



# Scotus on the Will



# Overview

John Duns Scotus

Freedom

Happiness

Implications

# John Duns Scotus (1266?–1308)

- Scotus = Scot (but, cf. John Scotus Eriugena!)
- OFM
- Studied in Oxford, then Paris, from which he gets expelled for political reasons
- Oxford, Paris, Cologne
- Nickname: *doctor subtilis*, the "Subtle Doctor"



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# Reminder: Freedom in Aquinas

- the will is an intellectual appetite and *not* a sensory appetite
- intellectual appetite is aimed at objects as presented by the intellect; while sense appetite at objects presented by the senses.
- sense provides only particulars the sense appetite is not free
- the intellect deals with universals the intellectual appetite *is* free (since the universal includes many particulars).
- So, the will is not free with respect to its universal object (happiness), but it *is* free with respect to its particular object (*this* or *that* happiness).

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- intellectual appetite cannot guarantee freedom needed for morality
- the intellectual appetite per Aquinas can maybe free successively, but not synchronously – and it's synchronic contingency that we need for real freedom!
- *At the very moment* I will  $x$ , I also need to be able to will  $y$ .
- But Aquinas's notion of intellectual appetite cannot accommodate this option.
- Beside the intellectual appetite, the will also has another inclination: the *affectio iustitiae*.

Do we seek happiness necessarily?

- Aquinas and Henry: yes (in general, but not in particular)
- Scotus: no
  - will as nature vs. will as free appetite

“There is a two-fold appetite or ‘will’: one, namely, that is natural; another that is free” (183).

## Aquinas:

- natural inclination toward happiness, which then determines the content of morality
- the moral laws are derived from this – cf. Aristotle; the point of morality is to be happy (*eudaimonistic* ethics).
- will as intellectual appetite for happiness
- our choices are good (and make sense) only if they are aimed at the ultimate end.

## Scotus:

- rejects the idea of will as a merely intellectual appetite
- morality is not tied to human flourishing!
- we need **libertarian freedom** for morality; moral laws are not bound up with human happiness.
- divine command theory – God could have created a different world, and could have given the same world different moral commands.

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# Concepts of Freedom

- **Augustine**: Free will is a power for opposites (can be abused too) (FCW 2.18, 3.1)
- **Boethius**: Rational creatures must have choice, but need not be able to exercise it, provided they can do what they truly want.
- **Anselm (OFC)**: “Freedom of choice is the power to preserve rectitude of will for the sake of rectitude itself.” (OFC 3, p. 36).
- **Al-Ghazali**: free will is what can discriminate and choose between altogether similar things.
- **Aquinas**: free will is rational deliberation about the best means to a desired end.
- **Henry**: the will is free because it moves itself.
- **Scotus**: the will is free because it can will otherwise *even when it wills*.

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