



## GOD: EXISTENCE, UNICITY, AND SIMPLICITY

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The philosophical discipline responsible for proving God's existence is *metaphysics*. God's existence is the goal of metaphysics; so there is a crucial sense in which someone doing metaphysics is, for Scotus, doing natural theology.<sup>1</sup> Scotus's natural theology—what we can know of God *without* revelation, and consequently outside theological science—is sophisticated and of considerable complexity. Scotus clearly holds that God's existence can be rationally proved. In some ways, Scotus's natural theology is not unlike that of Aquinas. Like Aquinas, Scotus first attempts to show that there is some kind of entity that is prior to everything else; he then attempts to show that this entity has certain attributes in virtue of which we can label it 'God'.<sup>2</sup>

Before we look at the proof itself, we need to be clear about its overall structure. The structure is not exactly the same in the four different versions Scotus gives;<sup>3</sup> in the following discussion, I do not rely entirely on any one version. I hope, however, that my somewhat idealized account of the argument brings out clearly the points that Scotus is trying to make. Roughly, the argument runs like this:

- (i) There is a first agent.
- (ii) There is an ultimate goal of activity.
- (iii) There is a maximally excellent being.

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- (iv) These three properties are coextensive (i.e., any being which exhibits one of these properties will exhibit the other two as well).
- (v) A being exhibiting any of these properties must be infinite.
- (vi) There can be at most numerically one God.
- (vii) God must be simple.

I shall describe Scotus's argument, keeping closely to this plan. As we proceed, it will, I hope, become clear how the different stages fit together.

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### 1. The existence of a first agent

Central to Scotus's proof is the argument from efficient causation. In all of Scotus's versions of his proof, the argument exists in two forms, either one of which would, if successful, be sufficient to show the existence of a first efficient cause. I shall label the two versions the 'non-modal argument' and the 'modal argument', respectively. In many ways the two versions are very similar. The non-modal argument is simpler, so I shall use this version to get the basic structure clear. First, however, I shall discuss efficient causation.

#### *Efficient causation*

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Crucial for understanding either argument is an idea of what Scotus means by 'efficient causation'. Central to the concept of efficient causation is the idea that a cause is in some sense *sufficient* for its effect. Scotus—like Aristotle and all the medievals—talks about substances causing effects, where possible effects include the properties of objects and the existence of objects. (I shall refer to such substances as 'agents'.) In line with this, Scotus would add to the sufficiency claim that agents have 'causal powers' in virtue of which they produce their effects. As we shall see in chapter 4, the presence or absence of such causal powers is used by Scotus to distinguish causal from various sorts of non-causal sufficiency (e.g., logical entailment).<sup>4</sup>

Cause-effect relationships can exist in ordered series (where a series consists of three or more members). Not all such series will share the same properties. Consider the following two favorite medieval examples: a

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hand (in virtue of its motion) moving a stick to move a ball; the series father-son-grandson.<sup>5</sup> In the first example, the hand, in virtue of its motion, brings about the motion of the stick, which in turn brings about the motion of the ball. On this account, the motion of the hand is in some sense sufficient for the motion of the ball. In the second example, the parents and their procreative actions are sufficient for the existence of their son, but they are *not* in any sense sufficient for the procreative actions of their son. The existence of the grandson requires *further* explanation.

Scotus labels these series 'essentially ordered' and 'accidentally ordered', respectively. I shall label an essentially ordered series an 'E-series', and an accidentally ordered series an 'A-series'. Scotus picks out three features that distinguish the two series:

The first difference is that in essentially ordered causes, the second depends upon the first precisely in the act of causing. In accidentally ordered causes this is not the case, though the second may depend upon the first for its existence or in some other way.

The second difference is that in essentially ordered causes the causality is of another nature and order, inasmuch as the higher is the more perfect, which is not the case with accidentally ordered causes. This second difference is a consequence of the first, since no cause in the exercise of its causality is essentially dependent upon a cause of the same nature as itself, for to produce anything one cause of a given kind suffices.

A third difference follows, namely, that all essentially ordered causes are [temporally] simultaneously required to produce the effect, for otherwise some causality essential to the effect would be wanting. In accidentally ordered causes this simultaneity is not required.<sup>6</sup>

As Scotus presents these differences, the first is explanatory of the other two. What the first feature of an E-series amounts to can be captured as follows: some agent  $x$  brings it about that some item  $y$  has some property  $F$ , such that  $y$ 's being  $F$  brings it about that some other item  $z$  has some property  $G$ . This is in accord with Scotus's claim that, in an E-series, "the second depends upon the first precisely in its act of causing." The causal relations in an E-series are thus transitive:  $x$ 's bringing it about that  $y$  is  $F$  is *sufficient* for  $z$ 's being  $G$ .<sup>7</sup>

An A-series will not fit this criterion. In an A-series, the initial agent  $x$  brings it about that some effect  $y$  exists, or has some property  $F$ , such that  $y$ 's existing, or having  $F$ , is *not* sufficient for any further effect  $z$ .<sup>8</sup> On



this showing, of course, there is no difficulty in  $y$ 's being an agent; but the action of  $x$  will not be sufficient for  $y$ 's bringing about  $z$ . We should note that, in both series, the fact that there are earlier causes (not necessarily temporally earlier, but logically prior) is *logically necessary* for there being later causes. This is a matter of definition; if there are later causes, then of course there will be earlier causes. Scotus will exploit this claim in his proof of the existence of a first agent.

### *The non-modal argument*

The non-modal argument starts from the empirically evident claim that there exists something that is an effect.<sup>9</sup> Scotus correctly holds that no effect can produce itself, that (definitionally) no effect can be produced by just nothing at all, and that a circle of causes is impossible. Granted these claims, it follows that an effect must be produced by something else. Let us label this cause ' $c$ '. Scotus reasonably notes that we can ask whether or not  $c$  is an effect. If it is, then we can ask the same about its cause  $c_1$ :

And so we shall either go on ad infinitum so that each thing in reference to what precedes it in the series will be second; or we shall reach something that has nothing prior to it. However an infinity in the ascending order is impossible; hence a primacy is necessary.<sup>10</sup>

Causes, here, are agents and the powers in virtue of which these agents bring about effects. So the claim that there is a first cause amounts to the claim that there is a first agent.

This argument for a first agent explaining the existence of any effect relies on the impossibility of an infinite series of causes. Scotus attempts to justify this by appealing to his distinction between an E-series of causes and an A-series of causes. Rather like Aquinas, Scotus has no objection to an infinite A-series. But he does have an objection, which I shall outline in a moment, to an infinite E-series. He also believes that he can show that there can be no A-series unless there is an E-series. (This point is important, because if there can be an infinite A-series and no E-series, Scotus will not be able to argue successfully that there must be a first agent.)

Scotus tries to show that each of the three distinguishing features of an E-series is sufficient to block the possibility of an infinite E-series. Again, it is the first feature of an E-series that is most interesting. Scotus's

suggestions here are rather puzzling and seem to me to be inconclusive. In the late *Reportatio* (closely paralleled in the *Ordinatio*) Scotus argues from the following premise: "In essentially ordered causes . . . each second cause, in so far as it is causing, depends upon a first."<sup>11</sup> Put in this way, it follows straightforwardly that there must be a first member of an E-series. But the premise is question-begging, and I can see no reason for wanting to accept it. It requires that a first cause is necessary as well as sufficient for any effect in an E-series. But this is not so. I noted above that in any causal series there is a sense in which the existence of earlier causes is necessary for the existence of later causes. But we cannot infer from this that a *first* cause is necessary for some effect. There are sometimes many different ways in which the same effect can be produced.

Taking account of this objection, we could loosely reformulate the premise as follows: "In essentially ordered causes, any later cause, in so far as it is causing, depends upon an earlier cause." Put thus, the premise looks wholly plausible. But there would be no problem with an infinite E-series thus construed. Howsoever many prior causes there were, any one of them would be logically sufficient for any later effect.<sup>12</sup>

As I noted above, Scotus, just like Aquinas, is happy with the claim that there could be an infinite A-series. The reason is that, however long or short an A-series is, its various stages will *always* require further explanation outside the series. An infinitely long A-series is no more problematic or explanatorily insufficient than a finite series. And no A-series could exist without one or more E-series to support its various stages.<sup>13</sup>

I have indicated where I think that there are problems with Scotus's non-modal argument. If effective, Scotus would thus far have demonstrated that any E-series will have a first member (i.e., that there will be a first efficient cause of the series). This might not look like a strong conclusion, but it is an important stage on Scotus's route towards God's existence.

### *The modal argument*

We might be forgiven for imagining that Scotus might by now believe himself to have demonstrated the first conclusion mentioned above, namely, that there is a first agent. But Scotus does not think that the argument as it stands is strong enough to count as an (Aristotelian) *demonstration*:



I have no demonstration when I argue: "Some nature is produced or effected, hence something is producing or effecting it," etc., since I start out with contingent terms.<sup>14</sup>

For a strict demonstration, according to Aristotle, the premises must be necessarily true (i.e., such that they cannot be false).<sup>15</sup> A demonstration that fails to satisfy this condition will not fail to be such that its premises entail its conclusion, but it will yield a conclusion that is, like its premises, at best contingently true.<sup>16</sup>

The modal argument is like the non-modal argument in many important respects. For example, it crucially relies on the impossibility of an infinite series of E-causes. Scotus spells out the whole modal argument only in *De Primo Principio*. As we shall see, the changes made to the non-modal argument do not present any further logical difficulties.

The modal premise from which Scotus starts is

(1) It is possible that something is caused.<sup>17</sup>

The truth of (1) is not contingent; it is logically necessary. Premise (1) entails

(2) It is possible that something is an agent;<sup>18</sup>

from which, reasoning from the impossibility of an infinite E-series just as in the non-modal argument, Scotus further infers

(3) It is possible that something is a first agent.<sup>19</sup>

Further still, Scotus holds that (3) entails

(3\*) Something can be a first agent.

The argument from (3) to (3\*) offered by Scotus is extremely interesting. He reasons that something that is a first agent will be essentially uncaused (i.e., such that it is impossible for it to be caused). Adopting a very weak version of the principle of sufficient reason, Scotus suggests that anything that is essentially uncaused is a necessary existent (i.e., one whose non-existence is logically impossible). (I will return to this Scotist principle in a moment.) The following claim will capture this position:

- (4) If it is possible that something is an essentially uncaused being, then it is necessary that something is an essentially uncaused being.<sup>20</sup>

Scotus presupposes that any first agent is essentially uncaused. (Labeling it a 'first agent' entails that it has certain active causal powers, not that it actually exercises these powers. Scotus, as we shall see in chapter 4, wants to hold that the universe is radically contingent.) So:

- (5) If it is possible that something is a first agent, then it is necessary that something is a first agent.

Coupling (5) with

- (3) It is possible that something is a first agent,

we can infer

- (6) It is necessary that something is a first agent.

This entails

- (3\*) Something can be a first agent.<sup>21</sup>

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What should we make of the crucial premise (4) (Scotus's weak version of the principle of sufficient reason)? Clearly, it is not open to many of the objections that can be made against stronger versions of the principle. It does not commit Scotus to the claim that nothing can exist merely randomly (i.e., be both contingent and uncaused). And Scotus's principle has some *prima facie* plausibility. It is difficult to see how something essentially uncaused could fail to be a necessary existent.

The modal cosmological argument clearly bears out the claim that the study of basic metaphysical concepts—in this case, causation and necessity/contingency—yields as its result or object the existence of God.<sup>22</sup> The empirical input is minimal, and according to Scotus unnecessary for either the truth or the validity of the argument. The argument as Scotus puts it relies on his (failed) attempt to show the impossibility of an infinite E-series. The crucial premise (3) is clearly entailed by (2) if we sup-

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pose that an infinite E-series is impossible. But are there other ways of deriving (3)? Timothy O'Connor locates an argument in Scotus that will serve to demonstrate (3) without appealing to the impossibility of an infinite E-series. The argument can be laid out as follows:

- (7) It is not necessarily the case that a being possessing a causal power *C* possesses *C* in an imperfect way

entails

- (8) It is possible that *C* is possessed without imperfection by some item.

But if we couple (8) with

- (9) If it is not possible for any item to possess *C* without dependence on some prior item, then it is not possible that there is any item which possesses *C* without imperfection,

we can infer

- (10) It is possible that some item possesses *C* without dependence on some prior item.

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Proposition (10) along with

- (11) Any item possessing *C* without dependence on some prior item is a first agent

entails

- (3) It is possible that something is a first agent.

(‘Being an agent’ and ‘possessing a causal power’ are of course synonyms.)<sup>23</sup> And we have already seen that (3) entails (3\*).

The argument here will clearly push Scotus’s proof for the existence of a first agent further in the direction of the ontological argument. There seem to be no problems with the validity of this argument. And assum-

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ing that *necessary existence* is possibly a property, there may be little problem with the truth of the premises either. So the argument clearly represents a significant contribution to natural theology.

## 2. The existence of an ultimate goal of activity

The proof for the existence of ultimate goal(s) of activity is not spelled out by Scotus in much detail, since he regards his argument as closely analogous to the proof for the existence of a first efficient cause. Scotus reasons that at least some actions are goal-directed. On standard Aristotelian accounts of action, goals have some kind of *explanatory* role in action (hence Aristotle labels them 'final causes'). Clearly, it is possible to have a series of such causes: I wish to do *a* in order to gain *b*, and I wish to gain *b* in order to achieve *c*, and so on. Granted a sense in which a goal explains an action, Scotus argues that we could not have an infinite series of such goals: if we could, the teleological explanation would never get off the ground.<sup>24</sup> What Scotus wants to argue is that God is the ultimate goal of all actions. We normally think of goals as states of affairs, not as substances.<sup>25</sup> But clearly, goals can be subsistent entities too: objects of our love. This is the sort of goal Scotus has in mind. The series of entities that we love for the sake of something else must be finite, headed by something that we love for its own sake.

## 3. The existence of a maximally excellent being

The last step in the first part of Scotus's argument is to show that there must be some being or beings more excellent than any other beings. The argument is found most clearly in the *Reportatio*. Again, the argument relies on an analysis of the disjunctive transcendentals: in this case, necessary-or-contingent, infinite-or-finite, and exceeding-or-exceeded. Scotus supposes that all things can be objectively graded on some hierarchy of excellence. This claim is not as implausible as it might at first glance seem. Many of our ethical judgments, for example, are made presupposing such a hierarchy. As we saw above, Scotus holds that one of the fea-

tures of an E-series is that a cause is always more perfect than its effect. Since, according to Scotus, we can show that for any E-series there is a first member, we can also show that there is a most perfect member.<sup>26</sup>

Scotus oddly claims that this supports the thesis that there is a “simply unexcelled” being, by which he means one that cannot be excelled—a maximally excellent being. Scotus is presumably supposing that a first agent is more perfect than any of its *possible* effects. Granted that, of our list of first causes, there is at least one than which no other is more perfect, it will follow that some agent is more excellent than any possible effect. And this is a property closely related to that of being maximally excellent.

Elsewhere, however, Scotus gives an intriguing modal argument that would, if successful, yield the required conclusion far more elegantly. The argument is in fact more or less indistinguishable from that provided by Anselm in chapter 3 of the *Proslogion*.<sup>27</sup> Scotus’s argument—found most clearly in the *Reportatio*—presupposes that anything that is essentially uncaused must be a necessary existent; thus:

- (4) If it is possible that something is an essentially uncaused being, then it is necessary that something is an essentially uncaused being.

But being essentially uncaused is a great-making property. So any maximally excellent being will be uncaused. Hence:

- (12) If it is possible that something is maximally excellent, then it is necessary that something is maximally excellent.

If we couple this conclusion with

- (13) It is possible that something is maximally excellent,

we can infer

- (14) It is necessary that something is maximally excellent.<sup>28</sup>

Scotus spends some time justifying (13). The possible problem that he sees with it is that a maximally excellent being will be *infinite*; and Scotus sees

a need to show that the existence of an infinite being is possible. I will discuss this argument in section 5 of this chapter.

The argument is even more clearly “ontological” in its basic thrust than the argument to a first agent.<sup>29</sup> The difficult premise is (13), which entails that all great-making properties are compatible with each other. Scotus never seriously addresses the problem of the possible incompatibility of great-making properties. But if (13) can be shown to be true, Scotus’s argument will look fairly compelling.

#### 4. The coextensiveness of these three properties

According to Scotus, any being that exhibits any of the three properties (viz., being a first agent, being an ultimate goal, and being maximally excellent) will exhibit the other two as well. Agents act for the sake of goals. But there is nothing for the sake of which the ultimate goal could be produced. So the ultimate goal is uncaused, and thus is the first agent.<sup>30</sup> Since being a first agent is a great-making property, any maximally excellent being will be a first agent. Equally, by the second property of an E-series, a first agent will be more excellent than any of its possible effects.<sup>31</sup>

Because Scotus holds that the three primacies are coextensive, his argument for God’s existence will not require for its success the success of any more than *one* of the arguments outlined in the three steps just described. Furthermore, any one of the three arguments will, if Scotus is correct, allow us to infer directly the remaining two primacies. Thus, any one of the arguments, according to Scotus, will allow us to infer quite a lot about the God whose existence Scotus is attempting to demonstrate.

Scotus also shows that only one *kind* of being can exhibit the three properties.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean that there will be just one first agent. We could on this account still have a pantheon of first agents. The crucial feature will be that the members of our putative pantheon will all be the same sort of thing. The point of this step in the argument is that, supposing the three primacies to be properties necessarily exhibited by any God-like being, there can be at most one *kind* of God-like being. The step adds nothing in fact to Scotus’s overall argument, since it is not necessary for any of the later stages. Equally, it is (probably) entailed by the



claim—which Scotus attempts to prove later—that there can be at most *numerically one* first agent.

## 5. The infinity of the first agent

Central to Scotus’s understanding of the divine nature is its infinity. I shall spend some time in chapter 3 showing precisely how Scotus understands infinity. But it will, I hope, become clear even in the present chapter that the concept of divine infinity is structurally important in Scotus’s argument. Roughly, Scotus uses the idea of divine infinity to demonstrate divine unicity and simplicity. His procedure is thus the opposite to that of Aquinas, who takes divine simplicity as basic, and thence infers infinity and unicity.<sup>33</sup> Scotus expressly rejects Aquinas’s attempt to derive divine infinity from divine simplicity.<sup>34</sup> Part of the reason for this lies in the radically different conceptions of divine infinity that the two thinkers have. I will describe these different conceptions in chapter 3.

Scotus attempts to prove the infinity of the first agent by arguing from its knowledge,<sup>35</sup> from the nature of a first agent,<sup>36</sup> from the nature of an ultimate goal,<sup>37</sup> and from the nature of a maximally excellent being. The last of these is the most interesting. A maximally excellent being must be infinite, since what is finite can be excelled.<sup>38</sup> It is in his attempt to prove that a maximally excellent being must be infinite that Scotus spells out his modal argument for the existence of a maximally excellent being, which I described above. As I noted there, Scotus devotes some space to a discussion of the claim that infinity is compatible with actual existence. He argues that the complex concept ‘(an) infinite being’ is logically coherent, and therefore possibly exemplified. The concept is logically coherent since ‘being’ and ‘infinite’ are not logically contradictory.<sup>39</sup> And this yields the premise “It is possible that some being is maximally excellent,” which is one of the premises that Scotus needs for the truth of his modal argument for a simply unexcelled being.

In *De Primo Principio*, Scotus refrains from labeling the first principle ‘God’ until he has shown that the first principle is infinite. This is a clear sign of the importance Scotus attaches to divine infinity. As he points out in *Ordinatio*, the existence of an infinite being is “the last conclusion to be established.”<sup>40</sup> I shall follow Scotus in using the term ‘God’ from now on.

## 6. Divine unicity

Scotus offers six arguments for divine unicity (i.e., for the claim that there can be at most numerically one God), “any one of which, if proved, entails the initial thesis.”<sup>41</sup> All but one start from the claim that God is infinite in some respect or another. The remaining argument attempts to infer divine unicity from divine necessity. Scotus offers a seventh argument from divine omnipotence. He does not believe that this argument has any probative force, because he does not believe that natural reason can demonstrate God to be omnipotent. (I discuss this claim in chapter 4.)

It seems to me that at least two of Scotus’s seven arguments—that from infinite power and that from omnipotence—are successful. The first attempts to demonstrate that there cannot be two infinitely powerful agents.<sup>42</sup> As Scotus understands infinite power, an agent is infinitely powerful if and only if it has the capacity to bring about any possible effect. Omnipotence adds a further qualification: an agent is omnipotent if and only if it has the capacity to bring about any possible effect *immediately* (i.e., without the activity of any causal chain between the agent and any of its effects).<sup>43</sup> On these definitions, an infinitely powerful agent might be able to bring about some of its effects only mediately, via a causal chain; whereas an omnipotent agent could bring about any effect directly.<sup>44</sup> As Scotus understands infinite power, it entails that the action of an agent that has the capacity to bring about any *possible* effect will be both necessary and sufficient for any *actual* effect. The action of an infinitely powerful but not omnipotent agent will be sufficient for any actual effect in the sense that such an agent is the first member of every E-series. (Scotus makes the point in the second sentence of the following quotation.)

Scotus’s argument runs as follows:

Two causes of the same order cannot both be the total cause of the same effect. But an infinite power is the total primary cause of every single effect that exists. Therefore, no other power can be the total primary cause of any effect. Consequently, no other cause is infinite in power. My proof of the first proposition [viz., two causes of the same order cannot both be the total cause of the same effect]: If this proposition did not hold, then a thing could be the cause of something that does not depend on it. Proof: Nothing depends essentially on anything



if it could exist even when this other is non-existent. But if C has two total causes, A and B, each of which is in the same order, then either could be non-existent and still C would continue to exist in virtue of the other. For if A were non-existent, C would still exist by reason of B, and if B were non-existent, C would exist by reason of A.<sup>45</sup>

The basic point of this passage is that there cannot be two causes of an effect, each of which is, independently of the other, causally both necessary and sufficient for the effect. The reason is that either one alone is causally sufficient: and that the other one therefore cannot be causally necessary.<sup>46</sup> Now, a cause of infinite power is both necessary and sufficient for any actual effect. There cannot therefore be two such causes. (Scotus is rejecting the possibility of what we might today label 'causal overdetermination'.)

Scotus's second successful argument for divine unicity is, as noted above, not one that he himself regarded as having probative force. Just like the argument from infinite power, this argument has some important modern versions.<sup>47</sup> Basically, Scotus argues that, if there were two omnipotent gods,  $G_1$  and  $G_2$ , it would look as though each would be able to frustrate the will of the other, entailing—absurdly—that neither was omnipotent.<sup>48</sup>

Scotus suggests an objection to this argument. Could not the two agents "voluntarily agree on a common way of acting through some sort of pact?"<sup>49</sup> Scotus knows of two possible responses here. First, two omnipotent agents, even if they both agreed on how to act, would each be causally necessary and sufficient for any actual effect. This involves just the same contradiction as was highlighted in the argument from infinite power outlined above. Secondly, irrespective of what an omnipotent agent actually decides to do, it is only omnipotent if in principle its actions are not necessitated in any way. On the proposed scenario,  $G_1$ 's actions are not necessitated by  $G_2$ , or vice versa. Hence the wills of  $G_1$  and  $G_2$  *could* still conflict, which is sufficient to generate the contradiction.<sup>50</sup> To block the contradiction, the two Gods would have to be in agreement necessarily. And Scotus would regard this as in conflict with divine freedom.

As Scotus presents his argument, its conclusion is entailed by the premise that God has the capacity to bring about any possible effect immediately. It is, I think, obvious that, thus construed, there could not be two omnipotent beings, for just the reason that Scotus gives. Can Scotus's argument be made to work with weaker premises? Not according to



Scotus, who expressly denies that the argument could work without his theological understanding of omnipotence. On Scotus's understanding of an infinitely powerful—but not omnipotent—agent, however, such an agent will have the capacity to produce any possible effect. This power could be frustrated by another infinitely powerful agent just as effectively as it could be frustrated by an omnipotent agent. So I do not see why Scotus should believe his argument to presuppose a theological premise.

## 7. Divine simplicity

Scotus clearly regards the demonstration of divine simplicity as an integral part of a proof for God's existence, including a discussion of it in his *De Primo Principio*. Furthermore, in this late work he makes it clear that every claim about divine simplicity can be sufficiently demonstrated from divine infinity.<sup>51</sup> Neither of these facts emerges so clearly in the *Ordinatio* and *Reportatio* accounts. This is no doubt partly a result of the structure imposed on these two works by the order in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. In addition to the arguments for simplicity from infinity, Scotus also presents a proof for simplicity from God's necessary existence.<sup>52</sup>

Scotus's account of divine simplicity is far less ambitious than the account we find in Aquinas. Aquinas and Scotus both agree that God is simple in the sense of (i) lacking spatial parts, (ii) lacking temporal parts, (iii) lacking composition from form and matter,<sup>53</sup> and (iv) lacking accidental modifications. But there are two ways in which Scotus disagrees with Aquinas. According to Aquinas, God is (v) identical with his attributes, and (vi) such that his attributes are all identical with each other.<sup>54</sup> Scotus does not believe God to be simple in either of these ways. I deal with these two claims in chapter 3, and I examine Scotus's claim that God lacks temporal parts in chapter 4.

In *De Primo Principio*, Scotus places his basic argument from infinity first, and he evidently regards it as the most important. He reasons that a complex (non-simple) entity must be made up of parts, each of which will be less than the whole of which it is a part. The parts cannot themselves be infinite, since something that is infinite cannot be less than anything else. Neither can the parts be finite, since they then could not compose something infinite. So an infinite being cannot be made up of parts.<sup>55</sup>

A lot depends here on the kinds of part that Scotus has in mind. If Scotus is right that something infinite cannot be less than anything else, then his argument would be effective against the claim that God has *spatial* parts. Scotus, however, intends the argument to be effective against other kinds of complexity as well. Presumably, matter and form as putative component parts of a substance are each in some sense *less* than the whole of which they are parts. Equally, something infinite cannot be the subject of accidental modifications. Something that is subject to accidental modifications can gain and lose attributes; and according to Scotus the infinite cannot gain or lose anything.<sup>56</sup> In fact, however, Scotus's supposition that something infinite cannot be less than anything else is probably false.<sup>57</sup> If this is right, then the argument will not be effective even against the claim that God cannot have spatial parts.

Scotus has a further argument to show that God cannot be composed of matter and form. The unity of matter and form in a composite requires explanation. But this unity cannot be caused by the composite itself, since the composite would then be self-caused, which is impossible. It must therefore be caused by some other agent. The first agent therefore cannot be a composite of matter and form.<sup>58</sup>

As we shall see in the next chapter, Scotus holds that some kind of distinctions in God are consistent with the doctrine of divine simplicity. For example, as I have suggested, Scotus holds that God is distinct in some way from his attributes, and that his attributes are distinct in some way from each other. Equally, as I shall show in chapter 5, Scotus believes the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to entail some sort of complexity and distinction in God. Thus, Scotus's arguments for divine simplicity are not intended to exclude every sort of complexity. We shall see in some detail in the next chapter exactly what Scotus's position here amounts to.

Scotus offers a challenging and subtle proof for God's existence. Given that Scotus believes the proof of God's existence to be the goal of metaphysics, the success of his proof will be important for the success of his whole conception of the philosophical endeavor. It is Scotus the *philosopher*, not Scotus the *theologian*, who has a great deal invested in the existence of God.