

INTERPRETING DUNS SCOTUS

John Duns Scotus is commonly recognized as one of the most original thinkers of medieval philosophy – indeed, of Western philosophy *tout court*. His influence on subsequent philosophers and theologians is enormous and extends well beyond the limits of the Middle Ages. His thought, however, might be intimidating for the non-initiated because of the sheer number of topics he touched on and the difficulty of his philosophical style. The eleven essays collected here, especially written for this volume by some of the leading scholars in the field, take the reader through a variety of topics, including Duns Scotus's life and intellectual environment, his argument for the existence of God and his conceptions of modality, order, causality, matter and form, freedom, and human nature and its dignities. His views on the way human beings become aware of practical principles, on the extent and limits of their knowledge in this life, and on the concept of being and the notion of analogy are also analyzed. This volume provides a reliable entryway to the thought of Duns Scotus while giving a snapshot of some of the best research that is now being done on this difficult but intellectually rewarding thinker.

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Critical Essays

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page vii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	viii
 Introduction <i>Giorgio Pini</i>	 I
1 John Duns Scotus’s life in context <i>Stephen D. Dumont</i>	8
2 The modal framework of Duns Scotus’s argument for the existence of a first cause <i>Richard Cross</i>	44
3 Duns Scotus on essential order in <i>De Primo Principio</i> and elsewhere <i>Thomas M. Ward</i>	59
4 Duns Scotus on how God causes the created will’s volitions <i>Gloria Frost</i>	78
5 Duns Scotus on free will and human agency <i>Martin Pickavé</i>	102
6 Duns Scotus on the dignities of human nature <i>Marilyn McCord Adams</i>	122
7 Duns Scotus on matter and form <i>Cecilia Trifogli</i>	149
8 Duns Scotus, intuitionism, and the third sense of ‘natural law’ <i>Thomas Williams</i>	167

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[More Information](#)

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
9	The bounds of sense: adequacy and abstraction in the later works of Duns Scotus <i>Wouter Goris</i>	184
10	Before univocity: Duns Scotus’s rejection of analogy <i>Giorgio Pini</i>	204
11	Analogy after Duns Scotus: the role of the <i>analogia entis</i> in the Scotist metaphysics at Barcelona, 1320–1330 <i>Garrett R. Smith</i>	223
	<i>Bibliography</i>	246
	<i>Index</i>	264

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When this volume was still in the planning stages, Marilyn McCord Adams, who had agreed to contribute to it, passed away. Before being admitted to the hospital, with her characteristic generosity she sent me her chapter on Duns Scotus on the dignities of human nature. This might be the last essay she completed in her wonderfully productive life. It is an essay that perfectly reflects her penetrating intellect and her mastery of—and admiration for—Duns Scotus's thought. It is a great honor to have it in this collection. While expressing my gratitude to her, for the lasting mark she left on philosophy, medieval scholarship, and the lives of those who were so fortunate as to cross paths with her, I also wish to extend my deepest thanks to her husband, Robert Merrihew Adams, who checked and authorized the small changes necessary to adjust Marilyn's essay to the editorial norms of this series.

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