

Review

- Fill in the blanks: Aquinas was strongly influenced by the ***theology*** of _____ and the ***philosophy*** of _____.
 - Augustine
 - Aristotle
- Aquinas’s “five ways,” or proofs for God’s existence, were all based on the fundamental idea that the world is an _____ which needs a _____, and the cause is God.
 - “effect”
 - “cause”
- Finish this statement: Aquinas said that “*The person who knows God best is he who recognizes ...*”
 - *that whatever he thinks and says **falls short** of what God really is.”*

Review

- Aristotle had distinguished between the “**accidents**” and “**substance**” of an object. Describe what Aristotle meant by each of these ideas.
 - The **accidents** of an object were the physical qualities of that object which could be grasped by the bodily senses.
 - the **substance** of an object was the basic **inner reality**, perceived only by the mind, that gives that object its particular identity.
- Explain how Aquinas used these categories to defend the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation that had developed by his day.
 - When the priest pronounces the words, “This is My body, this is My blood”:
 - the **substance** (the non-physical inner reality) of the bread and wine is miraculously changed into Christ’s flesh and blood.
 - While the **accidents** (the physical form, taste, and smell) of the bread and wine remain the same; as far as human bodily senses are concerned, they are still bread and wine.

Later Scholastic Theologians



John Duns Scotus



<https://medium.com/the-liturgical-legion/john-duns-scotus-and-divine-atemporal-knowledge-76352b5cbc75>

John Duns Scotus

- John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) was born in Scotland.
- In his youth he joined the Franciscan order, and studied at Oxford and Paris Universities.
- Scotus was **opposed** to many of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. He began a revolutionary new trend in scholasticism by **separating** theology from philosophy.
- Scotus insisted, for example, that reason could **not** establish the existence of the **Christian** God; all it could do was prove the existence of a Being who was infinite.
- The human mind, he said, could only know the attributes and character of this Being through special divine revelation.
- So where Aquinas had “**married**” theology with philosophy, Scotus started proceedings for their **divorce**. This would soon alter the whole character of the scholastic enterprise.

John Duns Scotus

- In determining divine truths, Scotus emphasized ***God's will*** over ***human reason***.
- The world was what it was, ***not*** because reason demanded it, but because God's will had freely and sovereignly ***chosen*** to make things this way.
- For example, Scotus applied this outlook to the atonement: he said that Christ's death had saving power, ***not*** because of any inherent worth or value possessed by Christ or His sacrifice, but simply because God sovereignly willed to accept it as a sufficient payment for sin.

John Duns Scotus

- Therefore, according to Scotus, it was *impossible* for human reason to show that Christian doctrines were “reasonable”, because what God had done was *not required* of Him *by reason*, but *freely chosen*.
- We *cannot* reason about what God *must* have done or *must* do; we can only accept, by faith in His revelation, what He has *chosen* to do.
- This new stress in Scotus’s writings on the supremacy of God’s revelation laid the basis for a theology which was more Biblical and less philosophical in character.

John Duns Scotus

- Another conflict between Scotus and Aquinas centered on the doctrine of the “*immaculate conception*” of the Virgin Mary.
- This is the belief that Mary was conceived without original sin (“immaculate” means “without blemish”).
- Radbertus in the 9th century seems to have been the first to suggest this idea, but the teaching was rejected by many church leaders including Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux.
- Aquinas taught that Mary was *conceived* with original sin like *all* human beings, but was then *purified* from sin at some point between her conception and her birth.

John Duns Scotus

- Scotus, however, argued that it was a more perfect exercise of God's grace to preserve an individual from ***ever having*** original sin, than to ***purify*** an individual from its stain.
- Since Christ, the Second Adam, was free from original sin, it seemed fitting that Mary, the Second Eve, should also be free from it.
- Therefore, Scotus concluded, since Scripture and Church tradition did not ***deny it***, it seemed "probable" that Mary was conceived without original sin.

John Duns Scotus

- Scotus never went further than saying that the immaculate conception was “**probable**” because it **appeared** to follow from other known doctrines.
- His **followers** were less hesitant, and proclaimed the immaculate conception as a **definite truth**.
- Although it was not until 1854 that the immaculate conception became an **official** Roman Catholic doctrine.
- Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism both **reject** the immaculate conception.

John Duns Scotus

- Due to the intricacy and complexity of his theories, Scotus came to be called “The Subtle Doctor” and his most devoted students and followers came to be known as “Dunsmen.”
- Scotus’ teachings was viewed *favorably* by ecclesiastical scholars in the *centuries immediately following* his death in 1308.
- But by the *mid-16th century* “The Subtle Doctor’s” intensely analytical writings and logic came to be seen as *overly complex*, and so the Dunsmen, or “*Duns*” of that day came to be associated with *idiocy*.
- And so we see the origin of the modern term “dunce”.

William of Ockham



From stained glass window at a church in Surrey, England

William of Ockham

- William of Ockham (1285-1349) was born at Ockham in Surrey, southern England.
- He studied theology at Oxford University where he joined the Franciscan order.
- In 1324, Pope John XXII summoned Ockham to Avignon, France where, he became involved in a controversy.
- A party called the “spiritual Franciscans” wanted all members of their order to practice absolute poverty, as their founder Francis of Assisi had intended.
- Ockham ***supported*** this view, but it was ***condemned*** by Pope John XXII in 1328.

William of Ockham

- Ockham then fled to Germany where he was protected by the Holy Roman Emperor, Louis the Bavarian, a violent enemy of the papacy.
- John XXII **excommunicated** Ockham, who then spent the rest of his life in Louis' service.
- Ockham wrote **against** the papacy for Louis, teaching that:
 - An ecumenical council of the whole Church was **superior** to the papacy.
 - Popes could **err** but ecumenical councils and the Bible were both **infallible**.
 - The pope had no power to depose kings and emperors, but an emperor had the power to depose an erring pope.

William of Ockham

- Ockham was a *highly* influential thinker.
- He took further the divorce between theology and philosophy that Scotus had started.
- Ockham held that *reason* could not prove the existence of God; all it could do was *suggest arguments* to show that, at best, God *probably* existed.
- Ockham also maintained that all our human knowledge was strictly limited to our experience of individual things.

William of Ockham

- For Ockham, then, there was no pathway from reason or experience to spiritual realities or to God.
- Reason shows us a spiritually dark and Godless world; **only** the light of divine revelation in **Scripture** manifests God to us.
- The proper religious task of reason, Ockham said, was not to “prove” Christian doctrines or show how “reasonable” they were, but simply to examine the various statements of Scripture.
- By teaching this, Ockham had in some ways abandoned the whole scholastic attempt to build a theology with rational foundations.

William of Ockham

- Occam is most famous for what is known as “Occam’s razor.”
- Occam's razor says that when presented with competing hypotheses that make the same predictions, one should select the solution with the fewest assumptions. Or to paraphrase: “the simplest solution is most likely the right one”
- Although since Occam’s time this principle has been employed as an argument **against** the existence of God, this was not Occam’s purpose, for he was convinced that God **does** exist, even though such existence cannot be **proven** by rational argument, but must simply be accepted by **faith**.
- And faith affirms not only that God **exists**, but also that God is **omnipotent**.

William of Ockham

- Starting from divine omnipotence, Occam and his followers reached the conclusion that human natural reason can prove ***absolutely nothing*** regarding God or the divine purposes.
- ***Whatever*** God pleases to do is possible. ***Nothing*** is above the absolute power of God— not even reason, nor the distinction between good and evil.
- Strictly speaking, one should not say that God always does good, but rather that ***whatever*** God does, no matter what it might be, is good.
- It is God who ***determines*** what is good, and ***not*** vice versa.

William of Ockham

- Likewise, it is incorrect to say that God has to act *reasonably*.
- Reason does *not* determine God's action. On the contrary, it is the *sovereign will of God* that determines what is reasonable.
- If this is true, it meant that all the traditional arguments where theologians had tried to prove that a doctrine was "reasonable" were of no value!
- Ockham's theology, after showing that reason could not reach the depths of God, placed everything in God's hands, and was ready to believe *anything* that God had revealed.
- And to believe it, *not* because it *made sense*, but because it had been *revealed*.

William of Ockham

- Ockham was also influential in reviving *Semi-Pelagianism*.
- The great schoolmen before Ockham had, on the whole (with various modifications), been followers of Augustine and his theology of grace and predestination.
- Ockham, however, taught that an unbeliever could *merit* God's grace by "doing his best".
- Ockham denied that humanity's fallen will was in bondage to sin, and made God's predestination depend on His foreknowledge of those unbelievers who would "do their best" by their own natural capacity.

William of Ockham

- Ockham's type of Semi-Pelagianism placed a far stronger emphasis on the power of the human will than the older Semi-Pelagians had done.
- The older Semi-Pelagians had not held that a sinner could merit grace by doing his natural best, but that unbelievers could freely accept the *unmerited* grace which alone converts and saves.
- Ockham's teaching was in fact much closer to pure Pelagianism; we could more accurately describe it as "neo-Pelagianism" (the "new Pelagianism").
- This neo-Pelagian trend in scholasticism, begun by William of Ockham, came to its highest point in the great German theologian *Gabriel Biel* (1420-95), sometimes called "the last of the schoolmen."

William of Ockham

- The theology of Ockham and Gabriel Biel became known as the *via moderna*, the “modern way”, in contrast to the *via antiqua*, the “old way” of the previous schoolmen.
- The *via moderna* dominated scholastic theology until the dawn of the Protestant Reformation.
- This helps us to understand the forceful way in which the Protestant Reformers denounced scholasticism.
- They were, in part, condemning the neo-Pelagian theology of Ockham, Biel and the *via moderna*, which made salvation into the fruit of natural human free-will and merit, rather than (as the Reformers believed) the fruit of God’s sovereign grace.

The Rise of Musical Instruments in Worship



VOLUNTEERS ARE LIKE BROWNIES!

B BEST OF THE BEST
R REALLY GENEROUS
O OUTSTANDING
W WONDERFUL
N NATURALLY NICE
I INVALUABLE TO HOPE
E EXCELLENT
S SWEET



Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- John Duns Scotus argued that Christ's death had saving power, **not** because of any inherent worth or value possessed by Christ or His sacrifice, but simply because God sovereignly willed to accept it as a sufficient payment for sin. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
- William of Ockham argued that, strictly speaking, one should not say that God always does good, but rather that **whatever** God does, no matter what it might be, is good. It is God who **determines** what is good, and **not** vice versa. Do you agree or disagree. Explain your answer.
- Do you agree with Occam when he says that “when presented with competing hypotheses that make the same predictions, one should select the solution with the fewest assumptions”. Or to paraphrase: “the simplest solution is most likely the right one?”
- Do **you** have a topic or question that **you** would like to see us to discuss?