

Public lectures held at the Pontifical University *Antonianum*, Rome, January 12th-14th 2009¹

**A textual critique of the theological and philosophical elements in
John Duns Scotus.**

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To commemorate the 700th anniversary of the death of blessed John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266-1308), the Higher School of Medieval and Franciscan Studies (SSSMF) and the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University *Antonianum* have promoted several activities, oriented towards the study of the Subtle Doctor's texts. On May 26th 2006, in order to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Pope Paul VI' s Apostolic Letter *Alma Parens* on John Duns Scotus (July 14th 1966), was presented the critical edition of distinctions 1-17 of Scotus' *Ordinatio* III, vol. IX of the Vatican edition. On that occasion, Father Barnabas Hechich illustrated the methodology followed by the Scotistic Commission from its very beginning, as summarized by M. Serafini in his chronicle². His intervention was followed by the lecture of Prof. Orlando Todisco *Libertà e bontà, chiave di lettura del III libro dell'Ordinatio di Duns Scoto*³. Then, on March 6th and 7th 2008, Prof. Timothy B. Noone held two public lectures, *The Knowability of Substance: From St. Thomas to Duns Scotus*, and *Scotus' Place in the Educational System of the Franciscans*⁴. Then, from October to December 2008, Prof. Onorato Grassi, from the LUMSA University held the course *Aspetti dell'antropologia scotista: l'immortalità dell'anima*.

Continuing these initiatives, from the 12th to the 14th of January 2009, Prof. Timothy B. Noone held further lectures on Scotistic subjects, namely *A textual critique of the theological and philosophical elements in John Duns Scotus*. Almost as a conclusion to the itinerary of these two years, Prof. Noone has synthesized his experience working on the critical edition of Scotus' philosophical texts⁵, by giving insights on the gathering of the manuscripts, collating them, choosing variants, composing and interpreting the critical text. At the end of the same week, on the 15th and 16th of January took place the International Scotistic Congress *Walking towards the truth. Actuality of the thought of John Duns Scotus*, with lectures by Prof. Noone, Prof. Michael Gorman, Prof. Antoine Vos, Father Barnabas Hechich, Msgn. Franz Lackner and Prof. Mary Beth Ingham.

1 We would like to thank Prof. Noone, who agreed to examine this chronicle to further clarify some points. So this could be also considered as his *Reportatio romana examinata*.

2 Published in *Antonianum* 81 (2008), pp. 596-601.

3 Published in *Giovanni Duns Scoto: studi e ricerche nel VII centenario della sua morte in onore di P. César Saco Alarcón*, II, a cura di M. Carbajo N. (Medioevo, 15), Roma 2008, p. 133-151.

4 An extensive Italian translation by Father P. Messa appears on the *Chronicle*, in *Antonianum* 83 (2008), p. 721-728.

5 *B. Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Philosophica*, edited by G. J. Etzkorn, T. B. Noone et al., St. Bonaventure, N. Y. – Washington, D. C., 1997-2006.

By the end of these sessions, it seems that a renewed interest on Scotus' thought has arisen and new research fields have been opened, by means of working directly on the manuscript sources.

Chronicle

January 12th. Before the beginning of his lectures, Prof. Noone thanked Father Pietro Messa, president of the Higher School of Medieval and Franciscan Studies, for the opportunity to return to the *Antonianum* to hold these public lectures, and he also thanked the attending students and praised their courage, considering the technical nature of these lectures and their inherent difficulty.

As a way of introduction, he insisted on the fact that textual edition is not a mechanical activity, but a skill, which as such must be acquired with the assistance of other skills, such as a competent level of Latin, a sufficient acquaintance with Paleography and Codicology, and most remarkably an adequate knowledge of the historical context. The importance of the latter was further emphasized, as Prof. Noone considers it almost as important as the knowledge of the text itself, specially when it comes to produce critical editions of philosophical or theological texts, because of the close relation between medieval authors; a given argument or even a sentence must be understood under the light of its context; otherwise we may end up misunderstanding it completely.

The introduction continued by summarizing the contents of the lectures, which Prof. Noone considered to be a workshop rather than a proper series of lectures. During the course of the lectures the subjects dealt with were transcription, extras, collation and the formation of the stemma. The approach to critical edition that Prof. Noone confessed to follow is a mixture between the Lachmanian model, which had been already criticized in the 1930's by Father Charles Balic, in the preparatory works of the Scotistic Commission, and a more practical, experience-based one. Experience, and the wise counsel of his mentors, have shown Prof. Noone that we must pay more attention to what the text should say than to what the tradition sometimes says, regardless of how well-thought and well-established the stemma is. Key accidents occur during the text tradition, and sometimes a reading against the manuscript evidence proves to be more satisfactory. In any case, as he remarked more than once during the course of the lecture, emendations must be done with extreme care, and only if a variant against the manuscript can be proved by reasonable arguments, can it be considered as plausible; otherwise, the text must be kept as it is in the manuscript.

Prof. Noone finished his introduction remembering his two mentors, Father Leonard Boyle and Virginia Brown, both professors at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto. They both used to emphasize the importance of practice in textual edition, and the prevalence of the

context of the text itself over the stemma. He also remembered Gedeon Gál, the celebrated editor of the *Opera theologica et philosophica* of William of Ockham, in 17 volumes, whose ability to read through the manuscript, i.e. to right-guess against the manuscript was praised by Prof. Noone.

1. Transcription. The part of the workshop about transcription began by reading ms. Worcester Cathedral F. 69, which contains Duns Scotus' Paris reports in the version known to us as *Reportatio* B. Before actually reading the reproduction and transcription of d. 35, Prof. Noone showed the description made by Thompson⁶, with further emendations by Prof. Kent Emery, and gave some insights on the Worcester Cathedral library itself, whose collection dates back to medieval times and has remained almost intact. Founded by the Benedictines, it shows how hard they had to work in order to catch up with the Dominicans and Franciscans in the Universities, because they had arrived there later. Since it suffered almost no damages from rallies, burning of books or wars, we may count on the fact that the manuscripts are the same that were used in medieval times. On top of that, in many cases the only manuscript of a given text is preserved at Worcester Cathedral.

A most interesting fact (and a crucial one when editing the text) is that this manuscript was written by two scribes. The first one, identified as John de S. German, wrote Scotus' lectures on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, books I and IV, and the other one, still unidentified, wrote books II and III. Since books I and IV contain the hardest material and the first term of the academic year was longer than the second, the lecturer began with those books, to then lecture on the other two books on the second term⁷.

This portion of the manuscript is dated between 1310-1312, making it the oldest one to contain the *Reportatio* B. But, as resulted from reading the text, it's not a direct report of Scotus' words, but a copy of such report, hence on a second level of transmission of the Subtle Doctor's teachings; this becomes clear by the fact that sometimes the reporter makes remarks on the content of the lecture.

Considering the fact that we're in front of such a second level text, we

⁶ Cfr. R. M. THOMPSON, *A descriptive catalogue of the medieval manuscripts in Worcester Cathedral Library*, with a contribution on the bindings by M. Gullick, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral, 2001.

⁷ See ADRIANO OLIVA, *Les débuts de l'enseignement de Thomas d'Aquin et sa conception de la sacra doctrina* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2006), 241. Fr. Oliva cites the text of the Dominican master Remigius de Girolami from Florence, Bibl. Naz., Conv. Soppr G 4.936, ff. 337ra-b, which reads in part: "... secundum consuetudinem antiquam debet a nobis exponi post primum librum... Et propter hoc lectura quarti libri *Sententiarum* praemitti videtur lecturae secundi et tertii, tum quia est magis plana propter minorem quaestionum difficultatem, tum quia est magis opportuna propter minorem clericorum in isto tempore occupationem. Clerici enim in quadragesima non ita possent audire quia tunc magis circa sacrorum exercitium occupantur".

must be aware that the errors which irremediably occur in the manuscript may arise either from speech (i. e. the reporter didn't write well what the master was saying), from copy (i. e., the scribe made a mistake when copying the written report) or from both. And errors, as Prof. Noone clearly stated, will positively occur.

Summarizing the information given up to this point, Prof. Noone referred briefly to the first thing we must ask to any manuscript we're working on, and that is coherence between the external and the internal evidence. Errors in our manuscript can be many times explained by reflecting on the circumstances under which the copy was produced, and this also may help us find relations between manuscripts, when there's more than one containing the same text.

One of the characteristics of the Worcester Cathedral manuscript that Prof. Noone insisted upon was the type of letter in which the text was written, the *anglicana* handwriting. It was a semi cursive handwriting used exclusively in England during the XIII century, and already around 1360 had gone out of fashion. It was so typical of England, that contemporary scribes in the continent, for instance French or German copyists, were actually unable to read it, and to make things worse, even English scribes of the XV century were not capable of reading it either, thus making it the source of many errors on copies based on manuscripts written in *anglicana*.

Another source of common errors are numerals. Since in this period there was no rule on how to write the numerals, sometimes they were written *modo arabico*, sometimes *modo romano*, and sometimes indifferently, so it all becomes extremely mixed.

Yet another thing to take into account is the patron who commissioned the text. Often scribes, specially if it is a Professional scribe, worry about their patron, and if it is someone who payed for a private copy, they will tend to justify the margins, giving as a result heavy compression of words and many errors. The end of the line is a good source of errors.

Sometimes there are inconsistencies in the text that can be explained by the common practice of scribes to drop the second occurrence of a word, in order to avoid a double lecture.

On reading the text, Prof. Noone also called the attention to the fact that constantly the *magister* and his *socius* speak the same language or dialect and write using the same handwriting. It occurred with s. Thomas, Albert the Great, Duns Scotus, etc.

Finishing the first lecture, Prof. Noone remarked that an intervention in the text must be done only if one is capable of justifying his decision with clear and precise reasons. Otherwise, the reading of the manuscript must be left alone.

January 13th. Continuing with the lecture of our manuscript, Prof. Noone remarked, resuming from the point we had left the day before,

that any reading against the manuscript must be done only if what the manuscript says doesn't have any sense.

When transcribing, Prof. Noone also noted that punctuation is critical to carry the reader throughout the text. A sloppy text shouldn't be carried over to the readers, but instead the editor, as the person who best understands the text, must render it accessible to others by the means of punctuation. As one of the students asked, the *cursus* is also very important, specially in authors like s. Bonaventure, s. Thomas Aquinas, Vital de Four, Matthew of Aquasparta, who are excellent writers. Since the *cursus* is subconscious, it is never broken by an author, so it becomes also a relevant element to prove the authorship of dubious texts.

Many instances of graphic errors were drawn to the students' attention by Prof. Noone, attributable to either the act of writing itself (and so, *quibus* [abbreviated q⁹] can be confused by *quo* [abbreviated q^o] because of the movement of the scribe's hand) or the inability of French or German copyists to read the *anglicana* (and so, they never interpret *enim* correctly because of the way it is abbreviated [either .e. or , the latter being copied as , *autem*], hence resulting the "*enim-autem* confusion").

Another matter that proved to be an issue in reading a manuscript was the ink. Brown ink, which was the most common, since it was cheaper to produce, tends to fade in the parchment, and specially in the hair side of it. Black ink, on the other hand, was possibly more expensive, and because of its caustic nature it burned somewhat the parchment, hence engraving what was written on it.

Reading the text, we arrived to a point in which a very rare case of an objective genitive appears. Such an occurrence is so rare in medieval Latin, that Prof. Noone suspects of a missing section in the text.

By the end of the section on transcription, Prof. Noone made further remarks concerning the *anglicana*, this time not about the handwriting itself, but the way the page was presented, as a block text, with no paragraph marks. He also noticed that many times Scotus formalizes whole sentences in order to form syllogisms, to show clearly the logic of his arguments⁸.

II. Extra textual elements or "extras". In this section Prof. Noone discussed what he found in the ms. Figeac, M. Champollion, Inv. 03-091⁹. After a short introduction on how this manuscript came to his knowledge,

⁸ See B. J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* VIII q. 2-3 n. 152-153 (*Opera Philosophica* 4, 458-459), specially n. 153: "Ad evidentiam conclusionum. Cum sit prioritas naturae, tam in genere causae quam in genere effectus et prioritas temporis: per 'a' intellige 'prius naturā', per 'd' 'effectum priorem', per 'b' 'prius tempore'".

⁹ See NOONE, TIMOTHY, *A Newly-Discovered Manuscript of a Commentary on the Sentences by Duns Scotus* (Figeac, Musée Champollion, numéro inventaire 03-091, non coté), on *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale*, vol. 48 (2006), pp. 125-162.

he referred to the importance of the text it contains, which happens to correspond to the *Scotus Abbreviatus* mentioned by Father Balic in the general introduction to the *Ordinatio*¹⁰. This manuscript contains a number of invaluable *extras*, i. e. texts inserted by Scotus while still working on the *Ordinatio*, in order to replace parts of it to further develop an argument, to present it in a different manner, or simply to cancel a text that didn't satisfy our doctor. Nevertheless, there is one extra in particular which called immediately the attention of Prof. Noone when studying the manuscript, which referred to lectures by "the master in Naples". At this point it became clear that these weren't extras *de manu Scoti*, but belong to a sub-comment to the abbreviated text of the *Ordinatio*, which show that this manuscript was used to teach theology *ad mentem Scoti* in Italy in the fourteenth century.

There are two main hypotheses concerning this manuscript. The first one identifies four stages in the composition of the text: First, the abbreviation of Scotus' text; second, the text being considered too brief, new text was introduced; third, the sub-commentator adds his own text; fourth, the text is copied. The second hypothesis, which Prof. Noone deems not very likely, adds a prior stage, and considers the abbreviated text as derived from the "*alia Ordinatio*".

There are two fates of the extras. One, they are merged in the text (the most usual thing to happen), and sometimes the copyist puts the word "extra" to indicate that this text wasn't in the original manuscript, but it was attached to it to replace an older text or to add something to it. The other fate is that the extra text is dropped.

The section on the extras finished with a reflection on how difficult it was to erase something once it was in the parchment. The main problem in the Middle Ages, said Prof. Noone, was to get rid of or replace a text. Out of this difficulty came up the extras, being maybe at first simply small pieces of parchment attached to the manuscript (with the consequent danger of them falling out of it without leaving an indication on where to insert them); then, the first generation of copies were like a reproduction of what the scribes saw, with the text and the extras separately. The second generation merges both, the original text and the extras, into one text.

January 14th

III. Collation. In the section on collation of manuscripts Prof. Noone addressed the point in which there is an intersection of all the manuscripts of the *Reportationes*, and that is *Reportatio* II A. The two

¹⁰ See *op. cit.*, p. 135-136: "The version of the Oxford lectures contained in Figeac is the same as that found in Oxford, Merton College Library, Ms. 87, 147ra *et seq.* Charles Balic refers to the other works besides the *Ordinatio* that are contained in this manuscript, and also refers to it regarding the term *Ordinatio*. Balic mentions this manuscript in his work of 1927, remarking that it contains a *Scotus abbreviatus*".

crucial manuscripts are the Merton College MS 61 manuscript, written by the German scribe John Reinbold, who copied the whole *œuvre* of Scotus, and the Turin K ii 26 manuscript. Both of them contain unique lectures of the text, thus helping to identify their families. One important thing is that the Worcester Cathedral manuscript is the oldest (dated ca. 1320 for its binding, though parts of it, as we noted above, were written ca. 1310-1312), but as we found out in the seminar, it doesn't make it the best text; in this case, the Lachmannian dictum is confirmed by evidence, so "*recentiores non necessario sunt deteriores*".

As Prof. Noone noted, minor errors such as a confusion between *ergo* (abbreviated *e^o*) and *igitur* (abbreviated *g^o*) gain relevance by giving us a pattern, so that we can determine the relationship between manuscripts. It's also important to determine the character of the manuscript, of the testimony, and of the copyist, whether he knows what he is copying or not. So, for instance, we know that the copyist of the Vatican manuscript doesn't know well the *anglicana*, and therefore he will commit several mistakes; it also gives us a hint on what he had in front of him. On the other hand, even though we can be certain that the scribe of the Worcester manuscript is copying from ancient material, he is also correcting as he copies; since he knows what he's doing, he syncopates sentences, changes words by synonyms or alters the word order, either consciously or not.

The way in which a single word is written can tell us a lot from the character of the copyist. For instance, in the Turin manuscript we have *pati ens* (for *patiens*), indicating that he doesn't have word recognition, i. e. he's copying the figures he sees, word for word, not knowing what he is writing; he's stroke painting. As Prof. Noone noted, these illiterate scribes weren't unusual in the Middle Ages, frequently being boys who had learned to copy but not to read. This is very important for us, since these copyists can give us a window, a clear view of what they're seeing. They can't lie, because they don't know, neither consciously nor unconsciously, what they're doing. On the other hand, the scribe scholar can lie, substitute words, word order, put synonyms, etc., as we just saw in the case of the Worcester manuscript.

Then there is a moment, which sooner or later arrives, that Prof. Noone liked to call a "text explosion", i. e. when every manuscript has a different reading for the same word or sentence. In the case of the *Reportatio* II A, a Turin reading will be preferred to a Worcester one, because the Turin copyist can't lie; maybe he doesn't know Latin at all, and also his readings are graphically similar to the Vatican and Merton manuscripts. In this case it becomes clear that manuscripts are to be seen as windows to what's in front of the copyist. As Father Boyle said, if a guy knows what he's doing, there's problem ahead.

Confessing once again his eclectic approach to text editing, Prof. Noone remarked that he tries to put the safest text (i. e. best possible

manuscript) as a basis for the edition, just as Father Balic did for the *Ordinatio* with the codex 137 of the Assisi Commune Library (codex A)¹¹. In the case of the *Reportationes*, we must also always remember that there is a speech behind the text, not an autograph, i. e. that their origins are oral, not written, which brings us different kinds of problems (repetitions, errors of hearing, etc.)

IV. Formation of stemma. For the final section of the lectures, Prof. Noone chose Duns Scotus' *Quodlibet* as an example of formation of stemma, not only because he had worked on its manuscripts¹², but also because it is one of the most important *Quodlibeta* of the Middle Ages. As a matter of fact, almost immediately after its publication there were writings *contra Quodlibetum Scoti*, beginning with Thomas of Sutton, Hervaeus Natalis, etc.

On preparing the edition of his *Quodlibet*, Scotus worked on the report of the quodlibetal dispute, made by a reportator of the University of Paris. But, since his untimely death prevented him from completing his revision, his autograph ended in the middle of question 21. In this case, the stemma is different from the rest, because it only remained the reported text, not the one that Scotus revised.

There are also different levels in the transmission of the text. In the first place there was Scotus' quaternion (α), with notes and extras attached to it; then there is the first copy of it (β), in which the extras were inserted in the text.

As a final remark, Prof. Noone noted that the stemma, considered as a quantitative analysis, gives only a direction to the editor, a hint on where to look at; in order to be actually able to reconstruct the text there must be a qualitative analysis, to read through the manuscripts what the original text must have been.

In his closing words, Prof. Noone thanked once again the students for their attendance, to the *Antonianum*, and encouraged them to devote themselves to the enormous task of text edition.

HERNÁN GUERRERO TRONCOSO

¹¹ See *De Ordinatione I. Duns Scoti disquisitio historico-critica*, in B. J. DUNS SCOTUS *Opera Omnia*, studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae ad fidem codicum edita, vol. 1, 1950, p. 275*: "Ad genuinum enim textum *Ordinationis* stabiliendum ille codex tamquam auctoritas primaria, dux et iudex ordinarie adhibetur, qui et textum magis vicinum communi apographo seu pristinae recensio[n]i offert, et notas quibus huius textus relatio ad librum fratris Ioannis clarius dignoscit praebet. Iamvero ex hactenus disputatis patet huiusmodi esse cod. A, quippe qui ortum habet ex exemplari, quod textum sat vicinum apographo continebat, et quod antequam ab amanuensi cod. A transcriptum esset, ad fidem libri fratris Ioannis Duns fere ubique a recensore fuit bene correctum".

¹² See NOONE, TIMOTHY and ROBERTS, H. FRANCIE, *John Duns Scotus' Quodlibet: A Brief Study of the Manuscripts and an Edition of Question 16*, in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. C. Schabel, Leiden: Brill, 2007, pp. 131-198.