



GOD: KNOWLEDGE AND AGENCY

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1. Divine intellect and will

As we would expect, Scotus holds that God has intellect and will. He can know things, and he can will them. Scotus's argument for this, however, does not make use of the perfect-being methodology outlined at the beginning of chapter 3. Scotus does not believe that intellect and will are demonstrably pure perfections.¹

The argument for divine intellect presupposes that God has will. Scotus offers several arguments for this latter claim, of which I will give one. The argument is both the most interesting and the simplest: contingent causation exists; so the first agent causes contingently; so the first agent causes freely.² For reasons that I will examine in chapter 7, Scotus is convinced that the premise here ("contingent causation exists") is true. In support of the inference to "the first agent causes contingently," Scotus argues that necessity in God's actions is sufficient to block contingency in our actions.³ This does not seem obviously true. But, as we shall see below, Scotus believes that God's causal concurrence is required for everything that happens—including our free actions. If two causes concur in producing one effect, Scotus assumes that necessity in one of the causes is sufficient to guarantee necessity in the effect. (I look at Scotus's discussion of God's causal concurrence below. In *De Primo Principio*, Scotus at

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this point in his argument for God's will explicitly refers his readers to his discussion of God's causal concurrence.)⁴ It is difficult to know what to make of Scotus's claim that necessity in one of two concurrent causes is sufficient for necessity in the effect. And—as I shall show below—the reason for this is that it is difficult to make any sense of Scotus's account of causal concurrence applied to free actions.

In favor of the second inference—from contingency to freedom—Scotus argues that all contingent events are brought about by free will.⁵ Underlying this is an assumption, which I mention in chapter 7 (note 19), that genuine randomness is impossible. The argument in favor of divine intellect follows straightforwardly from this. No free agent can will something without knowing it. So God, as a free agent, must have intellect.⁶

2. Divine knowledge

Given that God has intellect, what can we say about his knowledge? Perhaps the most important feature of it is that none of God's knowledge is caused by anything external to himself. According to Scotus, God's simplicity entails that everything in God is in some sense identical with him; and God's necessity entails that he is immutable.⁷ Each of these two claims—that everything in God is identical with him, and that God is immutable—entails that nothing external to God can be necessary for anything internal to him.⁸ Suppose a creature were a necessary condition for the existence of something in God. On Scotus's simplicity claim, this would entail that a creature were a necessary condition for the existence of God's essence. And given that God is the first cause of everything, this is false. Equally, all creatures (as a matter of contingent fact) come into existence. So if a creature were a necessary condition for the existence of something in God, God would change.⁹ Considerations like these lie behind the scholastic claim that God cannot be really related to any of his creatures. If God were really related to any of his creatures, something in God—his relation to his creatures—would require the existence of something external to him. So God cannot be really related to any of his creatures.¹⁰

The claim that nothing outside God is necessary for the existence of anything in God has some odd implications for God's knowledge. Put simply, it means that God's knowledge of creatures is not in any sense

caused by the creatures themselves. To understand Scotus's position, we need to have a rough grasp of part of his philosophy of mind. According to Scotus—following Aristotle—our intellect has two “parts”: the passive intellect (which Scotus prefers to call by the Augustinian term ‘memory’), and the active intellect (to which Scotus often gives the Augustinian label ‘intelligence’). The first of these is responsible for storing ideas, concepts, and so on (the items of my ‘habitual knowledge’); the second (in Scotus’s account, though not in most medieval accounts) is responsible for actually understanding them. The idea is that memory has a capacity to call habitual knowledge to mind, bringing about a state of actual understanding. The items in the memory are said to have ‘intelligible existence’, and to *represent* the extra-mental realities to which they correspond.¹¹ These intelligible objects are in some sense caused in our minds by the extra-mental realities they represent.¹² They are the means by which we know external reality.¹³

What happens when we have actual understanding of an object that we know habitually? The scholastics, perhaps following Aristotle, generally assumed that there is a universal mental language, and that we use this language when we *think*.¹⁴ This notion of a mental language was used to spell out the difference between actual and habitual knowledge. According to Scotus, my memory along with the intelligible object it contains jointly cause actual knowledge in my intelligence.¹⁵ This actual knowledge consists in a basic item in our mental language—a mental word—inhering in my intelligence.¹⁶ Thus, a person *x* is in a state of having actual knowledge if a mental word inheres in *x*’s intelligence. We might think of this mental word as a mental *act*. Scotus classifies it as a *quality* inhering in the intelligence.¹⁷

God’s knowledge is different from this in at least two respects. First, God’s knowledge is caused not by anything outside himself, but merely by his essence and (for some of his knowledge) his will. Secondly, although God does have actual knowledge produced from his memory and expressed in a mental word, he also has actual knowledge that is not so produced or expressed. I will look at this second feature in the next chapter.

Scotus discerns three sorts of objects of divine knowledge: the divine essence, necessary truths and all logical possibilities, and contingent truths. I shall label this second sort of object an ‘N-object’, and the third sort a ‘C-object’. The set of N-objects includes all necessary truths, including

the essences of things;¹⁸ all possible combinations of contingent states of affairs (i.e., all logical possibilities);¹⁹ and all possible individuals.²⁰ In line with post-Augustinian tradition, Scotus labels the common essences, as known by God, 'ideas'.²¹ He does not label God's knowledge of logical possibilities and possible individuals 'ideas'.²² But most of what he says about divine ideas is applicable to God's knowledge of possibilities and possible individuals. I use 'N-object' to refer to all such objects. I look at these three sorts of object—the divine essence, N-objects, and C-objects—and their relation to God's knowledge, in turn.

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God's knowledge of his own essence

God knows his essence by a direct intuitive grasp of it as present to him.²³ Intuitive knowledge is knowledge of an individual object precisely as that object is *present* to the cognizer.²⁴ Furthermore, this knowledge is itself really identical with God's essence. God's self-love is necessary; so the self-knowledge required for this love must be necessary too.²⁵ And as we saw in chapter 3, necessary divine attributes are really identical with God's essence.

God's knowledge of necessary truths and logical possibilities

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God's knowledge of N-objects is very different from this. Roughly, Scotus holds that all N-objects are somehow *caused* by God. Rival theories would make God's N-knowledge relate to concepts that are somehow "givens"—already there prior to God's thought. According to Bonaventure, for example, there are eternal relations in God to objects other than himself. God knows things other than himself only in virtue of these relations.²⁶ There is no suggestion in Bonaventure that these objects have any sort of *existence* outside God. But Henry of Ghent makes just such a claim: common and individual essences have some sort of existence outside God, and these essences are objects of God's knowledge.²⁷ Henry claims that such objects have *esse essentiae* (their essential existence) but not *esse existentiae* (their actual existence).

Scotus regards both of these theories as radically confused. The first, according to Scotus, entails that God's intellect is passive with regard to knowledge of N-objects. Its knowledge of such objects is somehow *caused*

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in it by the concepts that correspond to this knowledge, and this “demeans the divine intellect.”²⁸ Against Henry’s theory, Scotus draws attention to the unclear existential status of the extra-mental objects it posits. Extra-mental objects are indistinguishable from real material things. And in this case, real material things are everlasting and in some sense exist necessarily. Thus, as Scotus points out, no objects can be brought into existence;²⁹ or at best such objects will be merely altered somehow, getting actual existence in addition to their essential existence.³⁰

Scotus reasons, therefore, that the N-objects of God’s knowledge must be produced entirely by himself.³¹ In fact, Scotus is convinced that knowing things in this way—by producing objects in intelligible existence—is a perfection.³² Claiming that the N-objects of God’s knowledge are produced by him does not mean that God could fail to produce them; it does not make them contingent. In fact, Scotus claims that God cannot fail but produce these N-objects. As Scotus puts it, God’s intellect is a “merely natural cause” of the N-objects known by him.³³

How does God produce N-objects? Scotus claims that God does so as a result of his intuitive grasp of his own essence. God’s essence somehow contains the “entities” of all created things,³⁴ and God causes the N-objects by intuitively seeing his own essence. Thus, God, by seeing his essence, produces N-objects in intelligible existence. Scotus often refers to God’s essence as the primary object of God’s knowledge, and N-objects as the secondary objects of divine knowledge.³⁵ N-objects are, of course, the ideas of all possible essences and individuals. So Scotus holds that necessary truths, logical possibilities, and possible individuals are all brought into existence by God.³⁶

Interestingly, Scotus also holds that God’s knowledge of N-objects is really identical with his essence. The first agent necessarily possesses everything required for its causal activity. But without its knowledge of N-objects, it could not cause. So its knowledge of N-objects must be essential to it.³⁷

God’s knowledge of contingent truths

Of course, God’s knowledge of all logical possibilities does not tell him which of these contingent possibilities is *actual*. And this brings me onto the third sort of divine knowledge pinpointed by Scotus: knowledge of

contingent actualities. Scotus is quite clear that God cannot know C-objects in the same way as he knows necessary truths and possibilities. Scotus's central presupposition in his discussion of God's knowledge of C-objects is that God's will is free. Suppose God's intellect could calculate which of all logically possible states of affairs should be actualized. God's free will could ignore this calculation, and thus (since God's intellect is always morally upright) possibly act badly. But of course God cannot act badly. Thus the actions of a free God could not be in any way dictated by his intellect.³⁸ So the divine intellect must gain its knowledge of C-objects in some other way. This way, Scotus reasons, must be by knowledge of the free decisions of the divine will. In short, God knows C-objects because he has freely caused them.³⁹

These C-objects are not, of course, really existing things external to God. They are still objects merely in intelligible, mental, existence (though they presumably directly correspond to existing contingent things). As we saw above, Scotus holds that divine simplicity means that everything in God is identical with him. And Scotus is quite clear that all of God's knowledge is identical with his essence.⁴⁰ But this raises a problem. How could anything contingent—such as knowledge of a C-object—be identical with the divine essence?⁴¹ Scotus does not really address this worry, although given his claims that everything in God is in some sense identical with God and that God's existence is necessary, Scotus certainly should do so. Perhaps the closest Scotus comes to a discussion of the problem is in distinction 39 of both *Lectura* and *Reportatio*. Scotus rejects the claim of Henry of Ghent that the divine intellect could gain knowledge of the determinations of the divine will directly from this will,⁴² arguing instead that God's intellect knows the contingent decisions of the divine will by means of his essence. Scotus draws an analogy with human vision:

If I were to have a constant act of vision, I now see a white thing and—if the white thing were removed—I would see something else as black without any change in the act of seeing; so the divine intellect sees the truth of some state of affairs [*complexionem*] made and brought about by the will (which truth his essence immediately presents to him).⁴³

The idea seems to be that the numerical identity of God's act of understanding is not altered in any way by the *content* of this act—where the

content is contingent upon the free decision of the divine will. And presumably it is this one act of understanding—irrespective of its content—that is identical with the divine essence. I am not sure, however, that this will go much of the way towards solving the contingency difficulty. After all, C-objects should be identical with the divine essence as much as God's knowledge of them is.

Accounting for God's knowledge of contingent truths in this way certainly safeguards the unconditioned nature of God; nothing outside God is required for him to have knowledge of contingent truths. But it seems to be open to an obvious objection. Scotus's account makes it look as though God's decision leaves no place for created freedom. Think about God's knowledge of future contingents, future events that may or may not come to pass, perhaps simply as a result of a human decision. If God knows these events—or even the C-objects necessarily corresponding to these events—by determining them, there seems to be no room for human freedom. And, as we shall see in chapter 7, Scotus is convinced that human beings are free in the strongest sense, with—like God—both the powers and the opportunities for determining their own actions. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Scotus believes himself to have overwhelming reasons for both of the following claims:

(1) God knows the future by determining it;

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ebrary (2) Human beings are self-determining free agents.

We have already seen the crucial presupposition lying behind (1)—namely, that God is wholly unconditioned, and cannot gain knowledge from external causes. And in chapter 7 we shall look at Scotus's reasons for (2). Given that both (1) and (2) are true, Scotus concludes that a further claim must be true:

(3) A free creaturely action has two causes which are jointly necessary and sufficient: God and the creature.⁴⁴

Scotus's argument, as Wolter and Frank have both pointed out, is not *explanatory*: it is a demonstration *that* (3) is true, not an explanation of *how* it is true, or of how (1) and (2) can be reconciled.⁴⁵

Frank offers a useful summary of the sort of essentially ordered concurrent causality involved in this sort of divine-human cooperation (labeling it 'autonomous co-causality'):

Although the two [autonomous partial co-]causes are ordered as superior to inferior according to their essential natures as active powers, the inferior's dependence on the superior in its act of causing is not a matter of participating in the other's fuller causality, nor does the superior otherwise move the inferior to exercise its causality. Rather, both superior and inferior causes act on behalf of the common effect with an independent, self-moving exercise of causality. To be sure, neither on its own effort suffices to cause the effect: neither is the total cause. In short, each cause independently exercises its causality, but only in cooperation do they bring about the effect.⁴⁶

Scotus's standard example of such essentially ordered autonomous co-causes is "the concurrence of male and female in begetting offspring. . . . Neither mother nor father suffice independently of the other, and, further, the necessary contribution of each is rooted in an essential difference between their generative powers."⁴⁷ Divine and human causal concurrence is like this. Both causes are necessary, and they are jointly sufficient, for a free human action. And God knows the outcomes of free human actions as a result of his own causal role.

This account of God's knowledge of free human actions is subtle and intriguing. But it is not clear to me that it is ultimately coherent, or that Scotus's sophisticated account of autonomous co-causality is really applicable here. Scotus's claim is that God can know future contingents by being an autonomous co-cause of such events. Now, knowledge—by definition—cannot be false. So if God really knows creaturely actions, his casual activity must be *sufficient* for the events that he knows. If God's activity here is not sufficient, then there is no way that God can guarantee the outcome. On the theory of autonomous co-causality, God's action is—by contrast—necessary *but not sufficient* for the production of the effect. So it cannot be the case *both* that God knows free human actions, *and* that he is an autonomous co-cause of such actions. Scotus's doctrine, as it stands, is not just (as Wolter and Frank rightly point out) non-explanatory; it is straightforwardly incoherent. Scotus should take the contradictory nature of (3) as evidence that either (1) or (2) is false. And in fact it seems to me that his arguments in favor of (1) and (2) are—con-

trary to what Scotus supposes—far from overwhelming. As I shall show in chapter 7, Scotus does not have a good argument for (2). And the argument for (1) presupposes a doctrine of simplicity that we might consider far too strong.

God's knowledge of temporal truths

There is a further puzzle about divine knowledge. How can a timeless God—a God who exists outside time—have knowledge of time? As I have tried to show elsewhere, Scotus unequivocally accepts that God is timeless, lacking both temporal extension and temporal location.⁴⁸ A God who is timeless cannot have the sort of knowledge of time that requires of its subject temporal location (e.g., what time it is now, or what happens tomorrow). But there is no reason why a timeless God cannot have knowledge of those temporal facts that can be known without temporal location. We do not need, for example, to have temporal location to know that certain events occur before other events, or that such and such happened on, say, 8 November 1308.⁴⁹ Scotus is quite clear that God can have knowledge of this second sort of temporal fact. For example, when dealing with the problem of God's knowledge of the temporality of creaturely existence, Scotus claims:

Just as [God] in eternity compares his will “as creative” to the soul of the Antichrist as possible for some time, so he in eternity compares his will “as creating” to the soul of the Antichrist as actually existing at that instant for which he wills to create that soul.⁵⁰

Scotus also tries (unsuccessfully) to claim that God can have knowledge of the first sort of temporal fact (i.e., the sort of fact that requires its knower to have temporal location). An objector tries to argue that a timeless God cannot know such temporal facts—and hence that, since God can know such facts, he cannot be timeless.⁵¹ Scotus tries to deflect the objection by reiterating that God can have knowledge of different times as outlined in the quotation above. So Scotus obviously—and mistakenly—supposes that his account is sufficient to allow God knowledge of the first sort of temporal fact as well. But this is not so, and Scotus's reply clearly fails to meet the objection. On the other hand, it seems to me right that a timeless God cannot know the first sort of temporal fact. The theist anxious to defend God's timelessness ought to devote his or her energies to showing why this divine “ignorance” does not have harmful consequences for divine omniscience.

3. Divine agency

Omnipotence and primary causation

According to the schoolmen, God is a partial cause of everything (other than himself) that exists and occurs. God is the *primary* cause; the created causes that act concurrently with God are *secondary* causes. Scotus generally spells out the relationship between primary and secondary causes as the relationship between the first member of an E-series and any subsequent member. (An exception to this, as we have just seen, is God's causal concurrence with our free actions. While God's action and our action are essentially ordered, they are also *autonomous*.) God is the primary cause of everything by being at the head of every E-series. As we saw in chapter 3, relationships of essential causality are transitive. This might seem to make creaturely concurrence superfluous. But Scotus does not think that it does. He draws a distinction between secondary causes and instrumental causes. *Secondary causes* have intrinsic causal powers. *Instrumental causes* do not have causal powers; or if they do, these powers are caused by the principal agent, and endure only for as long as the principal agent uses its instrument.⁵² Scotus describes carefully the way in which a genuine secondary cause is activated by the primary cause:

I believe that . . . a secondary cause . . . has a certain subordination of its active form [i.e., its causal power] to the active form of another. Through this subordination, when the prior cause becomes active in its order of causing, the second naturally becomes active in its order of causing. And thus the secondary [cause] is said to be a "moved mover," not because it receives its motion from the primary cause (through which it moves), but because in its motion it depends on another whose motion is naturally prior.⁵³

On this account, a secondary cause is activated by the activation of its causal powers. That its causal powers function when they do is presumably the result of the causal activity of the primary cause. But a secondary cause—unlike an instrument—is a cause in the sense that the effect caused by its causal powers is not caused by the higher cause.⁵⁴

As we saw in chapter 2, Scotus believes that God's infinite power can be demonstrated by natural reason. A being is infinitely powerful if it is capable of producing any effect. As we also saw, Scotus distinguishes

infinite power from omnipotence. A being is omnipotent if it is capable of producing any effect without the causal concurrence of secondary causes. An omnipotent being, for example, would be able to burn something without fire, and quench someone's thirst without water. Scotus believes that God is omnipotent in this way.⁵⁵ But he does not believe that it is possible to demonstrate that God is omnipotent. We believe in God's omnipotence merely on the basis of revelation.⁵⁶ According to Scotus, there is a probable argument in favor of omnipotence:

The active power of any secondary cause exists in the first cause in a more eminent way than in the second cause. Now what possesses the active power more eminently can cause the effect, it seems, without the intervention of what possesses it only in a lesser degree. To produce an effect no imperfection is required in the active power. For imperfection is not essential to acting, rather it is an impediment.⁵⁷

But he thinks that we could plausibly accept the premise ("The active power of any secondary cause exists in the first cause in a more eminent way than in the second cause") while denying the conclusion. Aristotle could argue, for example, that the premise entails no more than "[a] cause with such eminent power can indeed produce the effect of such a power, but only in its own orderly way, which means it functions precisely as a higher and remote cause."⁵⁸ Furthermore, Scotus claims that we could plausibly hold that the power to cause effects immediately—the distinguishing mark of omnipotence—implies imperfection: "Where an essential order exists, nothing can be adjacent to the least perfect unless it is in some measure imperfect."⁵⁹

Nevertheless, these arguments against omnipotence are not probative; if they were, of course, we could demonstrate the falsity of the Christian faith. And for Scotus the articles of the Christian faith are true.⁶⁰ We should also note that Scotus's claim that God is omnipotent does not entail occasionalism (i.e., that God actually exercises his omnipotence by causing everything in the universe directly). Scotus's claim is just that God *could* so act.

Divine freedom and timeless agency

Scotus offers a highly nuanced and original account of freedom. I examine it in detail in chapter 7. Scotus is quite clear that a free agent has a

power to produce opposite effects in exactly the same circumstances. When I bring about effect *e*, for example, I could in exactly the same circumstances bring about not-*e*, or even do nothing at all. Scotus analyzes created freedom into three different sorts of indeterminacies: a created agent is free to produce opposite *acts*, it is free to will opposite *objects*, and it is free to cause opposite external *effects*.⁶¹ According to Scotus, God's free will has the second and third of these indeterminacies, but not the first. Human beings need the first sort of indeterminacy—for producing opposite acts—because they bring about their effects piecemeal, and the first indeterminacy is what allows for some sort of *process* in created activity. Thus, creatures do one action at a time, and they necessarily perform one action after another. So the power to perform different acts is in fact an imperfection; it implies process and mutability. Thus it cannot be found in God.⁶² God in fact has one timeless act. By means of this one act he freely wills different objects, and causes different effects.⁶³ God thus freely produces any state of affairs he wants, timelessly and without going through any process.

God's timelessness means that God has no "time" in which to make his free choice with regard to which effects to bring about. Scotus believes, however, that it is possible to make a free choice in an instant. He argues that, at exactly the same time as a free agent chooses to bring about effect *e*, it retains its power to bring about not-*e*.⁶⁴ Scotus argues that this power is necessary for genuine contingency in the will. (I discuss his reasoning in chapter 7, section 1.) Clearly, if Scotus is right about this, then he has a tool that will allow him to give an account of timeless freedom. Given that a free agent has a power for opposites in the same instant, it is logically possible that either of the opposites be brought about. If there were no such power in God, then he would not be able to bring about effects freely. (On any alternative account, freedom entails power for opposites *before*—but not during—the actualization of one of the opposites. On this account, free agency requires temporal succession.) Still, how would a timeless God have time to choose? Scotus sees no reason for God's choice to take time. All that matters for him is that there is a logical sequence in God's activity; the divine intellect presents all possibilities to the will logically prior to the will's choice of just one of these possible states of affairs.⁶⁵

Scotus's claim that free agents have a power for opposites in the same instant—their synchronic power for opposites—revolutionized central

aspects of both theology and metaphysics. In theology, Scotus's claim enables him to give an account of God's power as ranging over sets of compossible (i.e., compatible) states of affairs. Each compossible set is known by the divine intellect as logically possible; the divine will, in one timeless action, actualizes one of these sets. This account of divine power enables Scotus to provide a theoretical framework for the talk of the "two powers" of God that we find commonly from the thirteenth century.⁶⁶ The distinction is between God's "absolute power" and his "ordained power." The first of these picks out God's power to bring about any state of affairs, actual or possible (things that are and things that might have been); the second, his power to bring about those states of affairs that are actual. Of course, the distinction is not intended to suggest that God has more than one set of causal powers. It is just a convenient way of stating that God can do more than he has actually done. Scotus often talks about things God could have done by his absolute power, by which he means that some counterfactual state of affairs is not logically impossible. (I discuss some of these claims in later chapters.) Of course, Scotus is clear, anything that God *does* is brought about by his ordained power. It is a mistake to suppose that Scotus holds God's absolute power to be some kind of executive power capable of overruling the ordained power. Thus:

God can act otherwise than is prescribed not only by a particular order, but also by a universal order or law of justice, and in doing so he could still act ordainedly, because what God could do by his absolute power that is either beyond or runs counter to the present order, he could do ordainedly.⁶⁷

The point of this passage is that God's ordained power relates to whatever he actually chooses to do. There is nothing that God could bring about by his absolute power which, were he actually to bring it about, would not be brought about by his ordained power.⁶⁸

By drawing attention to the realm of the non-actual as restricted by logical possibility, Scotus is able to make sense of the notion of God's absolute power in a way denied to his thirteenth-century predecessors.⁶⁹ Scotus's account of the synchronic power for opposites has some important metaphysical consequences too. Knuuttila puts the matter neatly:

In Duns Scotus's modal theory modal notions are no longer understood as clarifying the states of the actual world at different times. The domain of possibility is accepted as an a priori area of conceptual

consistency which is then divided into different classes of compossible states of affairs, of which the actual world is one. Thus it was not Leibniz who invented the idea of a possible world; the idea is present in Duns Scotus' modal theory.⁷⁰

And this move allows Scotus to distinguish logical possibility from the possible exercise of real causal powers.

Scotus's account of a synchronic power for opposites, as I have suggested, undergirds his account of God's timeless action. But there is an obvious objection to the idea of timeless action. How could a timeless God bring about different effects at different times? The crucial fact to keep in mind, I think, is that God as a disembodied omnipotent agent does not need to go through any *process* in order to act. (I discussed this aspect of Scotus's account of divine agency above. Briefly, God is free to will opposite objects and effects; but he does this through just *one* action. He is not free to will opposite actions.) Scotus capitalizes on this when trying to explain how a timeless God could bring about different effects at different times:

A new effect can be made by an old act of the will without a change of will. Just as I, by means of my continuous volition—by which I will something to be done—will do it just for the “when” for which I will to do it, so God in eternity willed something other than himself to be for some time, and then created it for the “when” for which he willed it to be.⁷¹

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The fact that a creature is created at time *t* does not entail that God has to do anything at *t*. All God has to do is to will (eternally) that the creature begins to exist at *t*.⁷²

Scotus's discussion of God's knowledge and agency shows considerable similarity to modern discussions of the same topics. Perhaps the most distinctive feature is Scotus's bold attempt to give an account of God's knowledge of free human actions given both that God is wholly unconditioned and that determinism is false. And Scotus's explicit claim that divine power ranges over all logical possibilities—all states of affairs that do not include a contradiction—is of obvious importance in the history of ideas.