objection to this proof and does not reply to it. The objection is that a craftsman need not have knowledge of every single artifact he can make—a general skill suffices. Scotus considers a similar sort of objection in the second objection to the first proof of infinity in Theorem 4.9; see his reply below.

4.66(44) *First proof of (ii).* By "naturally prior" here, I take Scotus simply to mean "essentially prior"—that is, just the sort of priority at issue in Chapters 1-3 of the *Treatise*. The First Nature's understanding of all intelligible things is the same as the First Nature and so necessarily exists from itself. Whatever necessarily exists from itself is naturally prior to anything that does not.

4.66(45) *Second proof of (ii).* Everything that exists, besides the First Nature, is made to exist by the First Nature willing it to exist. So it must know what it wills to exist prior to the existence of what it wills to exist.

67(46)-87(74) Infinity

Scotus devotes more words to proving the infinity of the First Nature than he does to any other of its attributes. This emphasis on infinity is also on display in the relevant questions of his *Sentences* commentaries, which overlap significantly—but not completely—with the proofs of infinity given here.[15] It is of limited helpfulness to offer detailed comparison of the proofs given here with those given elsewhere, so I will not do so. Two details are worth mentioning, however: in the *Treatise*, but not in the *Sentences* commentaries, Scotus offers a proof of infinity from simplicity. Also, while in each *Sentences* commentary Scotus leads off with the proof of infinity from efficiency, in the *Treatise* this proof is the seventh and last proof he offers (not counting the eighth and ninth proofs, which he rejects).

4.67(46)–(47) Theorem 4.9: You are infinite existence and are incomprehensible by what is finite.

4.68(48)–69(50) *First proof of infinity: first proof from intellect*

4.68(48)–(49) The core of the proof occurs in the first two sentences. The premise is that the intellect that understands everything (namely, the intellect of the First Nature), understands an actual infinity of intelligible things. The conclusion is that only an infinite intellect could understand that many things. The proof is, as Scotus says, an *enthymeme*, that is, a syllogism with a missing or implied premise or, as Peter of Spain puts it, "an incomplete syllogism . . . in which a conclusion is brought in hurriedly."[16] To complete the proof, Scotus offers a proof of the premise—here called the *antecedent*—and then a proof that the conclusion really does follow from the premise—here as elsewhere called the *consequence*.

Proof of the antecedent. Again, the antecedent is the single premise of the proof: the intellect of the First Nature understands an actual infinity of

15. Duns Scotus, *Lectura* 1.d.2.p.1.q.1–2.n.64–86 (Vatican 16:134–42); *Ordinatio* 1.d.2.p.1.q.1–2.n.111–47 (Vatican 2:189–215; *PW*, 62–76); *Reportatio 1-A* d.2.p.1.q.1–3.n.44–80 (Wolter and Bychkov, 128–40).

16. Peter of Spain, *Summaries of Logic* 5.3 (Copenhaver, 199).

intelligible things. A potential infinity of things is actually infinite if all those things are actual simultaneously. Intelligible things are a potential infinity with respect to created intellects. The First Nature understands everything and it understands everything it understands simultaneously (by Theorem 4.8). Therefore it understands an actual infinity of intelligible things.

Proof of the major premise of the proof of the antecedent. The major premise of the above argument is that intelligible things are a potential infinity with respect to created intellect. The proof of the premise is simply that its denial entails that, given enough time, a created intellect could eventually understand everything. Scotus asserts that no created intellect could come to understand everything, from which the premise follows.

Proofs of the consequence. Here Scotus offers two proofs that the conclusion of the original proof (only an infinite intellect could understand an actual infinity of things) really does follow from the premise of the original proof—the intellect of the First Nature understands an actual infinity of intelligible things. The first proof goes something like this: the more things an intellect understands at once, the greater the power of that intellect. The First Nature understands an actual infinity of things at once (by Theorem 4.8). Therefore it is an intellect of infinite power of understanding.

The second proof of the consequence is somewhat similar to the first: it holds that the more things an intellect understands *distinctly* by one and the same act, the more perfect (i.e., complete) is that act. The intellect of the First Nature understands distinctly an actual infinity of things (by Theorem 4.8). Therefore its act is infinitely perfect.

4.69(50) *Objections*. Scotus considers two closely related objections to these proofs. A greater number of things understood does not entail a greater power of understanding, since many things might be understood through one and the same concept, or by one and the same intellectual act.

Replies. The gist of Scotus's replies is that while many things *of the same type* might indeed be understood through one and the same concept, or by one and the same intellectual act, this is irrelevant. After all, according to his doctrine of *haecceity* (literally, *thisness*), each individual thing has some feature in virtue of which it is the very individual it is—some feature not shareable with any other thing.[17] Thus, the one act of understanding by which the First Nature understands every intelligible thing is an act that extends not just to an actual infinity of *things*, but an actual infinity of *types of things*.

17. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 2.d.3.p.1.q.1–6 (Spade, 57–113).

The proof from numbers and shapes. Scotus concludes with a brief argument, drawn from Augustine, according to which there are infinitely many numbers and shapes, and the First Nature understands them all, therefore, etc.

4.70(51)–74(55) *Second proof of infinity: second proof from intellect*

4.70(51) For any cause, C, its causality could be strengthened by the assistance of an additional cause if and only if C is finite. But the causality of the First Nature cannot be strengthened by the assistance of any additional cause. Therefore the First Nature is infinite.

Intuitive cognition. To show that the causality of the First Nature cannot be strengthened by the assistance of any additional cause, Scotus considers the source or ground of the First Nature's knowledge of whatever it knows. Here Scotus introduces a sort of knowledge he calls "vision." But by "vision," he means not the sensory power of sight but a type of cognition he calls *intuitive cognition* and describes as "knowledge precisely of a present object as present and of an existing object as existing," and also as "an intuition of a thing as existing and present."[18]

The feature of intuitive cognition most relevant to this proof is that—in finite intellects—the intuitively cognized object is a *proximate cause* of the knowledge of that object, in whatever intellect intuitively cognizes that object. Thus, the knowledge or understanding of the intuitive cognizer is made more perfect, or is "strengthened," by the causality of the intuitively cognized object.

The First Nature's intuitive cognition is uncaused. But the First Nature does not depend on the causality of any object for its knowledge of that object, since by its self-understanding alone it has perfect understanding of everything that can be known (by Theorems 4.2 and 4.8). Therefore no additional cause strengthens the First Nature's understanding in any way. And therefore its understanding is infinite. Since the First Nature's understanding is the same as the First Nature itself (by the third corollary of Theorem 4.6, and Theorem 4.8), the First Nature itself is infinite.

4.71(52) *First objection*. This objection invokes a familiar theme of Aristotelian science, namely that the highest knowledge of a thing includes knowledge of its cause(s).[19] The objector then reasons that if the First Nature's

18. Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 6.19 (Alluntis and Wolter, 136–37); *Lectura* 2.d.3. p.2.q.2.n.285–90 (Vatican 18:321–23).

19. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.1.981a24–27 (Barnes, 2:1553); *Posterior Analytics* 1.2.71b9–12 (Barnes, 1:115).

knowledge of (e.g.) the stone is not caused by anything, then the First Nature does not know the stone through any causes, and so is less perfect than it might be.

Second objection. This objection argues that the conclusion of the proof is too strong. Suppose that the First Nature by knowing itself knows everything at least as well as it would if its knowledge of other things were caused by those things. But, since each of these things is finite, it may well be that the First Nature can know them all by knowing itself and yet not be infinite.

Third objection. This objection concedes that the First Nature's knowledge of (e.g.) the stone is at least as perfect as it would be if the stone caused that knowledge, but asserts that the existence of the stone would indeed amount to some addition in perfection: instead of just the First Nature by itself, there would be the First Nature plus the stone, and that pair would be overall more perfect than the First Nature by itself. But if the perfection (e.g., of the totality of existing things) could be increased by the addition of the stone, then the First Nature is not infinite after all.

4.72(53) *Reply to the first objection*. The First Nature does indeed have perfect knowledge of, for example, the stone, even though it depends neither on the stone's causes nor on the stone itself for its knowledge of the stone. To see this, grant (as the objector does) that the First Nature really can know the stone without the causal input of the stone itself. The question then is whether, in not knowing the stone *through* the stone's causes, the First Nature's knowledge of the stone is less perfect than it would be if it did know the stone through the stone's causes. And Scotus's answer, of course, is that the First Nature's knowledge would be no more perfect. The reason for this answer is that while the stone's causes explain the stone's existence, they do not explain the stone's causing the "vision" (i.e., intuitive cognition) of itself in a knowing subject—"that vision would exist even if the thing seen were uncaused by such a prior cause," as Scotus says.

Still, the reply might seem like a dodge. When the objector says that a thing's causes can produce knowledge of the thing (e.g., the stone) that is more perfect than the knowledge that the stone alone can produce, surely what is meant is that the intellect that has knowledge *both* of the stone and the stone's causes, has more perfect knowledge of the stone than the intellect that is ignorant of the stone's causes. Understood this way, Scotus's reply—that the stone's causes don't contribute anything to the stone's causing the "vision" of itself—seems irrelevant. At the same time, understood this way, the objection is toothless, since the First Nature would know each of the stone's causes in the same way it knows the stone—through its one act of self-understanding.

4.73(54) *Reply to the second objection.* According to the second objection, if the First Nature's knowledge of things is not caused by those things, then all we can conclude is that the First Nature eminently possesses the perfections of the things it knows—we cannot conclude that it is infinite.

Formal and eminent perfection. Scotus's reply makes use of a distinction between the *formal* and *eminent* possession of a perfection. To have a perfection, P, *formally* is to be really characterized by that perfection. To have P *eminently* is (i) to have a perfection, P*, that is more perfect than P, and (ii) on account of P*, to be able to cause something else to have P *formally*. Scotus claims here that among finite things—and only among finite things—a cause that has P eminently becomes greater or more excellent when it has an effect that has P formally. But the First Nature is not made greater or more excellent in any way by the existence of any of its effects (since, by Theorem 3.14, it is first in eminence). Therefore it is infinite.

Now the reply itself is actually unclear about what exactly is made greater by the addition of an effect that formally possesses a perfection. As far as the text itself goes, it could be either that *the universe* is better by such an addition, or that *the perfection* is made better, or that *the cause* is made better. In the explication of Scotus's reasoning I offered in the preceding paragraph, I went with *the cause* because it is the only option that makes any sense in light of the original proof and the second objection.

First caused nature. At the end of the reply Scotus offers an example that he himself would reject but which is "postulated by some." The "some" is at least Avicenna and the view is that God does not directly create the whole world, but emanates an Intellect (which emanates Soul, and so on, down to the familiar creatures).[20] So Intellect is, as Scotus puts it, the first caused nature. According to Scotus's gloss, this nature eminently possesses every possible perfection that a creature can formally possess. But the first caused nature produces effects that formally have the perfections it has eminently, and the universe as a whole is more perfect thereby.

4.74(55) *Reply to the third objection.* I cannot claim to understand this reply. Here is a hard-won guess about at least part of what is going on. The First Nature can produce in creatures every perfection that creatures can have. For any perfection, P, which the First Nature can produce in creatures, the First Nature can produce it either immediately or through secondary causes (where at least one of its secondary causes possesses P formally). In neither case does created perfection add anything to the First Nature—neither its

20. Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 9.4.5–6, 11 (Marmura, 328, 330).

causality nor its being. The reason seems to be that P could not exist formally in any creature unless the First Nature possesses P formally or eminently. But then the First Nature's causality is infinite, since, for any perfection, P (and there are infinitely many such perfections), no created cause makes the First Nature any more able to produce P than the First Nature is all on its own. For example, suppose there is an infinite ascending series of *per accidens* ordered causes, in which a horse is produced by horses, which itself is produced by horses, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Then, for every horse that exists or has existed, it was produced by horses. Suppose that not even God could make a horse all on his own; suppose, that is, that for any horse God wants to make, God can make it only by causing the causality of another horse. Then it turns out that there is a perfection, being a horse, which can only come about through other creatures that have the same perfection. So at first glance it looks like horses add to God's power to create horses, and so God's causal power is not infinite. But Scotus denies the inference, because even in this circumstance, nothing at all could have the perfection of being horse unless God were causing the universe (including its horses) to exist, at every moment of its existence, as its essentially or *per se* ordered first cause. Thus, God would still be the ultimate source of the perfection of being a horse.

4.75(56)-76(59) *Third proof of infinity: third proof from intellect*

Theorems 4.6 and 4.7 yield that the First Nature's act of understanding is a substance. This proof tries to show that if an act of understanding is a substance then it is infinite.

To make some headway into this proof, start with the idea that all acts of understanding other than the First Nature's belong to a certain species of *accident*. An accident, in Scotus's Aristotelian vocabulary, is a non-essential property of a substance. In this context, the relevant substance is a person (e.g., a human being or an angel) and the relevant species of accident is an act of understanding, a species of accident in the genus of quality (as opposed to quantity, relation, etc.). A species includes both a *genus* and a *specific difference*. So, let us say that the species *intellectual act in the category of quality* has *quality* for its genus, and *intellectual act* for its difference. In Scotus's terminology, the specific difference *contracts*, or limits, the genus. If we consider the genus on its own—quality—it is indifferent or open to any species of quality. So in a species it is the specific difference that does the job of contracting or limiting the genus to the particular species that the species is.[21]

21. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.8.p.1.q.3.n.100–109 (Vatican 4:199–203); *Lectura* 1.8.p.1.q.3.n.99–105 (Vatican 17:33–36); *Questions on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle* 7.q.19.n.51–53 (Etzkorn and Wolter, 2:322–23).

In the proof Scotus is asking us to consider the species, *intellectual act in the category of quality*, and isolate that difference, *intellectual act*. What would it take for that difference to belong to substance rather than to quality? Scotus answers that what it would take is for the substance to be infinite.

To see how he gets there, consider his claim in the first sentence of the second paragraph of the proof: "things that agree in the formal nature from which their specific difference is received, agree also in genus, if each formal perfection is finite." The "formal perfections" here are the genus and the specific difference. Where each of these is finite, he says, then wherever there is some particular specific difference, intellectual act, that specific difference contracts one and the same genus—in this case, quality. On this principle, there couldn't be an intellectual act in the category of substance, *where substance is finite*. Where genus and specific difference are both finite, they are bound to each other. Thus, if an act of understanding is finite, then it is an accident; but the First Nature's act of understanding is not an accident (by Theorem 4.7); therefore it is infinite.

This principle might seem *ad hoc*—Scotus doesn't offer any reason for accepting that a finite specific difference can only contract one and the same genus. And strictly speaking the proof only works if this principle holds water. But there is a deeper implicit principle at work here, which does seem to be well motivated and which at least helps us see what Scotus is driving at: *genus is always finite, and therefore the specific difference of a genus must also always be finite*. To see this, consider that to be a genus is to be that which can be contracted by specific difference. Limitation and so finitude are built into what genus is. A specific difference of a genus by definition contracts a genus into a species, and so is bound to be limited to whatever range of powers are built into the genus. Thus, *intellectual act*, just insofar as it is the specific difference of the species *creaturely act of understanding*, is itself limited by the nature of its genus.

But if we can understand *intellectual act* not as a specific difference but *in itself*, according to its *formal nature* or *absolute nature*, then we can begin to see how that very nature, or *formality*, is not *intrinsically limited* by any genus. And this is exactly what Scotus wants to exploit. If we can detach *intellectual act* from its role as the specific difference of a genus, then we can consider it on its own. And what we find, or at least what we have no reason to reject, is that there is nothing about *intellectual act* that expresses any limitations at all. But where an intellectual act is a substance (as is the case with the First Nature according to Theorems 4.4, 4.6, and 4.7), the intellectual act is not a difference of any genus and so is unlimited, that is, infinite.

77(60)-77(62) *Fourth proof of infinity: from simplicity*

4.77(60)-(61) Scotus says this fourth proof is similar to the third, and so it is. The First Nature belongs to no genus (by Theorem 4.1) and so whatever

formal features it possesses—such as intellectual act, as discussed in the previous proof—it possesses not as specific differences contracting a genus, but in some other way. By simplicity (Theorem 4.1, again) the only way that the First Nature could possess these formal natures is by identity: one formal nature in the First Nature is not *formally the same* as another formal nature in the First Nature, but it is *really the same* as it. And where a formal nature is not limited as a genus or a difference, it is infinite.

4.77(62) This paragraph briefly sums up the four proofs of infinity Scotus has already offered: three drawn from the First Nature's intellect, and one from simplicity. The next three are taken from the three types of essential orders central to the *Treatise*: eminence, finality, and efficiency.

4.78(63)-79(65) *Fifth proof of infinity: from eminence*

4.78(63) Being first in eminence entails that there is no nature such that it is or can be more eminent than the most eminent nature. But for any finite nature, it can be surpassed in eminence. Therefore the most eminent nature is infinite.

Two arguments for the minor premise. Scotus offers support for this refreshingly tidy proof by giving two arguments for the minor premise—that is, that any finite nature can be surpassed in eminence. According to the first argument, the infinite is not *repugnant to* being, that is, it is compatible with being, that is, infinite being is possible. But the infinite is greater than any finite thing. Any finite being therefore can be surpassed in eminence, and so fails to be first in eminence. According to the second argument, anything that *can be* infinite is as perfect as it can be only if it *is* infinite. Infinity is not repugnant to being, and there is a most eminent being. Therefore, the most eminent being is infinite.

4.78(64) *Defending the minor premise of the arguments for the minor premise.* Scotus then suggests that the minor premise of this pair of arguments—that "the infinite is not repugnant to being"—stands in need of no proof. He then explains why the premise does not need to be proved: where repugnance cannot be found, non-repugnance should be assumed. We can detect nothing in *being as such* that entails that every being is finite. Therefore we should assume that being and infinite are non-repugnant, or compossible. And if so, the minor premise holds.

Scotus then offers three additional defenses of the premise that the infinite is not repugnant to being, which together elaborate the core reason for accepting the premise: we have no good reason to think that there cannot be infinite being; therefore we should think there can be.

4.79(65) *Enhancing Anselm*. Anselm described God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought" and then developed an argument to show that such a thing exists not only "*in the understanding*" but *actually* exists.[22] Anselm's argument is frequently interpreted as relying on some version of the claim that *it is greater to exist in reality than in the mind alone*. On some interpretations of Anselm, *existence in reality* is a property that makes a thing that has it greater than it would be if it lacked that property, and this in turn is supposed to function as a premise in an argument for God's existence.

But Scotus offers a rather different Anselmian argument. First, he adds a little precision to Anselm's formula, to suit his purposes. God is something *thought without contradiction* than which nothing greater can be thought *without contradiction*. The point of these additions is to assert the *possibility* that God exists. As the proof of infinity from eminence instructs, where we find no repugnance or contradiction, we should assume possibility.

Second, rather than focusing on existence in the mind and existence in reality, Scotus focuses on *esse essentiae* (the being of essence) and *esse existentiae* (actual existence). Here, Scotus's claim that God has *esse essentiae* just means that there is an essence—for example, the divine essence—which is coherent and therefore lacks contradictions. When you think about the essence of God you can't find repugnance or contradiction in it; Scotus wants you to infer from this that it is possible that such an essence actually exists.

So, assuming that it is possible that God exists, we can go on to ask whether God actually exists. Now, by Theorem 3.3, it belongs to the nature of God (insofar as he is first in the order of efficiency) to be unable to be caused. Thus (as the proof of Theorem 3.4 argues), if God does not exist, then it is not possible that God exist. But it is possible that God exists. Therefore God actually exists.

Because God actually exists and is something thought without contradiction than which nothing greater can be thought without contradiction, it follows that God is greater than anything that exists *only in the mind*—that is, something that has *esse essentiae* and whose nature does not entail that it exists. But this assertion that God is greater than anything existing in the mind alone does not, for Scotus, function as a premise of his Anselmian argument.

A second enhancement. Scotus offers a second way of enhancing Anselm's argument, a way that relies on his doctrine of "vision" or intuitive cognition. The aspect of intuitive cognition most relevant here is that there can only be an intuitive cognition of something that actually exists. By contrast, the other kind of cognition, abstractive cognition, is such that an intellect could have

22. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2 (Williams, 81–82).

abstractive cognition of something that does not exist—as you might have if you learned enough about dodo birds, which do not exist anymore. Scotus's point here is that if something can be both intuitively and abstractively cognized, then it is *more thinkable* than something that can only be abstractively cognized. Scotus seems to think that if a thing is something than which nothing greater can be thought, then it is *more thinkable* than anything else that can be thought. I'm not sure this follows. But suppose it does. Then, if something is more thinkable if it can be both intuitively and abstractively cognized, and if a thing's being able to be intuitively cognized implies that that thing actually exists, then something than which nothing greater can be thought actually exists.

4.80(66) *Sixth proof of infinity: from finality*

The First Nature is the first in finality (Theorem 3.15) and so is the ultimate end of everything. So it is the ultimate end of our willing. This ultimate end is either a finite or an infinite good. But no finite good can fully satisfy our willing. But it is contradictory that the ultimate end should be unable fully to satisfy our willing. So the ultimate end is an infinite good. So the First Nature is infinite.

4.81(67)-85(72) *Seventh proof of infinity: from efficiency*

This argument, adapted from Aristotle, reasons that only a nature with infinite power is capable of efficiently causing an infinite number of effects simultaneously. The First Nature is capable of this. Therefore it is infinite in power.

4.81(67) *Infinite motion*. The relevant texts from Aristotle assert that the first mover produces its effects over an infinite duration, and infer from this that the first mover is infinite in power. To move "with infinite motion" in this context does not mean or imply that the first mover itself is in motion, or is moved by something else. Instead, it moves only in the sense that it moves other things. Scotus "enhances" the inference in two ways, and then qualifies these enhancements, before producing his own version of the argument in 4.84(70).

First enhancement. The argument does not need to suppose that the First Nature *does in fact* move with an infinite motion; it need only suppose that it *can* move in this way.

Second enhancement. If motion is infinite then there is an infinite number of possible effects. Therefore the First Nature has power to produce an infinite number of effects and therefore is an infinite power.

4.82(68) *Objection to the first enhancement*. The objection says that the degree of power required for producing one effect over a short duration is the same degree of power required for producing an infinite number of effects over an infinite duration. Therefore, from the fact that the first mover can produce an infinite number of effects over an infinite duration, it does not follow that it has infinite power.

Objection to the second enhancement. Similarly, this objection grants that a first mover might be able to produce an infinite number of individuals, but asserts (following Aristotle) that there is merely a finite number of species. And the ability to produce individuals of a merely finite number of species does not entail infinite power.

4.83(69) *First objection to the objections*. In 4.68(48)-69(50), Scotus argued that since the First Nature, by understanding itself, understands an infinite number of intelligible things, the intellect of the First Nature is infinite. Here in the objection, the rhetorical question implicitly asserts *a fortiori* that the nature with the ability to cause the existence of an infinite number of things has infinite power.

Second objection to the objections. Similarly, in 4.70(51)-74(55), Scotus argued that the First Nature's intuitive cognition (or "vision") of any intelligible thing does not depend in any way on anything outside the First Nature. He inferred from this that the First Nature is infinite in intelligibility and infinite in being. *A fortiori*, then, the nature that can cause not merely the *being seen* but the *existence* of an infinite number of things is infinite in power.

The nature proximate to it. This enigmatic qualification at the end of the objection is another reference to Avicenna's "first caused nature." See commentary on 4.74(54).

4.84(70) *Reply to the first objection to the objections*. In the argument offered in 4.68(48)-69(50), a key premise is that the intellect of the First Nature understands an infinity of intelligibles *simultaneously*, not successively. So here: on the assumption that the First Nature can produce an infinite number of things simultaneously, not merely successively, it follows that the First Nature has infinite power.

Objection to the reply. The problem, however, is that an infinite number of things cannot exist simultaneously—the "nature of the effect does not permit it," as the objection says. The objection makes sense if we recognize that "infinite number of things" implies "every intelligible thing whatsoever." Then it is easy to see that an infinite number cannot be produced simultaneously: after all, it is intelligible that this ball is white all over at such and such a time

and place, and it is equally intelligible that the same ball is black all over at the same time and place. But the ball cannot be white all over and black all over at that time and place. So the existence of the white ball excludes the existence of the black ball, and therefore at least one intelligible thing cannot be produced simultaneously with all others.

But this impossibility, or "defect," on the part of the effects (namely, that they cannot all exist simultaneously), does not entail that the First Nature does not have sufficient power to bring them about simultaneously, were they able to exist simultaneously.

Reply to the objection. But showing that the impossibility of producing an infinite number of things simultaneously is due to the nature of the effects and not due to the nature of any causal power, is not enough to show that the First Nature's power is infinite. For suppose that it has power sufficient to produce an infinite number of things simultaneously, but only by producing at least some things together with a secondary cause. In this case the secondary cause would add to the First Nature's power, and therefore (according to 4.70(51)) the First Nature's power would not be infinite.

Reply to the reply. In reply the imaginary interlocutor distinguishes between two ways of possessing a *causality* (or causal power): eminently and formally. This refers back to 4.73(54), where Scotus distinguishes between possessing a *perfection* eminently and formally. Recall that to have a perfection, P, *formally* is to be really characterized by that perfection. To have P *eminently* is (i) to have a perfection, P*, that is more perfect than P, and (ii) on account of P*, to be able to cause something else to have P *formally*.

Having a *causality*, or *causal power*, is one kind of perfection. We can distinguish as many different types of causalities as there are possible effects. So causalities are distinguished from each other based on their objects. Thus, there is the causality of wisdom (i.e., the causal power to make something wise) and the causality of caninity (i.e., the causal power to make a dog), and so on.

To possess a causality, P, *formally*, then, is to be able to produce the object of that causality—for example, to be able to make dogs or make things wise. To possess a causality, P, eminently, however, is (i) to have a causality, P*, that is more perfect than P, and (ii) on account of P*, to be able to cause something else to have P *formally*.

The claim here in this objection to the reply is that it has been well proved that the First Nature has every causality (at least) eminently. Since there is an infinite number of causalities, it follows that the First Nature is infinite in power.

Scotus's own solution. Scotus endorses this last reply and offers his own final "enhancement" of Aristotle's original argument. If the First Nature has

formally every causality in such a way that it could produce every effectible thing at once (if it were possible for every effectible thing to exist at once), then it is infinite in power. The First Nature has *eminently* every causality in just this way. If the First Nature is not infinite in power, then it is less perfect than it would be if it had every causality formally. But to have a causality eminently is more perfect than it is to have it merely formally. Therefore, *a fortiori*, because it has every causality eminently in such a way that it could produce every effectible thing at once, the First Nature is infinite in power.

4.85(71) *Infinite power and omnipotence properly speaking*. Here Scotus clarifies that by proving infinite power he has not thereby proved omnipotence *properly speaking*. To have omnipotence in this strict sense is to be able to be the *total cause* of every effectible thing—that is, to be able to produce everything that can be produced without any secondary causes.[23] Nothing that Scotus has said here in this seventh proof of infinity yields that much stronger conclusion. To see this, suppose that the First Nature has some causality merely eminently, and not formally. Call the object of this causality, A. Then, in order to produce A, the First Nature must produce something else that formally has the causality to produce A. Then the First Nature is not the total cause of A. Instead, Scotus is here content to reason that, since (i) the First Nature can cause anything producible (either by its power alone or together with a secondary cause), and (ii) there are infinitely many producible things, then *assuming* that (iii) the First Nature has sufficient power to cause these simultaneously (despite the fact that due to the natures of these possible effects they cannot all exist simultaneously), therefore (iv) the First Nature has infinite power.

Omnipotence properly speaking does not add to perfection in power. Scotus then offers two reasons for the following claim: if the First Nature "had all at once what was required to be a *total* cause, it would be no more perfect than it now is when it has what is required to be the *first* cause." The gist of the claim is that even if the First Nature could be shown to be omnipotent in the strict sense, it would not thereby be shown to be more perfect in power than this seventh proof of infinity has shown the First Nature to be. The first reason is that if the First Nature does require a secondary cause to produce some effect, this requirement is not due to any deficiency in the First Nature's power but rather to a deficiency in the nature of the effect. Second, an agent is more perfect if it has a perfection eminently than if it has it formally.

23. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.d.42.q.un.n.9 (Vatican 6:343).

4.85(72) *Reply to the second objection to the objections to the enhancements*. This reply reaches back to the objection offered at 4.83(69), which drew on Scotus's earlier argument that the First Nature does not depend on other things for its intuitive cognition of everything that can be intuitively cognized. The crucial premise of that argument is that *an essence is infinite if no finite thing can add to its perfection*. Since no finite thing can add to the perfection of the First Nature's intuitive cognition—because it does not depend on anything for its intuitive cognition of whatever it intuitively cognizes—it follows that the First Nature's intellect is infinite. But being the first cause of the existence of all finite things does not, *on its own*, establish that no finite thing adds to the perfection of the First Nature. Therefore being the cause of the existence of all finite things does not, *on its own*, establish that the First Nature is infinite in power.

As an illustration of his point, Scotus refers to the "highest created nature," another reference to Avicenna's "first caused nature." (See commentary on 4.73(54).) Suppose the First Nature produces everything it produces by immediately producing this highest created nature, which in turn goes on to produce everything else. Then the First Nature is the total cause only of one thing, this highest created nature. But from this fact alone, that the First Nature is the total cause of just one finite thing, we cannot infer that the First Nature is infinite in power. And the same reasoning holds if we suppose that God has created any finite number of things.

86(73) *Eighth proof of infinity (rejected): from creation*

This is the first of two rejected proofs of infinity. Here the argument seems to be this: the extremes of creation are non-existence and existence. Creation is in some sense like a change from non-existence to existence. But there is an infinite distance between non-existence and existence. Therefore only an infinite power can, so to speak, bring something from non-existence into existence.

Scotus rejects this argument both here and in his latest *Sentences* commentary.[24] He does not deny that God creates *ex nihilo*, and therefore in some sense causes things to exist, which once did not exist. But he denies that it follows from this that there is an infinite distance between non-existence and existence. This is because if there is anything like "distance" between a non-existent and an existent thing, it is merely a finite distance. (By analogy, the distance from zero to one is one, not infinity.) Thus, it cannot be inferred that only an infinite power could bring something from non-existence into existence.

24. Duns Scotus, *Reportatio 1-A* d.2.p.1.q.1–3.n.58–62 (Wolter and Bychkov, 1:131–33).

87(74) *Ninth proof of infinity (rejected): from the lack of intrinsic causes*

This second rejected proof reasons from the lack of intrinsic causes of the First Nature, to its infinity. Intrinsic causes are material and formal causes. Since the First Nature has no efficient cause, it has no material cause (by Theorem 2.6), and since it has no material cause it has no formal cause (by Theorem 2.7). Aquinas had argued that form and matter are mutually limiting: form limits matter because by its nature matter is indeterminate with respect to any form; matter limits form because by its nature form is shareable by potentially infinitely many things.[25] Therefore, the argument goes, something that by nature has neither a material nor formal cause is infinite.

Scotus rejects this argument, here and in two of his *Sentences* commentaries.[26] He points out that on Aquinas' own view, an angel is by nature immaterial but is not therefore infinite.[27] Scotus adds a few more examples to reinforce the general point: being finite is not ultimately due to something extrinsic to a nature but rather to what a nature essentially is. Therefore, from the fact that the First Nature lacks the limiting principles of matter and form, we cannot determine whether or not it is infinite.

The rejection of the ninth proof of infinity marks the end of this long succession of proofs of Theorem 4.9.

4.88(75)-90(83) Proving Simplicity from Infinity

4.88(75) Theorem 4.10: Every kind of simplicity follows from infinity. As promised in 4.49(2), Scotus now returns to the simplicity of the First Nature, arguing first that it has no parts at all, then arguing that it has no quantitative parts, and finally arguing that it has no accidents.

4.88(76) *First type of simplicity: no parts*

If the First Nature is composed of parts, its parts are either finite or infinite. If finite, then the First Nature is finite. But the First Nature is infinite (by Theorem 4.9). Therefore its parts are not finite. If its parts are infinite, then a part of the First Nature is "not less than the whole." But every part is less than the whole of which it is a part. Therefore its parts are not infinite. Therefore the First Nature is not composed of parts.

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25. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a.q.7.a.1.corp. (Hause and Pasnau, 85).

26. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1:d.2.p.1.q.1–2.n.140–44 (Vatican 2:211–13; *PW*, 74–75); *Reportatio 1-A* d.2.p.1.q.1–3.n.52–57 (Wolter and Bychkov 1:130–31).

27. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a.q.50.a.2.corp.

This laconic argument is not fully satisfying. First, it seems true that no *finite number* of finite parts can compose a whole that is infinite, but perhaps an *infinite number* of finite parts could compose a whole that is infinite. Scotus does not consider this possibility.

Second, it is not at all clear that an infinite part would be "not less than the whole" of which it is a part. Suppose that the Infinite Nature's several perfections are parts, and that each is infinite. Then compare one of the parts—infinite wisdom, say—with the First Nature as a whole. The First Nature would have infinite wisdom along with several other infinite perfections. Plausibly, then, it would be greater than any one of its parts.

But perhaps in this case the First Nature would not be greater than the sum of its infinite parts. Since, according to third and fourth proofs of infinity (4.75(56)–4.77(61)), nothing infinite can enter into the sort of composition in which one part is determinable and another determining (potency and act, respectively), were the First Nature composed of infinite parts, these parts would not make up a genuine unity; they would be a metaphysical "heap" or mere sum of parts.

4.88(77)-(79) *Second type of simplicity: no quantitative parts*

4.88(77)-(78) Scotus here entertains the idea that the First Nature, infinite in perfection, is or has a magnitude. If so, then it has quantitative parts. Ultimately, as the conclusion of 4.88(78) makes clear, the First Nature cannot have or be a magnitude because magnitude requires a material subject and the First Nature is immaterial (see Theorem 2.6). But Scotus first proceeds by considering magnitude as such, in abstraction from matter, and arguing that infinite perfection cannot exist in a magnitude and so has no quantitative parts.

Infinite perfection cannot exist in a finite magnitude. Logically, a magnitude is finite or infinite. So showing that infinite perfection cannot exist either in a finite or infinite magnitude is sufficient to show that it cannot exist in a magnitude at all. Start with finite magnitude. Scotus arrives dialectically at the conclusion that infinite perfection cannot exist in a finite magnitude. The first effort to establish the conclusion goes like this: any finite magnitude can increase in size. Plausibly, as a magnitude increases, its total amount of perfection increases. But infinite perfection cannot be increased. So it cannot exist in a magnitude.

Scotus is not satisfied by this argument. He considers the possibility that infinite perfection, if it were in a magnitude, would exist completely in each part of the magnitude, rather than spread out across the magnitude. (It would be "whole in the whole and whole in each part," rather than "whole in the whole and part in each part.") If so, then an increase in magnitude would

indeed result in an increase of the *magnitude* that has infinite perfection, but it would not result in an increase of the *perfection* of the magnitude.

But Scotus is not satisfied by this argument, either. He reasons that while an increase in magnitude may not increase the perfection of the magnitude, it would increase its "power of efficiency," that is, its total efficient-causal power. By analogy, a small fire has the total (finite) perfection that fire is, but a large fire has greater burning power than a small fire. So a finite magnitude, however *perfect*, could always increase in *power*. But the First Nature has infinite power of efficiency (by the seventh proof of Theorem 4.9). Therefore it does not exist in a magnitude.

Infinite perfection cannot exist in an infinite magnitude. This is because an infinite magnitude cannot exist. Aristotle's own view is that magnitude is *potentially* but not *actually* infinite. It is (potentially) infinitely divisible and (potentially) infinitely increasable.[28] But a potentially infinite magnitude is actually finite. Since infinite perfection cannot exist either in finite or infinite magnitude, it cannot exist in magnitude at all, and therefore cannot have quantitative parts.

4.88(79) *The immateriality of understanding*. Scotus offers an additional, very brief argument that the First Nature has no quantitative parts. The act of understanding is immaterial and not extended and so has no quantitative parts.[29] The First Nature is understanding. Therefore it has no quantitative parts.

4.89(80)-90(83) *Third type of simplicity: no accidents*

Aristotelian accidents. An "accident," for Scotus and the Aristotelian tradition, is a feature a thing can have that is not a feature of the essence of the thing. Beulah the Cow is essentially bovine but only accidentally brown. Here Scotus approves two arguments for the conclusion that the First Nature has no accidents, but rejects an additional four arguments for the conclusion.

4.89(80) *First proof*. To be able to be the subject of an accidental property is to be able to be perfected in some way. But the First Nature is infinite in perfection and so cannot be perfected in any way. Therefore it cannot be the subject of an accidental property.

Second proof. Accidents are either material accidents or immaterial accidents. Material accidents are accidents of things with quantitative parts. But

28. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.6.206a.14–17 (Barnes, 1:351).

29. Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 9.26–30 (Alluntis and Wolter, 225–28).

the First Nature has no quantitative parts, as the arguments above show (4.88(77)-88(79)). Therefore it has no material accidents. Immaterial accidents are acts of will and understanding. But the First Nature's act of will and understanding is essential to it, not accidental. Therefore the First Nature has no immaterial accidents. Therefore it has no accidents at all.

4.89(81) *Third through fifth proofs (rejected).* Scotus offers three very brief enthymemes, the third through fifth proofs, in support of the conclusion that the First Nature has no accidents. He rejects all three on the grounds that while each shows "that an accident does not belong to the essence" of the First Nature, none shows "that an accident does not accidentally belong" to the First Nature. There is an implicit distinction here between an accident belonging *to the essence of a thing*, and an accident belonging *accidentally to a thing*. Consider Beulah the Cow. Her essence is bovine and brownness is one of her accidents. Notice that the accident of brownness belongs to *Beulah*, not to *bovinity*. Scotus's point in his objection is that none of these arguments rules out the possibility that the First Nature—considered here not as an abstract nature, divinity, but as a concrete thing, God—has an accident.

4.90(82) *Sixth proof: from pure perfection (rejected).* The sixth and last argument for the conclusion that the First Nature has no accidents reasons from the pure perfections. I myself cannot see how the proof is supposed to work, but, implicitly, the proof holds (i) that each pure perfection is "the best from itself" and (ii) that there cannot be several unqualifiedly best things. Scotus agrees with (ii) (see Theorem 3.15) but not with (i), as becomes clear in his objections to this proof. (Why anyone would hold (i), I'm not sure.) But, given (i) and (ii), the argument seems to go like this: If the pure perfections of the First Nature are not the same as the First Nature, then (iii) no pure perfection would be the best from itself and (iv) there would be several unqualifiedly best things. But not-(iii) and not-(iv). Therefore the pure perfections of the First Nature are the same as the First Nature. But that which is the same as another thing, is not an accident of that thing. (Also implicit: every feature of the First Nature is a pure perfection—this is never proved but see Theorem 4.2 and 4.3.) Therefore the First Nature has no accidents.

Pure perfection is not unsurpassable perfection. Now Scotus himself agrees that the First Nature's pure perfections are the same as the First Nature (this is entailed by simplicity, for which Scotus has at this point offered and endorsed several arguments). But he does not think that this can be inferred from the nature of pure perfection. A denominative pure perfection (e.g., a wise thing rather than wisdom) is better than anything incompossible with it (e.g., a

dog), but it is not thereby better than anything whatsoever. For example, perhaps it is not better than other pure perfections with which it is compossible, or perhaps it is not better than the First Nature itself, with which it is compossible. And so on for all other denominative pure perfections. Thus, Scotus here leaves it open that the First Nature both has all pure perfections *accidentally*, and is *better than* each pure perfection. Nothing about this scenario contradicts the nature of pure perfection as such. (Of course, for other reasons Scotus thinks that in fact the First Nature is the same as its pure perfections and so is not better than any of them.)

4.90(83) Here Scotus sums up: he thinks the first two proofs are successful, but the last four are not.

4.91(84)-93(86) In Praise of God

This beautiful metaphysical prayer is the rhetorical crescendo of the *Treatise*. It can stand mostly on its own, without comment. But a few points are worth making.

4.91(84) *Eternity.* Here Scotus praises the First Nature for its eternity, which entails that it is "without the potential to exist successively." The First Nature's existence does not proceed from one moment to the next, but is enjoyed all at once. Here Scotus offers something like a reason for thinking this about the First Nature: there cannot be succession where there is nothing caused. Scotus thus seems to derive the First Nature's eternity (or timelessness, as contemporary philosophers of religion would put it) merely from the fact that the First Nature is uncaused. This is a striking, but sadly undeveloped argument. Perhaps there is an assumption or intuition in the background, according to which, if something exists from one moment to the next, then there must be some causal explanation of how it gets there. Where a thing exists but has no cause, no causal explanation can be given. Therefore an existing, uncaused thing must not exist successively.

Immutability. Scotus says that he has discussed immutability earlier in the *Treatise*. But, like eternity, he does not discuss it explicitly. Probably he has in mind 4.89(80), in which Scotus infers simplicity from the fact that the First Nature is infinitely perfect and so lacks any potency. From this it follows that the First Nature cannot change and so is immutable.

4.92(85) *Truth and falsity*. Here Scotus says that the false is "what is not as it appears to be." Falsity occurs when a thing looks one way, but is really some

other way. Falsity thus implies a duality: the thing itself, and some other thing that explains why the first thing looks the way it does. Scotus's point here is that when there is nothing else to distort the appearance of a thing, there cannot be falsity. Since the intellect of the First Nature has just one source for all its knowledge (namely, its own essence), and nothing can distort that intellect's self-understanding, it cannot be the subject of any falsity.

That Greek and Platonic word. Scotus emphatically affirms the classical divine ideas theory according to which there is no need to postulate Platonic Forms or Ideas, since God's essence alone is the exemplar of everything intelligible.

4.93(86) *Metaphysical claims*. The *Treatise* has not appealed to revealed doctrines but only metaphysics, the science of being *qua* being. Recall the opening prayer (1.1(2)) in which Scotus asks for God's help as he seeks to discover what can be known about God simply from the nature of *being*.

The subsequent treatise. There was once some speculation that the treatise to which Scotus refers is part of the work known as *Theoremata*. There is now authoritative consensus that this speculation is unfounded.[30] If Scotus ever got around to writing this companion treatise, it has since been lost. But, given the late composition of the *Treatise*, it is probable that he never wrote its companion.

4.94(87)-97(93) The Uniqueness of God

4.94(87)-(88) Theorem 4.11: You are one God, besides whom there is no other, as you have said through the Prophet.

Why uniqueness? In Theorem 3.15 Scotus established that a nature with the Triple Primacy actually exists. In Theorem 3.19 he established that there is just one nature with the Triple Primacy. Then, throughout Chapter 4, Scotus derived various attributes of this one nature, sufficient for it to be God. At first glance, then, Theorem 4.11 might seem superfluous. But it is not. After all, for all Scotus has said so far, there could be several actual things with this one nature, just as there are many actual human beings sharing one human nature. If so, there would be several Gods. So here in the final theorem of the *Treatise* Scotus argues that there is and can be exactly one actual thing that has this nature. He offers five short proofs for the theorem. Each proof focuses on an attribute of the First Nature and argues that exactly one actually existing thing can and does have it.

30. Wolter, "Introduction" (Wolter, *DPP*, xiv–xvi); Kluxen, "Kommentar" (Kluxen, 252); M. Dreyer, H. Möhle, and G. Krieger, "Prologomena" (*Opera philosophica* 2:578–79).

4.95(89) *First proof of uniqueness: from infinite intellect*

If there were two infinite intellects, A and B, A would understand B and B would understand A. It has already been established that an infinite intellect understands everything it understands through itself, either as formally or eminently containing everything intelligible (see the second proof of infinity under Theorem 4.9, and especially 4.70(51) and 4.73(54)). But an infinite intellect cannot eminently contain an infinite intellect, because with respect to intellect they are equally perfect. Therefore A cannot understand B through what A eminently contains, and *vice versa*. Neither can A understand B through what A formally contains (and *vice versa*). There are several reasons for this. First, since each is infinite intellect, A does not depend on B for A's understanding of B (or *vice versa*)—see again the second proof of infinity, especially 4.70(51). But then, second, A's understanding of B would include only what A and B share in common, and would not include that by which A and B are distinct from one another (and *vice versa*). Thus, neither would understand the other perfectly. And third, since A's understanding of B would include only what they share in common, A would understand B "under a universal" and therefore abstractively (and *vice versa*). But intuitive understanding is more perfect than abstractive understanding. But A cannot understand B intuitively, because A neither contains B eminently, nor contains every feature of B formally, nor depends on B for its understanding. Thus, again, neither would understand the other perfectly. Therefore each would lack perfect understanding and so would not be infinite intellects after all—which is a contradiction. Therefore there is only one infinite intellect.

4.96(90) *Second proof of uniqueness: from infinite will*

The proof from infinite will assumes for the sake of argument not just that there are two infinite wills, A and B, but (implicitly) that there are two highest (infinite) goods (i.e., that which is "most lovable"), and that each infinite will is, necessarily, one of the highest goods. This implicit assumption makes the proof rather puzzling when considered alongside the fifth proof of uniqueness, which reasons explicitly from the nature of infinite goodness. But with respect to his ultimate goal of proving the uniqueness of God, this is not problematic, since he has already shown that the highest good (i.e., the first in the order of eminence) is also infinite will (see Theorems 4.4 and 4.9).

The highest good is most lovable. An infinite will loves most what is most lovable. So A is the most lovable and B is the most lovable. But A cannot love both A and B the most. Scotus offers two reasons for this. First, A naturally loves itself more than B. (He offers no reason for this claim and it is hard to see why it should be accepted, on the assumption that there are two highest goods.) Second, if B were destroyed, A would be no less happy. To

see this, consider that one highest good is sufficient for the perfect happiness of every lover (see 4.80(66), the sixth proof of infinity), including an infinite will. So A's beatitude does not consist, even in part, in enjoyment of B (if it did, A's happiness would be diminished by B's destruction). But it contradicts the nature of infinite will that it should fail to enjoy the highest good. Therefore there are not two highest goods. Therefore (by the implicit assumption of the proof) there are not two infinite wills.

4.97(91) *Third proof of uniqueness: from infinite power*

This proof relies on a key feature of essential dependence, namely that it is dependence in the *natures* of things. But there is a unique *nature* that has infinite power (by Theorem 3.16 and the seventh proof (from efficient causality) of Theorem 4.9). So suppose that there are two things having this one nature, A and B. Then anything essentially dependent on A is also essentially dependent on both A and B, since they share the same nature (and essential dependence is dependence due to nature). But it cannot be essentially dependent on both A and B, since A and B would be co-firsts in an essential order of dependence, each contributing equally to their joint effect. The problem with this is that each would be sufficient for producing their joint effect (since each is infinite power), and neither would be dependent on the other—but then we would have a redundant dependence, which is ruled out by Theorem 3.16.

In closing, Scotus entertains again the possibility that something could essentially depend on just one of these infinite powers (already ruled out by the nature of essential dependence). He asks a rhetorical question meant to assert implicitly that there would need to be some sort of explanation of why, given two natures of infinite power, something essentially depends on one but not the other. There cannot be a deeper or more authoritative power among natures to arbitrate. So the two infinite powers would, so to speak, need to work it out for themselves which is to be the essentially prior. But since each is infinite power (and also, perhaps, since none is more eminent than the other) there would be no rational way to divide the labor. It would be, if possible, entirely random. And Scotus seems to reject the possibility that there could be total randomness at the top of an essential order of dependence. Therefore there is and can be only one infinite power.

4.97(92) *Fourth proof of uniqueness: from necessary existence*

If there could be more than one necessarily existent nature, then there would be infinitely many of them. This is because, in general, a shareable property is infinitely multipliable (e.g., just considering human nature on its own, there

is no reason why there cannot be infinitely many humans). And necessary existence—necessary existence *from itself*, that is—is such that it is uncausable (see Theorems 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). Since everything that does not exist and is possible only comes to exist by a cause, it is impossible that there is a nature with necessary existence from itself that does not actually exist (see Theorem 3.5). Therefore if there can be more than one thing with necessary existence, there are infinitely many such things. Now Scotus clearly intends this as a *reductio ad absurdum—of course there can't be infinitely many necessarily existing things!* But, from the nature of necessary existence alone, it is not clear why it should be absurd that there are infinitely many such things, especially since Scotus has already granted the possibility of an actual infinity of things (see the first proof of Theorem 4.9).

To see why it is absurd that there should be infinitely many necessarily existing things, we need to look a little deeper. Scotus did argue, in Theorem 3.6, that necessary existence from itself belongs to just one *nature*. But the uniqueness of the nature is not at issue here. Instead, we're concerned with whether or not there can be more than one actual thing with that nature. So Theorem 3.6 on its own does not offer much help. One plausible suggestion is that the principle of parsimony (Theorem 2.15) offers good, if far from demonstrative, grounds for supposing there is just one necessarily existing thing. From the proof of Theorem 3.1, we gather that the starting point of Scotus's proof of God's existence is the fact that something can be produced. Theoretically, what turns out to be needed to explain this fact is something Triply First that has all the features Scotus argues it has, including necessary existence. More than one necessary existent, therefore, is theoretically superfluous.

If more than this is required, in order to meet Scotus's goal of a demonstration of God's existence (see 3.26(6)), I suggest we need to consider what necessary existence is supposed to entail. The first proof of Theorem 3.15 argues that since the first in efficiency, the first in finality, and the first in eminence all have necessary existence, it follows that there is just one nature that has all three primacies. So the unique *nature* that has necessary existence is first in these three ways. But from the Triple Primacy Scotus proved (over the course of Chapter 4) that there is just one nature that is infinite intellect, will, power, and goodness. And Scotus offers (more or less) independent arguments that only one actually existing thing can have these features. The suggestion, then, is that the impossibility of more than one necessarily existing thing can only be established by considering *what else* is supposed to follow from the necessarily existent nature. Admittedly, this suggestion weakens the argumentative force of this fourth proof of God's uniqueness, since it makes it logically dependent on the other proofs.

4.97(93) *Fifth proof of uniqueness: from infinite goodness*

Here Scotus offers two short proofs. *First proof*. Two infinite goodnesses would be better than one infinite goodness. But nothing can be better than infinite goodness. Therefore there is just one.

Second proof. By the nature of what it is to be a will, the will is fully "at rest"—satisfied, happy, blessed—by infinite goodness. If there could be two infinite goodnesses, then the will of a person aware of this possibility could not be fully at rest by one infinite goodness. But a will can be fully at rest in infinite goodness. Therefore there is just one infinite goodness. And so one God.

4.98(94) Closing Prayer

Here ends the commentary on the treatise on the first principle by John Scotus.

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Seeking what he describes as "the utmost limit of the knowledge our natural reason can achieve . . . concerning the True Existence [that is God]," John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) offers in this treatise one of philosophy's most rigorous and ambitious attempts to deduce God's existence from purely metaphysical theorems. As elucidated by its concise philosophical commentary, Thomas M. Ward's new translation of the *Treatise on the First Principle* puts a masterpiece of natural theology within reach of a new generation of English-reading students of philosophy.

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THOMAS M. WARD is Associate Professor of Philosophy, Baylor University.

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