

THE WILL AS PURE PERFECTION AND THE NEW NON-EUDAEMONIST IDEA OF LOVE IN DUNS SCOTUS

Josef Seifert*

Duns Scotus has developed one of the most original philosophies of freedom.¹ At the same time, his equally new and original philosophy of the transcendentals is a ground-breaking part of his metaphysical doctrine.² Moreover, these two are closely connected to the third teaching of Scotus that we shall consider in this paper: freedom is ‘transcendental’ in the sense of pure perfection. All of these teachings, in their turn, give rise to a radically new concept of love that cannot be explained along the lines of Aristotelian-Thomistic eudemonism.³

I. Duns Scotus’ New and Original Philosophy of the Pure Perfections I. The Essence of the Pure Perfections.

A. The first and fundamental essential characteristic of the pure perfections: that to possess them is absolutely better than not to possess them, for whatever reason this may be. Pure perfections are those which to possess is absolutely (omnino) better (melius simpliciter) than not to possess them.

The “pure perfections,” which played an important role already in the Pre-Socratic Xenophanes, were for the first time grasped with philosophical clarity by Anselm of Canterbury in his *Monologion*⁴. Scotus, quoting him, accepts Anselm’s list of pure perfections given in the *Monologion*: [The substance of the supreme nature] is not a body, then, “ he says, “nor any of those things which bodily senses perceive. . . . It must be living, wise, omnipotent, true, just, eternal, and anything, absolutely

* Dr. JOSEF SEIFERT, University Professor, e Rector, International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein and at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile en Santiago (IAP-PUC).

¹ This has been recognized by many authors. See for example, Walter Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus* (München: 1962); see also Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 57 ff.; see also William A. Frank, “Duns Scotus on Autonomous Freedom and Divine Co-Causality, ” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 2 (1992): 153-56.

² This text corresponds to a duns delivered at the “X Congreso Latinoamericano de Filosofía Medieval” April 19-22, 2005, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile en Santiago. In the program the title was given in Spanish as “La voluntad como perfección pura y la nueva idea non-eudemonística del amor n Duns Scoto. ”

³ At the time I delivered this lecture, I was Professor (Profesor titular) and Rector, at the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality Liechtenstein (IAP) and in Santiago de Chile at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile en Santiago (IAP-PUC). From 2015 – 2017, I held a chair (asn Catedrático) of the cátedra Dietrich von Hildebrand para fenomenología realista) en la Academia Internacional de Filosofía-Instituto de Filosofía Edith Stein, Granada, Spain.

⁴ *Monologion*, chap. 15.

speaking, that it is better to be than not to be.”⁵

However, as Anselm himself, he adds many others to this list, including free will. Anselm distinguishes the pure perfections from those properties (perfections), which “to be (to have)” in some cases (*in aliquo*) is better than not to be or to have.

Quite the reverse is the case with those properties and forms of being which are not simply perfect, such as gold, with its proper values of rustlessness, etc. It is in some instances absolutely better not to possess these values, namely then when one possesses a higher perfection which would be excluded by the essential limitations of being gold.⁶ Innumerable individual, concrete, and general properties, such as the possession of a pretty face or even the possession of human nature, are “*perfectiones limitatae*.”

All theology would be necessarily anthropomorphic and false if we could not distinguish pure from mixed (necessarily limited) perfections. Thus, the knowledge of pure perfections is the condition of knowing God, as Duns Scotus sees:

With regard to everything except relations, whatever is unconditionally better than something which is not it, must be attributed to God, even as everything not of this kind must be denied of him. According to Anselm, then, we first know something to be a pure perfection and secondly we attribute this perfection to God.⁷

Duns Scotus has deepened the doctrine of the first mark of pure perfections that demands a double refinement. “*Non ipsum*” cannot be understood merely as a simple contradictory opposite (of absence, of non-possession) since it is also valid for all limited perfections that their simple non-possession is less perfect than their possession.

Any form of absence of the pure perfections, however, implies of itself a lesser perfection than its presence, whether this absence depends on a contradictory or contrary opposite, on a negative and privative antithesis, or a positive essential characteristic incompatible with the perfection concerned (*quodcumque positivum incompossibile*) – such as the higher angelic and divine natures exclude the human.

⁵ Quod. 1, n. 8 (Wadding, 12:10 = AW, p. 12 [n. 1.22]), quoting Anselm, Monol. 15 (1:28-29).

⁶ Anselm makes use of his discovery of the uniqueness of the pure perfections in a manner decisive for classical metaphysics and philosophy of God. For, that which is not only greater and better than all other beings, but that greater than which nothing can be thought, must possess all those perfections, which to have (be) is absolutely better than not to have (et quidquid similiter absolute melius est quam non ipse): “living, wise, powerful and almighty, true, just, holy, eternal” and all other pure perfections. In contrast to this, no attribute which is essentially finite and limited may be ascribed to an infinite divine essence.

⁷ Ord. 1.3.1.1-2, n. 38 (Vatican, 3:25-26 = PW, p.24). See also Ord. 1.2.2.1-4, nn. 382-84 (Vatican, 2:346-47); Ord. 1.8.1.1, n. 22 (Vatican, 4:162); Ord. 1.8.1.4, n. 167 (Vatican, 4:239-40); Quod. 1, n. 8 (Wadding, 12:10 = AW, p. 12 [n. 1.22]); Quod. 5, n. 13 (Wadding, 12:128 = AW, p. 119 [n. 5-31]).

The second refinement added by Duns Scotus to Anselm's fundamental distinction takes into consideration Anselm's own grasp that the non-possession of a pure perfection can be preferable to its possession for accidental reasons, such as a foolish good man is preferable to a wise but evil man. It adds the insight that a certain nature, for example, that of a dog, may exclude the possession of such pure perfections as wisdom, wherefore its possession would not be good for an individual of such a nature.⁸ Scotus, therefore, distinguishes the expression *in quolibet*, which Anselm chooses for any subject of pure perfections, from the expression *in cuiuslibet*, meaning a subject of a determinate nature. Hence the *Doctor subtilis* says that the presence of pure perfection is better than its absence for any being or subject abstractly speaking (*in quolibet*): "*in quolibet habente ipsam melius est ipsam habere quam non ipsam habere*" (it is better to possess than not to possess in whatever subject possesses it)⁹, but not for any being of a given limited nature (*in cuiuslibet*), a distinction and an argument and distinction that also is retained in William of Ockham.¹⁰ There are natures which, because of their essential limitations, cannot bear a specific pure perfection and for which its possession, therefore, would not be better than its non-possession.

Duns Scotus seems, however, in his interesting redefinition of pure perfection through reference to the "*in quolibet*," to separate nature and subject too sharply from

⁸ Cf. Anselm, *Monologion*, ch. 15, 27 ff., especially *ibid.*, 31 ff.: *melius est sapiens quam non sapiens. Quamvis enim iustus non sapiens melior videatur quam non iustus sapiens, non tamen est melius simpliciter non sapiens quam sapiens. Omne quippe non sapiens simpliciter, in quantum non sapiens est, minus est quam sapiens.*

⁹ *Quodl. q. 5, n. 13, n. xxv, 215 a.* See also his text from Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as the First Principle: 4.10* A pure perfection is said to be something which is better in everything than what is not it. This description, however, seems worthless, for if we understand it of affirmation and negation, an affirmation is no better than a denial considered simply as such and as regards any subject able to have what is affirmed or denied. If these latter qualifications are omitted, and we claim the description holds for any subject whatsoever, then it is false, for it is not better for wisdom to be in a dog, for nothing which contradicts a thing is something good for it. [To this objection] I reply: This is a celebrated description, and one may explain it in this way. Take "better than what is not it" as referring to anything which is both positive and incompatible [and hence] entails the idea of not being this thing. It is better in this way, I say, in anything—not for anything, but in anything [and] insofar as it is concerned, for it is better than the [positive] incompatible feature which prevents it from being present. Briefly, then, one may say that pure perfection is whatever is absolutely and without qualification better than anything incompatible with it. This is the way the phrase "in everything than what is not it" should be understood, i.e., whatever is not it. For the rest, I am not concerned with the description. I accept the first part which is clear, and only add that one should understand "incompatibility" in the sense of denominative predication since it is commonly treated in this way [i.e., no possible subject could consistently have both predicates simultaneously]. Text available online: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/GODASFIR.HTM>.

¹⁰ Cf. Alan Wolter, *The Transcendentals and their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus*, (New York: 1946) p. 166, footnote 12.

one another.¹¹

Duns Scotus formulates¹² the essence of the pure perfections in the following precise way: “*perfectio simpliciter est, quae est simpliciter et absolute melius quocumque impossibile*” (“Briefly, then, one may say that a pure perfection is absolutely and without qualification better than anything incompatible with it.”)¹³ (the ‘whatever’ that is incompatible with a pure perfection) is a subject or nature, both or neither, as for example, *esse* (to be)¹⁴

¹¹Duns Scotus, *De Primo Principio*, c. 4, concl. 3, p. 69: Est, inquam, sic melius in quolibet – non cuilibet, sed in quolibet – quantum esset ex se. Cf. also Alan B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (St. Bonaventure, New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1946), pp. 164 ff. Elsewhere (Josef Seifert, *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), ch. 5) I have tried to show that the thesis that in any subject the possession of pure perfection would be better than its non-possession is also indefensible because no finite individual subject could be subject of exclusively pure divine perfections. There is a deeper link between individual subjects and nature than Scotus admits. This should, of course, not exclude two of Scotus’s insights which develop Anselm’s discovery: 1) that to a certain point, the same subject can be the bearer of different natures, and that 2) it may therefore well be the case that for a given subject of a specific nature it would be better to possess a (pure) perfection which is not compatible with its nature; for a mouse about to be eaten by a cat it might have been better to have become a lion, in which case its being eaten by a house cat would never happen; on a deeper level, a human person might have become an angelic one, with a great improvement of his or her intelligence. However, there are definite limits here which Scotus does not seem to be aware of. If one were to deny such limits, a total Teilhardian evolutionism would become possible in which any suppositum could assume any nature and thus acquire any creaturely or divine pure perfection.

¹² With a precision and fine pointing at their essence justifiably described by Walter Hoeres as ‘phenomenological’.

¹³ *De Primo Principio*, c. 4, concl. 3. Walter Hoeres stresses rightly that Duns Scotus practices here in an exemplary manner the phenomenological “back to things themselves”. Cf. Walter Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus* (Munich: Anton Pustet, 1962), 17 ff.; “Critique of the Transcendental Metaphysics of Knowing, Phenomenology and Neo-Scholastic Philosophy”, *Aletheia* I, 2, (1972) pp. 353-370; the same author, “Platonismus und Gegebenheit bei Duns Scotus”, in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti, Acta Congressus Internationalis, Oxonii e Edinburgi 11-17 Sept. 1966, c. vol. I* (Rome, 1968), pp. 139-168.

¹⁴ *De Primo Principio*, c. 4, concl. 3. Walter Hoeres stresses rightly that Duns Scotus practices here in an exemplary manner the phenomenological “back to things themselves.” Cf. Walter Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus* (Munich: Anton Pustet, 1962), 17 ff.; “Critique of the Transcendental Metaphysics of Knowing, Phenomenology and Neo-Scholastic Philosophy”, *Aletheia* I, 2, (1972) pp. 353-370; the same author, “Platonismus und Gegebenheit bei Duns Scotus”, in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti, Acta Congressus Internationalis, Oxonii e Edinburgi 11-17 Sept. 1966, c. vol. I* (Rome, 1968), pp. 139-168. [1] See also on this Josef Seifert, *Sein und Wesen. Philosophie und Realistische Phänomenologie/Philosophy and Realist Phenomenology. Studien der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein/Studies of the International Academy of Philosophy in the*

The human understanding is able to distinguish between these pure perfections in themselves and their factual limitations in all the forms in which they present themselves within the objects of our experience. Man is able in his knowledge to proceed to that point at which the “*impossibility of surpassing them without possessing them*” reveals itself to the spirit.

I cannot here present the Platonic and anti-Platonic elements in Scotus’ epistemology of pure perfections and my critique of them,¹⁵ nor enter here into a detailed criticism of this Scotistic epistemology of the pure perfections.¹⁶

Duns Scotus further clarifies the nature of the “pure perfections” through his distinguishing of five further essential characteristics of the pure perfections.

B. All pure perfections are mutually compatible. “Nulla perfectio simpliciter est impossibilis alteri perfectioni simpliciter.”

If one interprets the ratio (the definition, the essence) of the pure perfections as “*ipsa est melior in quolibet ... quam quodlibet impossibile sui*”¹⁷, and if there are then two pure perfections, A and B, which mutually exclude each other, then two mutually contradictorily opposed states of affairs can be derived from these two premises. For on the basis of this assumption, the possession of one and the same perfection A would at the same time be less perfect than its non-possession (based on applying the definition of the pure perfections to perfection B and its incompatibility with perfection A), and also more perfect than its non-possession (based on applying the same definition of the pure perfections to perfection A itself). Duns Scotus, therefore, makes us aware of a logical contradiction between the assumption of the incompatibility of pure perfection with one another and the definition of the essence of the pure perfections themselves. This is not only a formal-logical argument of

Principality Liechtenstein, (Hrsg./Ed.), Rocco Buttiglione and Josef Seifert, Band/Vol. 3 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996). Scotus says much more about pure perfections and the knowledge of their “ratio formalis” Duns Scotus brilliantly expounds that the human spirit can abstract precisely these pure perfections from all the limitations which accompany their realization in finite beings. What is more, human knowledge can penetrate to the pure and unique essential form, to the “ratio formalis,” and even to the essential core, of the perfection in question, which on the one side constitutes the formal essence which is the form of this perfection, and on the other is pure form and free of its accidental limitations in finite objects. The knowledge of the “ratio formalis” of the pure perfections penetrates to the corresponding essential form in its purity, that is, to be in itself, to life in itself, to knowledge in itself, to freedom in itself, etc.

¹⁵ See Josef Seifert, *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), ch. 5.

¹⁶ Cf. in particular the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, q. 5, and also footnotes 16-18 above. Cf. also Efreim Bettoni, *Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of his Philosophy*, trans. and ed. B. Bonansea (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961; Italian original, Brescia: La Scuola, 1946). See on this Josef Seifert, *ibid.*, ch. 5.

¹⁷ Duns Scotus, *Quodl.* q. 5, n. 8, XXV, 211 a.

Scotus, i.e., that it simply contradicts the definition of the pure perfections if two different pure perfections exclude each other.

If the premises of the Scotistic argument is not merely arbitrarily proposed, but is gained on the basis of the nature of the “thing – pure perfection” itself, then the Scotistic proof for the necessary compatibility of all pure perfections with each other is thoroughly valid¹⁸: it proceeds not from a mere arbitrary definition, but from an objective axiom, that is, from an essential law of things themselves.

C. Every pure perfection admits of infinity. A refinement to Scotus’ contribution: a pure perfection is only fully itself when it is infinite.

It is necessary to demonstrate the following three facts in order to establish the possibility of the actual infinity of every pure perfection: that absolute infinity as such is a perfection; that infinity is pure perfection; and that, therefore, nothing finite can surpass the infinite in perfection. From these three facts, in particular from the character of the pure perfection of infinity itself, it clearly follows that every pure perfection is compatible with absolute infinity that differs from an infinity within finite beings, the infinity within a limited part or limited aspect of being, e.g., the infinity of natural number sequences, of space, or of time,¹⁹ which, while being incommensurable with any finite distance or any finite mass, nevertheless contains within itself finite parts and is restricted to a limited sphere of being: numbers, time, space, lines, etc.

Completely different from this kind of infinity is that infinity which we can characterize as an absolute infinity. It is, first of all, in an essentially more profound and different sense than the infinite within the finite, incommensurable with anything finite. Secondly, the absolutely infinite in no way contains finite moments as real parts or actual elements of itself. Thirdly, and still greater significance: the absolutely infinite in no way stands within an essentially limited sphere of beings. Its subject is itself infinite in every respect. Fourthly, the subject of absolute infinity includes only pure perfections, which are absolutely better to have or to possess than not to possess. The exact contrary holds of the infinite within the finite, where it is more perfect for standing beyond the whole sphere of being to which these infinities are proper: number, space, time, lines, etc. Fifthly, the absolutely infinite is characterized primarily through the infinity of its *perfection*. It alone can be characterized, in the words of Anselm, as “that greater than which nothing can be,” or “that greater than which nothing can (also) only be thought.”

Thus, we can with Duns Scotus give an additional “essential definition” of the pure perfections: „a pure perfection is that perfection, which can be formally infinite.”

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cf. Adolf Reinach, “Über das Wesen der Bewegung,” prepared for print by Edith Stein on the basis of seminar notes, in Adolf Reinach, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Halle; Niemeyer, 1921), pp. 406-61.

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The most penetrating insight into the essence of pure perfections consists of the insight that they do not merely admit of infinity but are themselves *primarily* in their infinite form. While they are experientially accessible *exclusively* in their finite forms, we nevertheless, at the same time, know that every pure perfection is first “itself” in its infinite form.²¹

Scotus arrives at still another insight of great importance, which has been extensively considered by Hoeres²². Although the pure perfections exclude every imperfection, there is nevertheless an ordering and a hierarchical relationship among them, which fact poses a problem Scotus brilliantly solves.²³

D. Pure perfections are “irreducibly simple” – Duns Scotus as discoverer of irreducible urphenomena?

Every pure perfection is irreducibly simple, says Duns Scotus.²⁴ He means thereby that every pure perfection is what the phenomenologists have called an

²⁰ Oxon. 1. d. 8, q. 2, n. 3. “Solum illud est perfectio simpliciter quod potest esse in aliquo infinito.” (“Perfections in the absolute sense are only those which are able to subsist in some thing as infinite.”)

²¹ Scotus made many other contributions to a metaphysic of pure perfections. He poses to himself how acts and qualities (such as knowing, willing, love) would be pure perfections since they seem to be essentially accidents, and in comparison to substance, possess an imperfect mode of being. Scotus answers the question with the distinction between the pure perfections “as perfecting principle” – and in this sense, they can be absolutely perfect – and as an accident (i.e., as “a principle different from the ability to love or from the act of love) which is an imperfect form of realization of pure perfection, and which therefore does not belong to its nature as pure perfection. Duns Scotus does not note this fact explicitly, most likely because of his position, which rejects every truly analogous concept of being, that is, excludes that we can grasp the prime analogate at all – i.e., the pure perfections in their specific infinite form. This position has its root in Duns Scotus’ sharp critique of the Augustinianism of Henry of Ghent. We do not wish to enter into this historical controversy. Naturally, Scotus does not deny that all pure perfections are primarily in God. On this, cf. also Hoeres, *Der Wille*, pp. 61 ff.

²² Hoeres, *Der Wille*, p. 51.

²³ Thus, for example, life is higher than simple existence, love higher than life. However, how can this be if every pure perfection is infinite and unsurpassable? Scotus answers that such a hierarchy could only be true of the pure perfections if they are taken either in complete abstraction from their modes or if they are considered in their limited created actualizations. In the “mode of infinity,” they are all equally perfect because they are infinite and supremely one. In their infinite form, every perfection – despite preserving a formal distinction between them – is one with every other, thereby overcoming the hierarchy. Infinite being is infinite love; only infinite love can also be infinite life, etc. Hoeres, *Der Wille*, pp. 61 ff., in particular pp. 65 ff.

²⁴ Quodl., q. 1, n. 4; XXV, 10 a: Omnis perfectio simpliciter est simpliciter simplex. Probat, si est aliquo modo resolubilis in distincta, sint A et B, neutrum potest esse perfectio simpliciter simplex, quia tunc unum non faceret per se unum cum reliquo, quia non est per se unum ex quibuscumque distinctis, nisi unum sit sicut actus et aliud sicut potentia.

ultimate, an *Urphänomen*. No essence of a pure perfection allows itself to be reduced to, or deduced from, something else or is definable through something other. We touch in a pure perfection an ultimate and simple something, which in no manner can be thought of as composed of other predicates or other perfections.²⁵

In this context, we will also not treat another, the sixth essential characteristic of the pure perfections which Duns Scotus raises: the communicability of all pure perfections. A detailed discussion of this characteristic of the pure perfections would take us too far from the sphere of philosophy and bring us into the domain of theology.²⁶

²⁵ The necessary and irreducible simplicity of every pure perfection can be better understood through an argument that assumes their universal essence as its point of departure. If a pure perfection were not an ultimate, original datum, in the sense of the phenomenologists, or irreducibly simple, in the terminology of Duns Scotus, then it could only consist of other pure perfections. It is evident that a pure perfection cannot consist of essentially limited, “mixed” perfections. Were the other perfections of which a given pure perfection X is composed, however, only accidentally linked with the composed perfectio simpliciter, then they would constitute together only an accidental unity, which would contradict its status as a pure perfection. A mere conglomerate, a mere accidental unity of various perfections, cannot possibly itself be pure and potentially infinite perfection. Therefore, it must be the case, says Scotus, that every pure perfection possesses an irreducible simplicity and ultimacy. Here arises admittedly whether the alternative, upon which rest the premises and the conclusion of this argument, is a true alternative. Could there not be an essential and necessary (that is, non-accidental) unity and identity of all pure perfections? Scotus certainly does not exclude this. However, does this not lead to the reducibility of all pure perfection to one single perfection? This question must remain at this point unanswered. Still, a mere accidental unity of pure perfections can certainly be excluded. Even if the pure perfections were not physical, but rather metaphysical parts (such as act and potency) of a whole, they would still be imperfect and would mutually require each other for their own perfection. Every such conception of the pure perfections as composed or as parts of a whole contradicts the essential characteristics of the pure perfections we have already elaborated.

²⁶ The philosophical insight into the communicability of all pure perfections is for Duns Scotus theologically motivated, which excludes that here also can be found certain philosophical insights. Starting with the mystery of the Trinity, Scotus stresses that the singular characteristics of the divine persons and ‘person’ in its haecceitas and irreplaceable individuality at all can never be a “pure perfection.” If every specification that is proper only to a specific person were pure perfection, would all other persons, even the divine, be imperfect because they would lack precisely this perfection. This holds true in particular of all finite individuality and the participation of a finite nature in the pure perfections. Starting with this, one can see philosophically that (at least if there is a trinity of persons in God, and insofar as we can speak of the unitas of finite individual substance and person) a pure perfection must always possess a certain universality and communicability, and can never be the exclusive possession of a single individual or a single person. Otherwise, the absolute being would necessarily have to be one person. Personal being as such is nevertheless a pure perfection. We cannot here continue to discuss this characteristic of the communicability of all pure

II. Transcendentals and Pure Perfections as Irreducible to the “*passiones entis qua entis*” According to Duns Scotus

Duns Scotus poses the question: is it possible not only to discover transcendental attributes that are coextensive with being (*coextensivae enti*), which must exist in every being, but also to understand attributes that do not exist in every being, but which nevertheless possess no essential limitations or restrictions?

Duns Scotus says that all determinations which are ascribable to beings independently of the distinction between infinite and finite, or all those properties which are proper to infinite being alone, are transcendental, that is, lie beyond all determinations and limits of genera or species²⁷:

All transcendentals are necessarily also pure perfections, and all pure perfections are *eo ipso* transcendentals. In addition to those pure transcendental perfections which are possessed by *all* beings and those which are only ascribable to God, there is a third group of transcendentals (such as being a person, knowledge, freedom, etc.), which are only ascribable to some finite beings and the absolute being.²⁸ Duns Scotus actually develops a philosophy of freedom based on the intuition of this third group of pure perfections (=transcendentals), although he does not explicitly distinguish it²⁹ from the others.

Duns Scotus writes: “*Non oportet ergo transcendens ut transcendens dici de quocumque enti.*” (“It is not necessary therefore that the transcendent as transcendent be predicable of every being.”)³⁰

perfections or the problems that arise in understanding this characteristic.

²⁷ Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1 d, 8 q. 3: “*Ergo quaecumque conveniunt enti ut indifferens ad finitum vel infinitum, vel ut est proprium enti infinito, conveniunt sibi non ut determinatum ad genus, sed ut prius, et per consequens, ut ens transcendens et extra omne genus.*” (“Therefore, all the properties which refer to a being indifferent of whether they are finite or infinite, or in the mode which is proper to infinite being, do not comport themselves reciprocally as a concept determined concerning genus, but as prior concerning genus, and for this reason, as a being transcendent and beyond all genus.”)

²⁸ But they have a thoroughly transcendental character in the sense that they are pure perfections and free of all essential limitations.

²⁹ This third group of transcendentals (that are neither coextensive with being nor exclusively divine).

³⁰ Oxon, 1 d. 8, q. 3, n. 19. That this transcendental or “transcendent” character is not ascribed to them based on their being found in all beings, but rather for the reason of their “pure” (not essentially limited) perfection, naturally does not imply that the “*passiones entis qua entis*” do not incorporate a unique and significant sense of “transcendental”, in that they (and not the other pure perfections) are the principles which found the commonality and unity of all beings. Together with Duns Scotus, we can further distinguish, from another point of view, five different fundamental types of transcendental properties of being: 1. The first and most fundamental transcendental, as the home and source of all transcendentals, is *ens* (being) itself. In this transcendental are rooted all other transcendental determinations of being, particularly

those which are coextensive with being. Ens is itself further determined by the difference between being and the existent [Sein und Seiendem] on the one side and between being and essence on the other. 2. Secondly, Duns Scotus distinguishes within this first fundamental sense of the transcendentals those coextensive with being. These are those which were generally recognized by the Scholastics in addition to ens as transcendental determinations of being. However, as we have already asserted, Duns Scotus does not consider either these characteristics or ens itself as transcendentals primarily because they are common to all beings. This is rather only one of many ways to transcend the categorial or any other kind of limitation of being. Certainly, because the transcendental categories of being coextensive with beings are to be found in all realms of being, they are also eo ipso not limited to any determinate kind of being and possess no categorial limitations. Nevertheless, it is not primarily this moment of absolute generality which constitutes them as transcendentals, but much more the possibility of being unlimited, which is also ascribable to many other characteristics of being which are not absolutely general but which are nevertheless pure perfections, such as freedom for example. For since absolute being, on account of its infinity and absoluteness, lies beyond all limits of any merely individual categorial constitution of being [Seinsbeschaffenheit] and any other limits, all those attributes which are found in the infinite divine being regardless of whether they are found in any other beings or are shared by any other beings, must be affirmed as transcendental. While the longest list of the coextensive transcendentals in Thomas Aquinas is seven, Duns Scotus reduces these to just three; if ens (which he places in a separate group) is included, as in the Thomistic list of seven transcendentals, to four. See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in: *Opera Omnia (ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis ex aliis aevi auctoribus)*, 7 Bde, ed. Roberto Busa S. J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1980), vol. III, pp. 1-186, Q. I, a. 1, and Edith Stein, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinne des Seins*, in: *Edith Steins Werke*, Bd. II, Hrsg. L. Gerber, 2. Aufl. (Wien, 1962); 3. unver. Aufl. (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 302 ff; 308 ff. Cf. as part of this discussion John Crosby, "The Idea of Value and the Reform of the Traditional Metaphysics of Bonum," *Aletheia* I,2 (1977), pp. 231-339. With Duns Scotus' reduction of the three Thomistic transcendentals *res* (essentia), *aliquid* (non nihil; aliud quid) and *unum* all to *unum*, the question arises of whether he thereby discovered authentic reducibility of different transcendentals to one, or if he reduced to one three irreducibly distinct moments, which Edith Stein elaborated with great phenomenological precision. Besides the ens and unum, Duns Scotus also holds fast to the *verum* and *bonum*, whereby it is still necessary to ask if his striking of *pulchrum* (i.e., its reduction to *bonum*) is justified. 3. Thirdly, Duns Scotus philosophical investigation of a fascinating third kind of "transcendental" that he calls "disjunctive transcendentals," of which, in his opinion, there must be an infinite quantity. Whose deepest meaning, a meaning decisive for the problem of analogy and univocity, lies in that disjunction, which distinguishes the finite from the infinite, being which subsists in itself from being which subsists in another, temporal from eternal being, which dictates, in other words, that every being must be either absolute or not absolute. These "transcendental disjunctions," as I prefer to call them (because there is not actually a specific transcendental determination which is here ascribed to all beings, but only that characteristic, that every being respectively must possess one attribute of a specific pair of contradictory opposites), bring up fundamental philosophical problems, which must nevertheless be excluded here from our discussion. 4. Of much greater interest to us here because the basis of Duns Scotus' philosophy of will and love is above all the fourth group of transcendental properties which Scotus distinguishes and which Anselm of Canterbury had

III. Duns Scotus' Philosophy of the Good as Foundation of His Philosophy of Freedom

The transcendental *bonum* is of crucial significance for metaphysics as well as for ethics and a philosophy of freedom and love. Moreover, the whole idea of pure perfections is necessarily connected with the pure perfection of *bonum*.

In Thomas Aquinas, the good (value) is defined as a transcendental property of being, not in itself (*in se*), as being and essence, but in relation to something else, *ad aliud*, namely as relational to will and, more properly, to *appetites*. The good is conceived as being qua *appetibile*.

Scotus comprehends the *bonum* in the primary sense as the *intrinsic preciousness* of being completely grounded in the particular essence - and in many cases, in the real existence - of a being.

Of the objective good *for* a person, it is true that the importance of a being does not depend on that which the being is in itself, but only, so to speak, on the being "in its relation to" another being, and in many cases of objective goods for persons, this means that the good is so in relation to its strivings, drives, or happiness. This kind of importance does indeed not characterize a being in itself (*in se*), but only *ad alia*. This is the way Thomas characterizes *bonum* in general.³¹

Duns Scotus, on the contrary, recognizes clearly that goodness is an *intrinsic*

already brought to light before him. I speak of the "pure perfections," which are actually not only a separate group of transcendentals (those that are ONLY pure perfections and do not belong to the other groups) but rather constitute the innermost core of all transcendentals. Being itself and all transcendental determinations of being coextensive with being are also pure perfections. Likewise, one side of the "disjunctive transcendentals" is constituted – although negatively – as pure perfection. Even if the pure perfections constitute the core of all transcendentals and are coextensive with all transcendentals in a sense discussed above, there are still in addition to the first three kinds of transcendentals such transcendental determinations that extend beyond absolute being to only some finite beings, such as the person, for example, and which therefore do not fall into any of the first three groups of transcendental determinations of being. 5. While all and (according to Duns Scotus only) pure perfections and transcendentals are attributable to God, there are, finally, those exclusively pure divine perfections (such as omniscience, omnipotence, absolute infinity, aseitias etc.), that are exclusively ascribable to the absolute being.

³¹ We prescind here from another kind of foundation of the good insofar as it is perfection in the actuality of esse, or from identification of good with the act of real being which occurs in a more objectivistic Thomistic thesis, a thesis which John Crosby and other authors have criticized, using a concept analogous to that which we also would accept, as a form of "naturalism." In radical difference, the importance of value alone renders possible a truly metaphysical concept of good. This importance characterizes a being in its own innermost nature. Here it would be senseless to say that a valuable being is, in itself, neutral. In *De Veritate*, q. 21, Thomas explains that being has goodness only in relation to an appetitus, as being an appetibile.

property of being and not just relational to the appetites. This is the foundation of his philosophy of freedom as pure perfection that allows for infinity.³²

IV. Freedom as Pure and Personal Perfection According to Duns Scotus' Metaphysics of Freedom

Duns Scotus insists upon such personal perfections as knowledge, freedom³³ and love being pure perfections.³⁴ The fundamental insights of Duns Scotus about the spirituality and the perfection of the free will constitute a major part of his philosophical insights.³⁵

A. Freedom is a pure perfection because its object, the good, is an intrinsic characteristic of being and not dependent on any subject's appetites. Duns Scotus' understanding of value (the good) as a transcendental property of being *in se*, i.e., as an *intrinsic characteristic* of being, is the chief reason why not only the *bonum* can be a pure perfection capable of infinity, rather than being limited to the nature of the subject's appetites, but why also freedom as entailing an adequate relation to the intrinsic value of things can be pure perfection.³⁶ Duns Scotus has discovered what we also can call the capacity of giving a due *value-response*,³⁷ that is the capacity to respond to an intrinsic good that is not intended only as a means towards happiness: "*Intellectus potest cognoscere rationem illam boni, non ut ad finem ordinatus, sed ut in se est quoddam bonum; et sic voluntas potest ipsum velle non in ordine ad beatitudinem*".³⁸

B. Freedom as a pure perfection because it can be motivated not by the quest to fulfill the appetites (*affectio commodi*) but by an *affectio iustitiae* - Duns Scotus'

³² Neither the pleasurable nor the good is attractive for our appetites, but the goodness in itself is the transcendental bonum. Moreover, only for this reason also the beautiful can be subsumed under the bonum in Duns Scotus. In this sense, the pulchrum certainly collapses into the bonum, into the sphere of bonum understood in a wider sense as the good in itself or value. See also the similar position of Edith Stein, *ibid.*

³³ Ord. 1.3.1.1-2, n. 39 (Vatican, 3:26-27 = PW, p. 25): Take, for example, the formal notion of "wisdom," or "Intellect," or "will." Such a notion is considered first of all simply in itself and absolutely. Because this notion includes formally no imperfection or limitation, the imperfections associated with it in creatures are removed. Retaining this same notion of "wisdom" and "will," we attribute these to God -- but to a most perfect degree.

³⁴ Ord. 1-3.1.1-2, n. 39 (Vatican, 3:26 = PW, p. 25).

³⁵ See Walter Hoeres, *Der Wille*, II, ii, 2, par. 3, 149 ff.; 205 ff.

³⁶ Cf. the following texts of Duns Scotus: Oxon. III, d. 33, q. unica n. 6: "*Voluntas autem habet pro objecto bonum ostensum ab intellectu, quod est bonum universale, quod est bonum simpliciter*". Cf. also Oxon. IV, d. 49, q. 5 no 6. Cf. also the excellent analysis Hoeres gives of this doctrine of Duns Scotus, *ibid.*, pp. 149 ff.

³⁷ See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Ethics*, 2nd edn (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), ch. 17-18.

³⁸ Cf. likewise, Oxon. IV, d. 49, q. 10 n. 15.

discovery of the value-responding character of the will and the “personalistic principle” (*persona est affirmanda propter seipsam*) as a condition of ethics, of the highest moral commandment of love, and the will’s being a pure perfection.

That the free will can be motivated by the intrinsic value of things and above all of the persons also renders possible the spiritual dignity of the person and the freedom which affirms beings for their own sake. Moreover, the infinite scope of the range of objects of free acts is rendered possible by the capacity of the free person to affirm the intrinsic good for its own sake; if the good did depend on our appetites, the free will would always be restricted to a tiny fraction of the universal world of goods, namely to that part of it that is related to the finite happiness of the subject and it could not have the good in itself but only the good for the subject as its ultimate end; hence the will would be much more restricted than the intellect and not a pure perfection. Since it extends to all goods, including the infinite good, *in themselves*, however, it is pure perfection and even higher than the intellect: firstly, because the value of its response due to the good is greater than the intellectual value of the knowledge of the good; and secondly, because its range is even wider than that of the intellect because the act and love of the will can also embrace all the aspects of the infinite good that human reason cannot comprehend.

The thesis that the free will is a pure perfection can be justified only if the “important in itself”, the good as value in itself, or the good as bearer of an intrinsic and objective value, is recognized as object of the will – in contradistinction to the “objective good *for* the person”, i.e., to the *ens qua appetibile*, which is not “in itself” (*in se*) good but rather good only in relation to the appetite (*ad aliud*), and hence more restricted, and if the will can affirm the good *in se*.

All of these insights are closely related to Scotus’ philosophy of love.³⁹ In the act of love, the demands of due relation are fulfilled uniquely, insofar as love is directed toward persons who are affirmed for their own sake. Above all, in the act of the love of God⁴⁰ in which a person gives her whole being to God, there lives a perfect incarnation of this due relation.⁴¹

Love cannot be conceived as being motivated only by one’s own advantage or happiness (*affectio commodi*) but rests entirely upon the “*affectio iustitiae*”, on the motivation of intrinsic justice and adequacy. If we do not see this, we fail to understand love, as Duns Scotus sees with extraordinary clarity.⁴²

³⁹ The most significant analysis of this doctrine of Scotus was presented by Hoeres. See Hoeres, *ibid.*, pp. 149 ff.

⁴⁰ Scotus deems this act possible even by nature, not only by faith and grace.

⁴¹ ..., which – as the Christian believes – can only become more perfect than it is within the sphere of natural objects and experiences if it is elevated through grace and achieves the ultimate perfection by participating in the mystery of the love of God Incarnate himself.

⁴² And in a phenomenological look at things themselves. This ‘back to things themselves’ shows itself particularly impressively in Scotus’ analysis of love. The phenomenological dimension of the Scotistic theory of the pure perfections and of love is worked out with great

Moreover, only such a philosophy of the self-transcendence of love and its motivation by the *affectio iustitiae* makes it comprehensible that we ought to love the neighbor as ourselves and God above everything else. This first commandment can solely be fulfilled if God is not just loved as our own good, let alone as a means towards our own happiness. In such a eudaemonistic perspective, we could never love God more than ourselves because the appetites for happiness and hence the limited self would be the only ultimate measure and source of our love of the divine good. Hence the love of God more than we love of ourselves would become intrinsically impossible, wherefore Duns Scotus thinks that eudaemonist ethics is not only philosophically false but also theologically heretical because in its last consequence, it would dissolve and negate the first commandment.⁴³

In a way, those insights of Duns Scotus could very well be compared to Karol Wojtyła's philosophy of freedom and transcendence,⁴⁴ Duns Scotus sees the autonomy and perfection of the will rooted in a special transcendence in virtue of which the will can respond to the intrinsic good; it is rationally ordained to the good in itself, all goods, and the absolute Good above and beyond their role for the happiness of the subject; the ecstatic and self-transcendent capacity of the will to affirm intrinsic goods for their own sakes is the ultimate condition and ground of its character as pure perfection.

These doctrines of Scotus stand among the most outstanding contributions of Duns Scotus towards an adequate philosophy of the good, philosophical anthropology, and ethics. See the extraordinary text of Walter Hoeres in Walter Hoeres, *ibid.*, pp. 150-152 (translation by Katharina Fedoryka): In contrast to this, Scotus conceives of the will as an autonomous potency, whose aim in no way coincides with that of the being in which it is rooted. The autonomy of the will is rather grounded in its specific, material nature, which allows it to be in rational ordination towards the good, and in that this nature is pure perfection. This essential content allows the will to act in a truly rational and objective manner in relation to goods; by virtue of the pure perfection of this content, this stance is extended to all goods to the good itself. The capacity for such a stance makes the will something completely different from all

penetration by Walter Hoeres. See Walter Hoeres, *Der Wille*, especially pp. 17 ff.

⁴³ See also Anselm von Canterbury, *Proslogion und Ad Proslogion*, in: *Anselm of Canterbury (Aosta), S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*, Franciscus Salesius Schmitt (Hg.), 2 Bde. (Stuttgart-Bad-Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann/Günter Holzboog, 1968), Bd. I, pp. 89-139; see also my "Essere Persona Come Perfezione Pura. Il Beato Duns Scoto e una nuova metafisica personalistica," *De Homine, Dialogo di Filosofia 11* (Rom: Herder/Università Lateranense, 1994), pp. 57-75; the same author, *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989).

⁴⁴ See Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Boston: Reidel, 1979); cf. also the corrected text, authorized by the author (unpublished), (official copy), Library of the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality Liechtenstein, Schibbogg 7 B-C, Bendern, Liechtenstein; see also Josef Seifert, "Karol Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II) as Philosopher and the Cracow/Lublin School of Philosophy" in *Aletheia II* (1981), pp. 130-199.

other faculties of natural sensible striving, for “the will alone among all appetites (appetitus) can desire something good for its own sake, and therefore there is no similarity between the will and those other appetites.” Only the will, therefore, can affirm something for its own sake; its object is therefore not only that particular good of its own perfection, but the general good, i.e., the Good itself; insofar as we think of the convertibility of ens and bonum, the object of the will is being itself. This follows from the fact that the will can evaluate everything for its own sake, and from the fact that the purely absolute good, i.e., the good which is not constituted through the relationship with something other such as my own perfection, for example, is convertible with being. Thus, the will can, based on its natural essence, i.e., without the addition of caritas, love God above all else, but in the same way, it can will every other good, without having to set itself in relation, either implicitly or explicitly, to the final end of beatitudo. Through this also is Scotus’ doctrine of the will differentiated from that of St. Thomas, for whom the finite goods always appear as means for a final end.

The ecstatic structure of the will in Scotus’ thought manifests itself precisely in that it can affirm every good - no matter how small it is - for its own sake... This affirmation of the object in its specific place in the hierarchy of values is only possible through the will’s rationality, which can do justice to the object in itself, without reference to its own perfection. With this definition of the rationality of the will as the ability to do justice to every good in its own terms, we have fixed upon the deepest grounds for the ability of will as the rational capacity to prefer one good to another. The doctrine of the capacity to affirm and to do justice to a good purely for its own sake allows Scotus also to stress emphatically that the will is spiritual and rational not only through participation but in itself. For if the essence of spirit consists in ecstatically reaching out to another in its individuality, then this applies to the intellect equally as well as to the will. Since the ability for self-determination has its measure and its direction in the inner rationality of the will through which freedom is first made possible, as we have said, one can also characterize freedom as the ability to do justice to everything. According to Scotus the affectio iustitiae provides also the inner order for the affectio commodi in making the motivation by our own advantage, pleasure, and happiness an ordered one. This thought is again quite similar to Karol Wojtyła’s philosophy of integration.