

Scotus: An Initial Lonerganian Treatment

Matthew Peters

The present paper was inspired by a collection of distinct though related interests. Perhaps first among these was the desire to respond to a call Lonergan makes in a rather long footnote in the first chapter of *Verbum*. Lonergan states: “While M. Gilson has done splendid work on Scotist origins, there is needed an explanation of Scotist influence” (Lonergan 1997, 39). Lonergan’s reference to Gilson has to do with the latter’s pioneering work identifying and analyzing the sources upon which Scotus was drawing in developing his, Scotus’s, own mature philosophy. Yet, clearly Lonergan saw that a further effort was needed: providing an account of how Scotus influenced the tradition that succeeded him. Now, two facts are worth noting regarding Scotist scholarship subsequent to Lonergan’s call. First, relatively little work has been done by students and scholars of Lonergan to provide a critical and dialectical history of Scotist influence. Secondly, interest in and discussion of Scotist influence has nevertheless increased enormously amongst other philosophical communities. Perhaps beginning with Heidegger’s *habilitation-schrift* of 1916, a litany of prominent philosophers and theologians – including Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, John Milbank and the whole Radical Orthodoxy movement – have returned to Scotus in one fashion or another. What seems to have emerged from this discussion of Scotus is the view that Scotus, for good or for ill, represents a seminal figure in the history of Western thought, in particular as setting the stage for the so-called Modern as well as Post-Modern Project in philosophy. Indeed, this second fact represents the second major source of inspiration for this very paper. For it would seem that the time may be ripe for developing a truly Lonerganian account of Scotist influence, since such an effort would be extremely valuable in its own right, but would also open up the possibility of displaying for other philosophical communities the profundity and rigor with which Lonergan’s philosophy could handle such a significant philosophical issue.

This paper, then, seeks to lay some initial groundwork for providing a sustained critical treatment of Scotus’s philosophy from a Lonerganian perspective. The procedure it will follow will be to begin with some detailed exegesis of Scotus’s cognitional theory, particularly his notion of the act of

understanding. As the paper unfolds, however, more critical analysis will begin to emerge, for it seems that, given the ultimate goal of this paper, this will be valuable in its own right but will also contribute – through clarification by contrast – to the goal of simply understanding certain of Scotus’s doctrines. The paper will continue adding critical suggestions throughout the rest of the paper, and will end with some concluding remarks.

Scotus: A Critical Interpretation

In order to give an account of Scotus’s cognitional theory it will be well briefly to observe the distinction Scotus draws between intuitive and abstractive cognition. Intuitive cognition is cognition of the object in which the object, through its immediate presence, is the direct moving cause of the cognitional operation of intuition. As a consequence, cognition of the existence of the object accompanies all intuitive cognition. As Demange writes, in the case of the object of intuitive cognition: “la conscience de son existence accompagne sa donation” (Demange 2007, 31-32). Such intuitive cognition may be either sensible or intellectual, and more will be said later about Scotus’s notion of intuitive cognition. Abstractive cognition, in contrast, is cognition in which the object does not directly move the intellect through its immediate presence, but rather through some kind of intermediary or representation. As Demange states, “La connaissance abstractive est . . . connaissance d’un objet en tant qu’il ne meut pas directement mais seulement par l’intermédiaire d’un autre objet, ou d’une espèce qui le représente” (Demange 2007, 32).¹ The intermediary or representation of the object that will be relevant to a discussion of the abstractive cognition Scotus identifies as the act of understanding is the “*species intelligibilis*” or intelligible species. However, before moving on to discussing Scotus’s account of that act, let us first specify somewhat more precisely what is meant by “object” when Scotus speaks of an object of cognition.

The Object of Cognition in Scotus

¹ Cf. Scotus: “In cognitione intuitiva res in propria existentia per se motiva obiective, in cognitione autem abstractiva est per se motivum aliquid, in quod habet esse cognoscibile, sive sit causa virtualiter continens rem ut cognoscibile, sive ut effectus, puta species, vel similitudo representativa continens ipsum cuius est similitudo” *Quodlib.* XIII, n. 10 (Wad. XII, 310). Cited in Demange 2007, 32.

The object of cognition, for Scotus, is not what we might call the “full object,” by which is meant the object considered under all its determinations. Rather, it is the object, as Scotus would say, *qua cognoscibile*, that is to say, the object insofar as it may be cognized or understood. The determination or aspect of the object that is susceptible to being understood is the *quidditas* or “common nature.” The common nature, for Scotus, is the determination of the object that is really common to other objects who would share in the nature. Thus, the common nature “tiger” is common to every tiger, and the common nature “man” is common to every man. Scotus, moreover, following Avicenna, affirms that, considered strictly in itself, the common nature is neither universal nor individual. As Scotus, quoting Avicenna, states: “Horseness is just horseness – it is of itself neither one nor many, neither universal nor particular” (King 1987, 7).² However, the common nature may be “contracted” to the mode of particularity or individuality, and this is in fact achieved by the *haecceitas* or “thisness.”

The precise nature of the relation between the *haecceitas* and the common nature has been subject to much heated debate for centuries. Unfortunately, fully weighing in on this discussion would take us too far afield for present purposes. However, a few general, and hopefully uncontroversial, remarks may be made. As was suggested, since the common nature in itself is neither universal nor particular and can exist indifferently in either mode, if it is to exist in a “real” object it must be contracted to the mode of individuality, for all such objects are individual on Scotus’s account. Thus, as existing in the order of reality, the common nature can never be separated from the *haecceitas*. Consequently, the distinction between the two cannot be affirmed to be a real distinction: they are really identical. Yet, though really identical, Scotus does not want to maintain that the distinction between them is merely notional, or based on a relation of reason; for, as we will see more clearly in a moment, that would undermine the common nature as the objective ground of scientific knowledge. Thus, Scotus introduces his famous notion of formal distinction in order to account for the real identity of, yet not merely notional distinction, between the *haecceitas* and the common nature. As contracted by the *haecceitas* to the mode of individuality, the

² *Ord.* II, d.3 p. I q. 1 (<http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/translations/SCOTUS.Ord2d3p2q1.trns.pdf>). Cf. Scotus: “Il n’est pas inclus dans la quiddité, en tant qu’elle est quiddité, qu’elle existe dans le singulier, bien qu’elle n’existe réellement qu’en lui” *Op. Ox.*, I. I, d. 3, q. 7, n. 28. Cited in Gilson 1952, 522

common nature and *haecceitas* are really identical, yet formally distinct. As Scotus maintains, “true identity . . . is consistent with formal non-identity” (*Ord.* IV, d. 46, q. 3, n. 5.)³

As was intimated above, it is only, strictly speaking, the common nature which is susceptible to being known positively or directly by the intellect, on Scotus’s showing. The *haecceitas*, in contrast, can only be known,⁴ at most, indirectly as a necessary metaphysical postulate.⁵ Moreover, what seems significantly to be motivating Scotus’s insistence that the common nature should remain formally distinct from the *haecceitas* is that, otherwise, it would not be something that could be said to be truly common among various objects, which would thus undermine it as the ground of scientific knowledge. For, science, as Scotus maintains, deals with universal concepts,⁶ yet if these concepts were not grounded in or founded on something really common among distinct objects, then they would be, as Demange writes, “pure fictions” (Demange 2007, 275).

Though, the formal distinction and the common nature are not the central foci of this paper, they nevertheless holds some secondary significance. I found Demange’s articulation of the general notion of the common nature to be the most concise and succinct; therefore, I will quote him at length on it, subsequently highlighting especially those points that will be of significance to our ensuing discussion of Scotus’s account of the act of understanding. Regarding the common nature, Demange writes:

³ Cited in Williams “The Divine Nature and Scotus’s Libertarianism: A Reply to Mary Beth Ingham” 4, <http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~thomasw/The%20Divine%20Nature%20and%20Scotus%27s%20Libertarianism.pdf>

⁴ And without desiring to confuse discourses, one indeed wonders whether or not, instead of “known,” it might be better to say that the *haecceitas* can only be “thought” in something like the Kantian sense, i.e. the intellect cannot know the *haecceitas*, but it must necessarily think it in order to explain what it does know. To be sure, Scotus holds that in the next life we shall know the *haecceitas* of all things directly, and that our inability to grasp it *pro statu isto* seems to be, for him, a consequence of The Fall.

⁵ There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether the intuition of the object as existing and present would include the direct intuition of its *haecceitas*. However, the majority of the evidence with which I am presently familiar seems to indicate that Scotus would deny that, even in the case of the immediate intuition of the object as existing and present, the *haecceitas* would be included in that intuition. Thus, for instance, Scotus writes: “Quod arguit loquens: ‘Singularis agit’ – verum est, sed non in quantum singular. Natura enim est ratio agendi” *Theoremata*, p. 1, n.9-10 (Op. Ph. II, 595). Cited in Demange 2007, 277. Cf.: “This is why Scotus never ceases repeating that neither senses nor the intellect could ever possibly know the singular in its singularity, in its thisness” (Dumont 1965, 631).

⁶ And, ultimately, propositions and syllogisms

La *natura* possède alors un degré d'unité propre, inférieur à l'unité numérique. La nature commune, comme ce qui est apte à se trouver en plusieurs, n'est pas définie comme étant en plusieurs, mais comme ce qui "ne répugne pas" à l'être, n'étant de soi ni singulière ni universelle. Cette unité de nature, intermédiaire entre l'unité de raison et l'unité numérique, n'est pas définie comme commune en acte dans la pluralité, car cela lui donnerait une détermination d'universalité en acte, qui implique une intellection ; or ce n'est pas à l'intellection que la *natura* doit sa réalité, puisque c'est au contraire sur la *natura*, comme réalité que se fonde l'intellection. Du point de vue ontologique, il faut donc dire que la nature commune est semblable à une matière purement indéterminé, apte à se trouver sous plusieurs formes, et qui par conséquent ne peut conserver cette indifférence si on la définit comme actuellement présente sous plusieurs formes. De même que la matière est l'unité indéterminé présupposé par tout acte de forme, est qui n'est de soi un acte sous aucune, la nature commune n'est que l'unité réelle mais non actuelle présupposé par l'opération universalitric de l'intellect . . . L'universel n'est pas une simple fiction de l'esprit, il se fonde sur une réalité commune à plusieurs choses ; mais cette réalité, sur laquelle se fonde l'intellect pour prédiquer un concept commun, n'est pas une réalité commune en acte : c'est une convenance, une disposition donnée dans les réalités. Le blanc et le noir "conviennent" davantage dans leurs réalités que le blanc et la pierre ; l'intellect est donc fondé à prédiquer au blanc et au noir le concept commun de couleur qui n'appartient pas à la pierre, pour indiquer cette plus grande convenance qu'il perçoit dans les choses (Demange 2007, 276-77).

Thus, the common nature is a non-numerical unity somehow "present" in things; it must be a non-numerical unity since, if it were a numerical unity, it would be merely an individual or particular and thus not suited for grounding the universal concepts of science. Though not common in act, the common nature is a kind of tendency or disposition to commonality that, presumably, can be brought to act, although it is not clear exactly how this happens or what it would accomplish. Again, the common nature, considered strictly in itself, is "indifferent to being universal or singular" (Etzkorn and Wolter 1997, 125); however, it may be "contracted" by the *haecceitas* to the mode of individuality or singularity. The common nature may also be "universalized": that is to say, it may be transformed from the mode of individuality to that of universality; such universalizing action, as we will presently see, is the work of the agent intellect as setting the stage for the act of understanding. It may be further emphasized that Scotus insists that the common nature must precede the activity of the intellect, lest our concepts be mere fictions.⁷

⁷ Cf. Scotus: "[On the unity of the common nature] I give another answer to the argument, therefore. The unity of the object of the sense is not some universal unity in actuality, but is something that is one by a prior unity – namely a real unity – by which the intellect is move to cause something common to be abstracted from this and that singular, and from singulars that are of the same species more than from singulars that are of different species. Otherwise, the universal would be a mere fiction. For apart from any act of the intellect, this white object agrees more with that white object than with something of a different genus. Hence, I say that this one real thing [i.e., whiteness] before any act of the intellect is one in many, though not derived from many. It becomes such through the intellect, and then it is a universal, but not before." *Quaest. In Met. I, q. 6, n. 22* (Etzkorn and Wolter 1997, 124)

Scotus's Account of the Act of Understanding

Let us give a brief step-by-step overview of Scotus's account of the act of understanding and then turn to unpacking the various steps more fully. First, for Scotus, the senses are moved by the common nature that is present in the singular ("full") object, which causes the senses to produce the sensible species, which latter is a kind of representation of the common nature. Next, the sensible species is worked upon by the *sensus communis* and the imagination, which activity produces the phantasm. Third, the possible intellect receives the phantasm. Fourth, the agent intellect illuminates the phantasm and thereby "begets" the intelligible species (*species intelligibilis*) or concept which is thereby impressed upon the possible intellect.⁸ Fifth, once the intelligible species or concept is present within in it, the possible intellect can then turn to it and grasp the concept, which operation is the act of understanding proper. The preceding list of steps gives a basic account of the process by which the intellect produces its proper content – the intelligible species or concept – and engages in the act of understanding that content.

Let us begin by examining more closely what occurs at the third and fourth steps. What is going on when the agent intellect illuminates the phantasm and begets the intelligible species? To begin with, it must be clarified that the intellect, when begetting the intelligible species, does not, strictly speaking, work on the phantasm at all, but rather the common nature that is present representatively therein. As Scotus states: "Terminus actionis intellectus agentis non est phantasma, in quod agit, sed universale. . ."⁹ In other words, in his account of the act understanding Scotus denies the fact of insight into phantasm.

There is a nest of related reasons why Scotus rejects the notion of insight into phantasm. First of all, it would seem that Scotus's metaphysics of cognition does not permit that the agent intellect should

⁸ Cf. Harris: "The *species sensibilis* of the sensible quality is received in the sensitive faculty. The species is an image or copy of the actual quality possessed by the external thing"; "The *sensus communis* thus represents a synthesis in consciousness of sense data which is on a lower level than that of the understanding, and is of itself incomplete and imperfect . . . Closely allied to the common sense is the phantasy or imagination, which Duns is inclined to identify with; he, however, distinguishes them, but it is difficult to see how exactly how they differ . . . Phantasy or imagination is distinguished inasmuch as it is more closely tied to memory" (Harris, 266, 270).

Demange's account is in accord with Harris's: "Au commencement, la nature présente dans le singulier meut la sensation à produire des espèces sensibles ; puis l'imagination opère sur ces espèces sensible et produit une image qui représente la chose sous la raison de singulier ; enfin, à partir de cette représentation du singulier, l'intellect agent produit une espèce qui représente l'universel" (Demange 2007, 216)

⁹ *Meta.*, l. VII, q. 18. n. 11, cited in Lawrence, 26. Cf. Scotus: "intellectus agens nihil causat in phantasmibus" *Op. Ox.*, l. I, d. 3, q. 6, n. 10, p 206. Cited in Gilson 1952, 517.

act upon the phantasm. Since the phantasm is of the material, sensible and distended order, were the agent intellect to act upon it, its effect would not be the abstraction of an immaterial intelligible content, but would rather be immediately reduced to the order of the material and distended. As Demange notes: “L’imagination présente la chose dans l’ordre étendu et matériel du sensible; l’intellect la représente dans l’ordre inétendu et immatériel de l’intelligible; or il n’y a aucune continuité entre ces deux ordres, de sorte que si l’intellect opérait directement sur l’espèce imaginative, il ne pourrait en abstraire qu’une entité étendue, jamais un universel” (Demange 2007, 216). Indeed, not only would it not abstract the intelligible from the phantasm, but, on the contrary, were the agent intellect actually to work on the phantasm, it itself would in some sense become “sensibilized”: that is to say, it would become material and distended (Gilson 1981, 181).

A second reason why Scotus feels compelled to deny insight into phantasm is that, for him, the notion that there could be a grasp of universal in the particular or of the intelligible in the sensible is simply contradictory. As Gilson notes, for Scotus, “Il est contradictoire de soutenir qu’on puisse connaître l’universel dans le singulier” (Gilson 1952, 522). Gilson explains further why, on Scotus’s account at least, the notion of insight into phantasm is contradictory:

Dans un sujet singulier, l’universel se restreint à la singularité du sujet. Dans un objet tel que le phantasme, l’universel n’est représenté que restreint à la singularité du sujet qui engendre l’espèce sensible. Il est donc impossible, en quelque sens qu’on entende, que l’intellect se tourne vers le phantasme pour y regarder l’universel. Celui n’y est pas (*Ibid.*).

The phantasm of itself is singular; thus, the notion of grasping a universal content in the phantasm is contradictory since, strictly speaking, there is no universal there to be grasped.

There is a third reason that Scotus feels compelled to deny the act of insight into phantasm. Were it to be in the phantasm that intellect grasped its proper object, this would entail that the intellect would be dependent on the bodily or the corporeal in order to engage in its proper operation. Thus, Scotus has a

specifically theological concern in denying insight into phantasm, for he feels that to assert otherwise would render the human intellective soul dependent upon the body.¹⁰

We have noted three reasons why Scotus denied insight into phantasm: 1) the fact that, according to Scotus, were the intellect to act directly upon the phantasm its effect would immediately be reduced to the order of material and extension and in fact would cause *per impossibile* the intellect itself to become material and distended; 2) the notion of a grasp of the universal in the particular is, for Scotus, a contradictory notion; and 3) the theological concern that affirming that the intellect grasps its proper object in the sensible or imagined would amount to asserting the dependence of the soul upon the body.

It can be noted briefly how Lonergan exposes and critiques the flawed grounds upon which Scotus claims that the notion of the act of insight into phantasm is contradictory, as he states

We can handle with the same science the necessary and the empirically intelligible, the universal and the imaginative scheme which approaches the singular, the changeable and the unchanging, the *per se* and the *per accidens*, insofar as we go behind the conceptual order. Within the conceptual order those terms are contradictory. (Lonergan 1962, 162)

Thus, Lonergan shows that Scotus was compelled to deny insight into phantasm largely because he failed to penetrate to the pre-conceptual order. For, within the merely conceptual order, the universal and the particular are contradictory, and on Scotus's account the intellect is concerned strictly with the universal concept. Thus, Scotus could not but view the idea of the intellect grasping anything in the data of sense or imagination as a contradictory notion. Yet, as Lonergan points out, this view is due to the fact that Scotus failed to penetrate to the fact that, prior to the formulation of universal concepts, there is a grasp of a pre-conceptual intelligible form emergent in the data of sense and imagination, and that it is from this grasp that the formulation of universal concepts intelligibly and intelligently proceeds.¹¹

Let us return then to our unpacking of the third and fourth steps leading to the act of understanding. The agent intellect, as was stated, does not work on the phantasm; rather, it works on the common nature represented therein. Consequently, it can be seen that there is a sense in which the action

¹⁰ Unfortunately, I do not have the space to go into this difficult theological question in the present paper. However, it is something that I hope to address at a later time.

¹¹ Further criticism of the ground of this denial of insight in phantasm in Scotus will be discussed below on p 22ff.

of the agent intellect is not properly abstractive, for it does not abstract anything from the phantasm.

Rather, the action of the agent intellect might be better called “universalizing”: that is to say, its action is to transform the common nature – again, itself indifferent to being universal or particular – from its mode of singularity while represented in the phantasm, to a mode of universality not restricted by the sensible order or contracted by the *haecceitas*. As Demange notes:

“L’action de l’intellect agent n’est donc pas abstractive, mais universalisatrice: de ce qui représentait le singulier, l’intellect agent fait quelque chose qui représente l’universel.” Il s’agit, non d’un processus d’abstraction, mais d’un transfert *ab ordine ab ordinem* (Demange 2007, 217).

Thus, in tandem with his denial of insight into phantasm, there is, again, in Scotus no account of a pre-conceptual grasp of an intelligible content from which the formation of a concept or definition would intelligibly proceed. Rather, there is merely an immediate leap from the sensible to the conceptual order.

A further aspect to be noted regarding the action of the agent intellect and the production of the concept is that, rather than being a conscious and intelligent process, it rather appears to be an unconscious and automatic function of metaphysical mechanics. As Harris notes, for Scotus, “The first act of agent intellect appears unconscious and automatic: it ‘begets’ the intelligible species from the phantasm, while the possible receives the impression of the species” (Harris, 276).¹² For Scotus, when the object, say an instance of the color purple, becomes present to the senses, both the sensation and the intellect immediately and automatically produce their respective species of the object: the sensation that of sensible species “purple,” the intellect that of the universal intelligible species or concept “purple.” In other words, when I see purple, the instant that I see it, I am in possession of both the sensible species and the concept of purple. As Dumont states: “In the instant that this quiddity is first introduced into the imagination through a prior sensation, it is simultaneously introduced into the possible intellect through abstraction under the agency of the agent intellect” (Dumont 1965, 631).

¹² Regarding the automatic character of this process in Scotus, Demange, too, notes the “automotricité dans sa noétique” (Demange 2007, 217).

As Lonergan has shown, for Aquinas the production of the concept comes, not unconsciously, automatically and concomitantly with sensation, but rather is the result of an extended period of conscious and intelligent inquiry into the data of sensation. As Lonergan states regarding Aquinas

Apart from certain natural concepts . . . it cannot even be suggested that Aquinas thought of conception as an automatic process. Conceptualization comes as the term and the product of a process of reasoning. As long as the reasoning, the fluctuation of discourse continues, the inner word [i.e. concept or definition] is as yet unuttered. But it is also true that as long as the reasoning continues, we do not as yet understand; for until the inner is uttered, we are not understanding but only thinking in order to understand. Hence understanding and the inner word are simultaneous, the former being the ground and cause of the latter. What, it may be asked, can be the reasoning that is prior to the emergence of the term? Must there not be three terms before there can be any reasoning at all? Clearly such a difficulty is possible only if one's notions of rational psychology are limited to the data found in an abbreviated and very formal textbook on deductive logic. But if one is willing to take a broad view on reasoning, to conceive of syllogism with some of the intellectual suppleness of Aristotle, one will be willing to grant that every question either asks whether there is a middle term, or asks what the middle term is: that when one asks what a stone is, one asks for the middle term between the sensible data and the essential definition of the stone; between those two, there has to occur an act of understanding, and leading up to such understanding there is the discourse or reasoning of the scientific method; finally, such discourse differs with the progress of the human mind, for Aquinas, under the misapprehensions of Aristotelian physics, probably thought of stones as things while any modern thinker would pronounce them to be accidental aggregates. Already we have seen that from the fact that human understanding had its object in phantasm, Aquinas deduced that human intellect was mostly reason; one should not be surprised when he goes on to affirm that we have to reason in order to form concepts (Lonergan 1997, 52).¹³

As we will see later, when speaking of those, in contrast to Aquinas, whose view of reasoning is limited to the data one would find in an abbreviated and very formal textbook on deductive logic, Lonergan is surely thinking of Scotus, among others. However, the basic point being underscored here is the difference between Scotus's and Aquinas's respective accounts of conceptualization. For Aquinas, we conceive only when and because we understand; but because we have to inquire and, broadly speaking,

¹³ To underscore the thoroughness with which Lonergan grounds his interpretation of Aquinas in the primary sources, we note the following passages from Aquinas that Lonergan cites: "When I want to conceive the intelligibility of a stone, it is necessary that I come to it by a process of reasoning; and so it is in all other things that are understood by us, except perhaps in the case of first principles, which, since they are known simply, are known at once without any discursive reasoning process. Therefore, as long as the intellect is thrown this way and that in a process of reasoning, its formation is not yet finished, not until it conceives the intelligibility of the thing perfectly; and only then does it have the intelligibility of the complete thing, and only then does it have the intelligibility of the word. And therefore it is that in our soul we have thinking, by which is meant the discursive process of inquiry, and we have a word, which is now formed according to the perfect contemplation of the truth" *Super Ioannem*, c. 1, lect. 1 (Lonergan 1997 22-23); "The act of understanding has not reached its completion unless something is conceived in the mind, which is called the word; for we are not said to understand, but to think for the sake of understanding, before conception is established in our mind" *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9 c (Lonergan 1997, 23); "The concept is the effect of the act of understanding" *De veritate*, q. 4, a. 2 c (Lonergan 1997, 23); "It belongs to the essence of the conception of the heart that it proceed from something else, that is, from the knowledge of the one conceiving" *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 34, a. 1 c (Lonergan 1997, 51).

reason in order to understand, conception can only occur after an often extended process of inquiry. In contrast, for Scotus, conception is automatic and unconscious. Once the common nature is representatively present in the sensible species or phantasm, the metaphysics of efficient causality simply kicks in¹⁴: the object, as motive cause, just spontaneously elicits the natural response of the intellect, which is to transfer it from the order of singularity to that of universality. There is no account of the concrete tension of inquiry, of the experience of investigating the data of sense and imagination which, when understood, yields the production of the conception. As Fred Lawrence notes, “How ironic, then, are the standard textbook accounts, which cast Aquinas in the role of the defender of Aristotelian logic and metaphysics, and so as one concerned primarily with the universal, the abstract, the conceptual; and according to which first Scotus, and then Ockham, plays the role of the critic preoccupied with the particular, the concrete, the individual thing” (Lawrence 1970, 24).¹⁵

Having thus described how Scotus posits the production of concepts as an automatic and unconscious matter of metaphysical mechanics leads us to the point where we can unpack the fifth step in the act of understanding on Scotus’s account: namely, that it is only after the concept is already present in the possible intellect that the possible intellect can then turn to this concept and perform the act of understanding proper. As Gilson states: “La question est de savoir si, du point de vue des conditions exercise, l’espèce intelligible doit être déjà présente pour que l’intellect pussie exercer son acts. La réponse de Duns Scot est affirmative” (Gilson 1952, 512). Thus, unlike Aquinas, for whom understanding precedes and grounds conception, for Scotus, we conceive before we understand.¹⁶ The

¹⁴ As Demange notes, for Scotus: “La relation de causalité efficiente . . . se produisant entre l’objet réel (ou une forme réelle qui le représente) et l’intellection, décrit le processus psychologique de l’intellection” (Demange 2007, 232).

¹⁵ Indeed, as Lawrence points out elsewhere, it would seem that for Naïve Realists like Scotus, “the very unconscious origin of concepts guarantees there objectivity, since any subjective input in concept formation would, to that extent, prejudice or compromise the objectivity” (Lawrence 2004, 109).

¹⁶ Cf. Ingham and Dryer: “At a first stage, sense experience (vision, touch, smell, etc.) gives rise to the phantasm or mental image in the imaginative power of the soul. The phantasm is the sensible representation of the extra-mental object. In a second stage, this imaginative mental image is received by the potential intellect (the passive intellectual potency of the soul). By means of the light of the agent intellect the intelligible likeness (*species intelligibilis*) is born. This intelligible species now replaces the sensible likeness and leaves its impression on the possible intellect. *At this final stage the possible intellect, actualized by the presence of the concept, gives birth to the act of understanding*” (Ingham and Dreyer 2004, 26. Emphasis added.).

basis of Scotus's argument seems to be that the object as known must always precede the act, as Gilson notes: "Il faut toujours que l'objet précède l'intellection, sans quoi l'intellect n'aurait rien à connaître" (Gilson 1952, 513).¹⁷

Clearly, the student of Lonergan will quickly observe that the reason why the *quidditas* must precede the production universal concept and in turn that the universal concept, as object of the act of understanding, must precede the act of understanding proper is that, for Scotus, in order for the object of knowledge to in fact be objective it must be "already out there now." For, as Lonergan points out in his analysis of the origin of the dynamic biological anticipation of reality, the elementary object of biological consciousness is something the animal finds as "already constituted" (Lonergan 2005, 276). Thus, it seems to be rather clearly suggested that Scotus is confusing the object of human knowledge for the elementary object, or body, of animal extroversion in his insistence that the object precede the act of understanding, instead of being constituted by it as it is for Aquinas and Lonergan. Indeed, we might take this occasion to note a brief aspect of Lonergan's treatment of Aquinas in this regard in order to draw some further clarification by contrast with Scotus.

As Lonergan points out in *Verbum*, Scotus objects to Aquinas's argument that the divine ideas can be accounted for by adding notional relations to the divine essence, "for [in Scotus] the object precedes the knowing, and relations that precede knowing are not notional but real" (Lonergan 1997, 19). Yet, Lonergan points out further: "[Scotus's] argument does not touch Aquinas's real position, which is that the object as known is not prior and that the relations pertain only to object as known" (Lonergan 1997, 19). What Lonergan is getting at here is Aquinas's generalization of Aristotle's observation that, in the case of technical invention and the practical arts, the idea or conception of the artist or inventor is, in the first instance, a product of thought. As Lonergan points out, for Aquinas, not only is the idea or conception of the artist or inventor a product of thought – which quite clearly precedes the object – but, indeed, "The same holds true for every definition and every judgment" (Lonergan 1997, 18). As Aquinas

¹⁷ Scotus: "Rien ne saurait suffire par nature à susciter un acte de connaissance à moins de disposer d'un objet antérieur par nature à cet acte, c'est-à-dire un qui lui est présent en lui-même ou dans quelque chose qui le représente," *Ord.*, I, d.3, q.1, n.37. Cited in Demange 2007, 214.

states: “The quiddity (like) the composition or division (is) the product of the intellect” (Lonergan 1997, 22).¹⁸ Aquinas can thus maintain that the divine ideas, while notionally distinct, are nevertheless really identical with the divine essence; for, just as the architect’s grasp of the whole form of the house that she intends to build is only notionally distinct from her grasp of the parts, so is God’s grasp of the manner in which His various perfections can be participated only notionally distinct from His grasp of His own essence. In contrast, for Scotus, the quiddity or common nature most certainly is prior to the operation of the intellect, for it is the moving cause of the operation. Yet, Scotus insists even further that the intelligible species or concept itself must be present prior to the act of understanding.

Now that we have investigated Scotus’s account of the act of understanding, let us turn to how he conceives science.

Scotus’s View of Science

Fully to explicate all the details of Scotus’s notion of science extends well beyond the scope of this paper. However, I would like nevertheless to draw out some aspects of that notion which would almost certainly be particularly germane to a more complete treatment of Scotus from a Lonerganian perspective. Thus, the procedure I will follow in the present section will be merely to deal in a somewhat piecemeal fashion with certain aspects of Scotus’s notion of science, with a view to setting up a larger discussion to be undertaken in another paper.

To begin with, it would seem that on Scotus’s view of science, it is in the object of science that science properly is to be found. In other words, when it comes to science, for Scotus, the object is all-dominant. Thus, the object of science “virtually pre-contains” the entirety of a given science. By “virtually pre-contain” Scotus appears to mean that all the propositions that would be affirmed by a given science can be logically deduced from one simple object. As Demange notes:

Il n’est donc possible de procéder à une progression dans la connaissance scientifique qu’en vertu d’une déduction évidente, laquelle se fonde sur les relations de précontenance causale entre les vérités scientifiques, lesquelles sont donc *in fine* toutes précontenues dans un objet premier : le

¹⁸ Cf. Aquinas: “The being of the quiddity is a certain being of reason” *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m. Cited in Lonergan 1997, 20.

sujet de la science. On voit donc que pour Duns Scot l'unité d'une science résulte directement de la nature même de l'évidence et de la nécessité scientifique : une science est un ensemble de connaissances que l'on peut parcourir déductivement, c'est-à-dire qui sont précontenues les unes dans les autres (Demange 2007, 227).

A famous example Scotus uses to support his point is that all geometry is virtually contained within its first object, namely, the triangle, or rather its definition: according to Scotus, it seems, all geometry may be deduced from this principle object.

The student of Lonergan will of course quickly note that Lonergan decisively shows that such a deductivist view of science is simply arcane and has been historically superseded by the methods of modern science. Indeed, from his earliest works Lonergan showed that even the apparently deductive method of Euclidean geometry was in fact not strictly deductive at all, but rather reached conclusions that, while they could not be deduced from the axiom, nevertheless were graspable by the pre-conceptual act of insight into phantasm.¹⁹ Other considerations that a fuller critique of Scotus would invoke would be Lonergan's exploitation of Hilbert's notion of implicit definition. For regarding this notion, Lonergan notes that a point may be explicitly conceptually defined either as position without magnitude or as simply through an ordered pair of number (such as 1, 3). Yet, it is the grasp of the pre-conceptual intelligibility of the point that allows one to move intelligently between these two explicit conceptual definitions. One could likewise consider would be the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries.

To return to the present issue, however, for Scotus, it is not merely that all sciences can be deduced from some first object; rather, it seems that, in some sense, science just is the object. As

¹⁹ Cf. *Understanding and Being*, p 23-24: "Euclid's first proposition is to construct an equilateral triangle on a given base in a given plane. And you remember the solution – if you studied Euclid's construction and not some modern variation in which all the problems and theorems are changed. It is to take center *A* and radius *AB* and draw a circle. Take center *B* and radius *BA*, draw another circle. You get point *C*. Join *CA* and *CB*. Because *AB* and *AC* are both radii of the same circle, they are also equal. Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. Therefore, all three sides are equal, and we have an equilateral triangle. Now if you are familiar with geometry, you know that Euclid has slipped. He undertakes to solve his problems and prove his theorems in virtue of his definitions, axioms, and postulates. But there is one step that is not covered by any of Euclid's definitions, axioms, or postulates, namely, that the two circles will intersect at point *C*. There is no way of proving *that* from the whole set of definitions, axioms, and postulates." Instead, as Lonergan points out, the way one grasps it is by getting an insight into the phantasm through which one grasps that the circles must necessarily intersect.

Demange states, for Scotus, “ce n’est pas . . . *l’intellect* qui contient virtuellement la connaissance, c’est son *objet*” (Demange 2007, 207). Indeed, as Scotus states :

“Omnis autem ratio cognoscendi quae est in intellectu creato . . . se habet ad ipsum cognitum sicut mensuratum ad mensuram, et ita sicut ‘posterius naturaliter’ ad prius; quare unitas eius necessario dependet ab unitate obiecti mensurantis. Igitur necesse est aliquod unum obiectum esse mensuram eius. Sed obiectum quod est mensura eius, est ei adequatum; ergo non est ratio cognoscendi alia, nisi quia continentur virtualiter in primo obiecto quod est mensura eius” *Ord.* II, d.3, p.2, q.3, n.370. (Cited in Demange 2007, 207.)

For Scotus, it seems, the object is the measure of the mind and science is, not a habit of the scientist, as it is for Aquinas and Aristotle, but just the object itself, which deductively pre-contains the whole of the science.²⁰ Thus, all normativity appears to be on the side of the object. As Demange states, for Scotus, “la connaissance est relative à des objets de l’intellect, c’est dans ces objets qu’elle trouve sa cause, sa mesure et ainsi sa vérité” (Demange 2007, 246). A great deal more indeed needs to be worked out regarding this aspect of Scotus’s notion of science, but clearly preliminary indications are that Scotus’s view is both exceedingly arcane and naive.

Another aspect of Scotus’s notion of science that would have to be critically examined in a fuller treatment would be the question as to whether all scientific propositions are analytic in a more or less Kantian sense for Scotus. For instance, César Ribas in a recent piece has argued strongly that, regarding Scotus’s notion of causality, “if we were forced to classify it according to Kant’s distinctions, we would have to say that this principle is not synthetic but analytic” (Ribas 2007). Indeed, given that, for Scotus, the act of understanding merely grasps concepts and the logical relations between them, and that science is merely a deductive procedure, it would seem that the propositions of science, on Scotus’s account, could only be analytic. Let us examine a few of Scotus’s attempts to give examples of scientific reasoning to see whether we might be able to glean some further indication as whether or not, for Scotus, all scientific propositions essentially are analytic.

²⁰ Note the contrast with Aquinas: “The term *mind* [*mens*] is taken from the verb *measure* [*mensurare*]. For a first thing of any genus is measured by what is least [simplest] and first in its genus, as is clear from the *Metaphysics* [X.1 1052b24, 34]. So the word mind is applied to the soul in the same way that understanding [*intellectus*] is. For understanding [*intellectus*] knows about things only by measuring them, as it were, according to its own principles.” (Cited in Byrne 1997, 187)

First, let us examine how Scotus's view of the way in which so-called experimental knowledge is achieved in order to show that this view would essentially correspond to what Kant would call a merely analytic science. Exposing the essentially analytic character of Scotus's view of science can perhaps be most expeditiously accomplished by examining an example he gives of the manner by which we go about gaining scientific knowledge from experience. The example we will use is Scotus's interpretation of Aristotle's account of how we come to know the cause of an eclipse – such example will be particularly useful as it will provide the means of a further clarification of Scotus's view insofar as we contrast it with that of Aquinas and indeed Aristotle, himself.

Thus, regarding how we come to have knowledge of the cause of an eclipse, Scotus states

It should be further noted that at times we experience [the truth] of a conclusion, such as: "The moon is frequently eclipsed". Then, granting the validity of this conclusion because it is a fact, we proceed by the method of division to discover the reason for this. And sometimes, beginning with a conclusion thus experienced, a person arrives at self-evident principles. In such a case, the conclusion which at first was known only by experience now is known by reason of such a principle with even greater certainty, namely, that characteristic of the first kind of knowledge, for it has been deduced from self-evident principles. Thus for instance, it is a self-evident principle that when an opaque body is placed between a visible object and the source of light, the transmission of light to such an object is prevented. Now, if a person discovers by way of division that the earth is such an opaque body interposed between sun and moon, our conclusion will no longer be known merely by experience as was the case before we discovered this principle. It will be now known most certainly by a demonstration of the reasoned fact, for it is known through its cause (Wolter 1987, 110).

The claim that is of central import to our present concern is that the principle that, when an opaque body is placed between a visible object and the source of light, the transmission of light to such an object is prevented, is self-evident. For, by what does Scotus mean "self-evident"? He means that it is true based upon the definitions of the terms: that is to say, Scotus is claiming that, insofar as you know the respective definitions of "visible object," "opaque body" and "source of light," and a statement claims a the opaque body is interposed between the visible object and its source of light, you mind will be compelled to assent to the claim. Moreover, the "way of division," of which Scotus speaks here is the method whereby one logically unpacks what is implicitly contained in the concept of "earth": that is to say, it is the movement up the Porphyrian tree that conceptualist Medieval interpreters of Aristotle

thought was what Aristotle meant by analysis.²¹ Thus, implicit in the concept “man” are the concepts “rational” and “animal.” Yet, animals possess sensitive souls. Therefore, if you know something is a man you can deduce that it has a sensitive soul. Similarly, implicit in the concept of “earth” might be “flat” and “opaque body.” Thus, if you know something is earth, you can deduce that it is an opaque body. Once you have deduced this term, it is merely a matter of inserting it into the self-evident proposition and presumably you have scientific knowledge.

The significant point to recognize, here, is that the principle concerning opaque bodies, in a much more radical sense, is not self-evident at all. The child, for instance, when it is first learning about things of this sort may see a source of light like the sun and an object that (we know) is illuminated by the sun. She may then place herself between the sun and the illuminated object and, in turn, witness the illumination of the object disappear or at least decrease. However, she may have no idea that the cause of the object’s thus darkening has anything to do with her interposition between the sun and the object. She may well have supposed that the object was itself a light or had a light within it and that the light went out. She may have supposed that light is like sound and that, just because something is directly interposed between the source of light and the object, nevertheless, like sound, the light can still reach the object. Or she may have supposed until then that light can travel through human bodies. Similarly, regarding the explanation of an eclipse, Pat Byrne reminds us “there was a time when the term ‘eclipse’ did not include its cause in its definition, but was simply a fact to be explained” (Byrne 1997, 89). For Scotus, however, explaining an eclipse is merely a matter of inserting terms into self-evident principles and deducing the logical implications. Yet, again, as Byrne notes, “The problem of the lunar eclipse cannot be solved as an analytic problem (in the Kantian sense), according to Aristotle” (Byrne 1997, 237). Rather, as Lonergan mentioned above, the process, in both Aristotle and Aquinas, of moving from the fact to the reasoned fact, is not a matter of inserting terms into self-evident analytic propositions, but of finding the middle between the sensible data (the moon thus darkened) and the essential definition of an eclipse.

²¹ Cf. Patrick Byrne’s *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* for a sustained critique of this interpretation.

Another point to develop in this context from a Lonerganian perspective would be to show that when science is conceived as deducing what necessarily follows from the definition of the terms, the possibility of scientific development is cut off. For, concepts are eternally just what we define them to be. Thus, on Scotus's account, there would be no way to develop in our understanding of the moon (defined as a visible body) and its relationship to sun (defined as a source of light) and the earth (defined as an opaque body). For Scotus, based on the definition of these terms, it is universally and necessarily the case that the light from the sun should not reach the moon if the earth is interposed between the two. However, with, for instance, the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries and post-Einsteinian science, it need no longer be presumed that two parallel lines will not meet; for we may posit that the space through which they travel is bent.²² Thus, if the space around the earth is bent by the earth's gravity, then the light from the sun travelling through that space could reach the moon even if the earth is interposed between it and the sun. However, it seems that on Scotus's account, science abstract entirely from the concrete and existent. Indeed, as Demange writes, for Scotus, "la connaissance scientifique est purement abstractive, elle n'est pa en rien liée à l'existence ou la non-existence des choses extérieures" (Demange 2007, 246). Thus, one of the effects of this abstraction from the concrete, it would seem, is that science, including theology, falls into what Lonergan criticizes as an abstract immobilism for which even authentic development is conceived as a threat to truth. Clearly, much can be developed in connecting the problem of abstract immobilism with Scotus's view of science.

Let us take another example from Scotus. Scotus, in this example, wishes to show that the intellect can correct the senses in instances in which the senses perceiving something such as the staff being bent in water. Thus Scotus states

But if the judgment of different sense differs in regard to what is seen outside; for instance, if sight says that the staff which is partly in the water and partly in air is broken . . . in all such instances we are still certain of what is true and know which sense is in error . . . For there is always some proposition to set the mind or intellect aright regarding which acts of the sense are true and which false – a proposition, note, which the senses do not cause but merely occasion in the intellect. For instance, the intellect had this proposition reposing in it: "The harder object is not broken by the touch of something soft which gives way before it". So evident is this proposition upon the

²² Cf. *Understanding and Being* pp 27-28.

analysis of its terms that intellect could not call it in doubt, even if its terms were derived from erroneous senses. Indeed, the opposite of this proposition includes a contradiction. Now both sight and touch attest that the stick is harder than the water and that the water gives way before the stick. It follows therefore that the stick is not broken as the sense of sight judges (Wolter 1987, 115).

Scotus's argument is thus that by definition the harder object cannot be broken by the softer which gives way before it, and to assert otherwise would be a contradiction. Thus, since the senses of sight and touch tell us that the staff is harder than the water which gives way before it, we can be absolutely certain, despite what sight tells us, that the staff is not bent.

Notice, first of all, that on Scotus's own showing sight would actually be telling us that the staff is not harder: that is to say, Scotus contradicts himself, it seems, in affirming that sight both sees the staff as bent and the staff as harder, for to see it as bent would be to see it as softer, not harder. However, that is not the major point at issue. What is at issue is that, again, Scotus is not conceiving science and scientific reasoning as a matter of investigating sensible data (the shape of the bent staff) in order to find the middle term in order then to arrive at the essential definition of the phenomenon. Rather, science for Scotus is again revealed to be a matter of inserting terms into apparently self-evident propositions: since touch tells us that the staff is harder than the water which gives way before it, we can be absolutely certain, based upon the definition of the terms, that the staff is not bent. However, anyone who has witnessed a plane crashing into water will tell you that, despite the fact that the plane was "harder" than the water which did in fact give way before it, nevertheless, the "harder" plane most certainly was bent upon entering the water.

The larger point here, then, is that it seems rather clear that science, for Scotus, is merely a matter of logically relating concepts. Such a procedure abstracts entirely from the concrete, or, as Kant would say, it determines no object of experience.²³ To be sure, more work needs to be done in this area in order to develop a more precise account of the abstract deductivist and analytic view of science that Scotus

²³ Cf. Lonergan's observation concerning why Kant insisted upon a concrete over an abstraction deduction of metaphysics: "Analytic propositions lack both relevance and significance: they lack relevance, for they regard all possible worlds but are isolated from the actual world; they lack significance, for they are obtained by studying the rules of syntax and the meanings of words, and clearly that procedure does yield an understanding of this universe" (Lonergan 2005, 430).

appears to endorse. However, a fair amount of evidence seems to have been amassed to indicate that it is likely that Scotus would be subject to the Kantian critique of the abstractness and vacuity of basing science on analytic rather than synthetic propositions.

Moreover, it might be suggested that there seems to be a consistent overlooking of the role of insight in the formulation of scientific definitions. In contrast to Scotus, for Aristotle and Aquinas, we come to know the definition of an eclipse, not through logically relating previous definitions of “opaque body” and “source of light,” but by inquiring into sensible data and asking “What?” or “Why?” and grasping a nest of intelligible relations. In other words, not only is there a lack of an account of insight into phantasm in Scotus’s cognitional theory, there seems clearly to be an oversight of the role of insight in the unfolding of scientific practice.

To summarize this section, then, as the act of understanding for Scotus is a kind of automatic mechanical process, so too does he seem to view science as something that unfolds with a kind of logico-mechanical necessity by which all of science is deductively unfolded from the object. In consequence of this view, science appears to be entirely abstracted from the concrete and existent. Such a view of science, moreover, seems especially prone to an abstract immobilism that cuts off authentic development. Though a full criticism of this view of science from a Lonerganian perspective will have to wait for another occasion, nevertheless we have perhaps had some indication as to how that critique would proceed.

Intuitive Cognition

Let us now attempt to fill out our account of Scotus’s cognitional theory by discussing briefly his notion of intuitive cognition. Regarding Scotus’s notion of intuitive cognition, Lonergan provides us with a helpful indication as to why, for Scotus, such cognition would be necessary, as he states

Any metaphysical system eventually assumes the form of a set of propositions. The propositions can be divided into primitive and derived, and a logical technique can establish that if the primitive propositions are accepted, then the derived must also be accepted. The problem, then, of a deductive method is to select correctly the primitive propositions. A first alternative is to assert that one’s primitive propositions are universal and necessary truths. Since they are not deduced, they commonly will be claimed to be self-evident. However, a dialectic of method need not scrutinize this claim, for the properties of universal and necessary truth turn out to be sufficiently significant. If the primitive propositions are universal, then they are abstract. They may refer to existing objects, but they do not assert the existence of an object, unless the universal is supposed to exist. This conclusion is confirmed by such keen logicians as Duns Scotus and William of

Ockham, both of whom felt compelled to complement their abstract systems with the affirmation of the existing and present as existing and present (Lonergan 2005, 427-28).

Lonergan is stating that since, as we attempted to draw out above, Scotus's abstract deductivist method of science abstracts from the existence of its object, in order to have knowledge of existence some other form of cognition must be appealed to. For Scotus, the appeal is to an intuition of the existence and presence of the object as existing and present.²⁴ Fred Lawrence provides further clarification.

[For Scotus] despite the perceiving which happens within so-called abstractive knowledge, the objectivity of human knowledge in this life cannot, by definition, be secured by abstractive knowledge. It must, therefore, be left to sense intuition: "Visio est existentis ut existens est, et ut praesens est videnti secundum existentiam suam" (Lawrence 31).

For Scotus, intuition has a systematic importance; and so, like heaven, it is spread throughout the whole of his gnoseology. In various contexts he distinguishes two types of knowledge. The most obvious sort of non-sensible cognition, in our present state of existence, is abstractive cognition; it is *cognitio objecti secundum quod abstrahit ab omni existentia actuali*. Scientific knowledge of quiddities or essences falls under this category of knowledge. Like all forms of abstractive knowledge, it may pertain to either the existent or the nonexistent, for it is limited to the necessary and the possible. The sole knowledge capable of attaining the existent precisely as existent is intuitive cognition: it attains the object *secundum quod praesens in aliquod existentia actuali*. Abstractive knowledge is deduced from the fact of scientific knowledge. Intuitive knowledge *as intellectual* is deduced from a number of premises: if we apprehend the present and existent by means of sense intuition, and if a superior faculty must necessarily possess all the perfections of lower faculties, then one is forced to postulate a *cognitio intuitiva, seu visiva, quae est rei in se* (Lawrence 29-30).

²⁴ It should be recalled, as was established earlier, the "object" to which Scotus would be referring is the *quidditas* or common nature. Thus, the point here is that, as opposed to abstractive cognition, in which there is a "mediating" representation "between" the intellect and the object, namely, the *intelligible species* or concept, in the case of intuitive cognition there is no such mediation; rather, the *quidditas* as existing is somehow directly present to the intellect through some kind of intellectual vision. It should perhaps be pointed out that here we find another point at which a Lonerganian critique could be mounted, since connected with the notion of the abstractive deductivism of his methodology is Scotus's view of abstraction. For, on Scotus's account, abstraction is not enriching, as it is for Lonergan and Aquinas, but rather impoverishing. Abstraction or "universalizing," for Scotus, produces the intelligible species, which he considers an "*esse diminutum*" or "*esse repraesentatum*": that is to say, an impoverished replica of the "real thing" "out there" (Demange 2007, 215). This view of abstraction in fact may mark a kind of epochal shift in the view of abstraction, namely, away from what Aristotle and Aquinas had conceived towards the modern representationalist views of knowing; for indeed similar views of the nature of the concept idea emerge in Hume and Kant. For Kant, concepts are representations, and since judgments are syntheses of concepts, judgments are mere representations of representations. The basic thrust behind all of these positions seems to be the view that, instead of being something we do, as it were, on the way to knowledge of being, understanding and conception merely pull us away or put us at a remove from being, for being is conceived as what is indeed "already out there now": that is to say, as what would or should ideally be given or found in some immediate confrontation.

Thus, for Scotus, along with the abstractive cognition that yields the sciences which abstract entirely from existence and non-existence, there must be added an immediate intuition of the existing and present as existing and present.

Lawrence's quote indicates one of the main arguments Scotus's proffers in defense of such an intuition: since the objects of sense are immediately intuited as existing and present, then, since a superior faculty must necessarily possess all the perfections of a lower faculty, the intellect, too, must have an immediate intuition of the existence and presence of its object. Scotus's argument that would prove that the senses intuit the existence and presence of their object is that, when the object of sensible intuition is removed, the intuition ceases. As Demange notes, for Scotus, "la connaissance sensible est nécessairement intuitive car lorsque l'objet n'affecte plus lui-même directement l'organe sensoriel, il n'y a plus de sensation" (Demange 2007, 32).

Lonergan provides a rather concise critique of this view of the intuition of the existing and present.

The medieval theologians that explored this type of system [i.e. the abstract deductivist system] acknowledged the existence and the omnipotence of God; the only possible restriction upon divine omnipotence, and the only restriction on the range of possible worlds, lay in the principle of contradiction. Their metaphysics deal with all possible worlds, and so it deal simultaneously with every possible instance of the noncontradictory. Not only did this object prove extremely tenuous and elusive, but it soon became apparent that the one operative principle in their thought was the principle of contradiction. Moreover, this principle ran counter to their affirmation of an intuition of the existing and present as existing and present. For it would be contradictory to affirm and deny some occurrence of the intuition; it would be contradictory to affirm and deny the existence of some object; but there is no apparent contradiction in affirming the occurrence of the intuition and denying the existence of its object. If not contradiction is involved, then in some possible world there would occur intuitions of the existence of what did not exist; and as Nicholas of Autrecourt perceived, neither analytic propositions nor intuitions can assure one that the possibility of illusory intuitions is not realized in this world (Lonergan 2005, 428-29).

Another means, which would be in agreement with other aspects of Lonergan, by which Scotus's argument for the intuition of the existing and present could be critiqued would be by drawing out what we find in certain passages Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. Husserl notes that, on the level of sensation, one does not intuit being "*qua* existence," as he states: "I can see colour, but not being-coloured. I can feel smoothness, but not being-smooth. I can hear sound, but not that something *is* sounding" (Husserl

2001, 345). As Lonergan would say, the term of sensitive operations is not existence. In other words, there is a fundamentally phenomenological critique Scotus's appeal to an intellectual intuition of the existing and present. For existence is not in fact "given" in sensation *qua* sensation; there is no sensible intuition of the object as existing or present. The positing of existence and presence is an operation of the mind, namely, that of judgment. Consequently, the grounds that Scotus appeals to in order to affirm intellectual intuition of existing – namely, that an inferior faculty must possess all the perfections of a lower faculty – is entirely undercut once one grasps that one does not *sense* the existence and presence of any object.

Lawrence is also suggesting something very important when he notes, for Scotus, "Abstractive knowledge is deduced from the fact of scientific knowledge." What Lawrence I believe is getting at is the problem that faces the philosopher who conceives knowing primarily as taking a look when he or she would otherwise attempt to account for our knowledge of the intelligible and universal. There is a paragraph in *Insight* where Lonergan explicates this issue with rather brilliant elegance; indeed, I find it to be one of those paragraphs in *Insight* (and there are many) that contain an almost superabundance of content. Lonergan states

Certainly Duns Scotus would have rejected the Kantian notion of the a priori for the very reasons that led him to reject the Aristotelian and Thomist view that intellect apprehends the intelligible in the sensible and grasps the universal in the particular. After all, what is presented by sense or imagination is not actually intelligible or actually universal. But objective knowing is a matter of taking a look at what actually is there to be seen. If, then, intellect apprehends the intelligible in the sensible and the universal in the particular, its apprehensions must be illusory, for it sees what is not there to be seen. *Nonetheless, we do know what is intelligible and universal. To account for this fact without violating his convictions on extroversion as the model of objectivity*, Scotus distinguished a series of steps in the genesis of intellectual knowledge. The first step was abstraction; it occurs unconsciously; it consists in the impression upon intellect of a universal conceptual content. The second step was intellection: intellect takes a look at the conceptual content. The third step was a comparison of different contents, with the result that intellect saw which concepts were conjoined necessarily and which were incompatible. There follows the deduction of the abstract metaphysics of all possible worlds, and to it one adds an intuition of the existing and present as existing and present, to attain knowledge of the actual world (Lonergan 2005, 431. Emphasis added).

Scotus was aware of the intelligible and the universal. However, since it appears that he conceived knowledge on the model of extroverted biological consciousness he assumed that, in order for them to be "really out there," they must show up in the content of sensation. Knowing, truly knowing, is a matter of

looking at all there is to be seen and not seeing anything that is not there to be seen. If intellect claims to know the intelligible in the sensible it is merely claiming to see that which is not there, for the sensible as such is not intelligible.²⁵ Thus, in Scotus, abstraction is not grasped and described in its concrete unfolding, but rather is merely deduced, as Lawrence states, in order to explain our grasp of the intelligible and the universal.

In this section, then, on Scotus's notion of intuitive cognition we have hopefully made a few inroads into where a more thorough Lonerganian critique of Scotus could be launched. We have seen that, given his abstract view of science, in order to account for knowledge of existence, Scotus was forced to posit an immediate intuition of the existing and present as existing and present. However, we also saw that his argument defending this view rested on the faulty presupposition that existence is intuited in sensation. Once this aspect of his argument is exposed as flawed then all that is based upon it – including the idea of an immediate intellectual intuition of the *quidditas* – is undermined as well.

The Concept of Being in Scotus

I would like now to offer a suggestion regarding a potential further consequence of Scotus's view that the act of understanding strictly grasps concepts. This suggestion, moreover, if it were to be verified would likely be of great significance in inserting Lonergan into the contemporary discussion concerning

²⁵ This was Kant's same difficulty. He understood the intelligible and universal laws of Newtonian science; they constituted part of his conscious experience. However, in order for them to have been determination of that which is "really out there" (i.e. things in themselves) they would have to have shown up in the data of sense. Yet, Hume had shown that they could not in fact be located there. The major contrast between Scotus and Kant in this regard then seems merely to be how they view the direction of the concepts to move. For Scotus, concepts move through an unconscious mechanical process from "out there" to "in here," whereas for Kant, concepts move through an unconscious mechanical process from "in here" to "out there." For the naïve interpreter this makes Scotus a "realist" and Kant an "idealist." However, from a Lonergan perspective they both share a more radical common core of conceptualism. Indeed, Husserl, despite the much greater phenomenological perspicacity we have noted, also seems to have had difficulties here. For, although he made the tremendous phenomenological breakthrough in realizing that existence is not given in sensation, nevertheless he was forced to posit on intuition of being and other universals. The same dynamic seems to be at work. Husserl had within his conscious experience the knowledge of the intelligible, the universal, the existent. However, he scoured, with unyielding patience, the field of sensible data and could not find it there. Yet, since knowing is primarily a matter of looking or intuiting, it must be that the intelligible, the universal and the existent or being – because, once again, we do know them – come to us through some form of intuition. Cf. Husserl 2001, 345ff. Lonergan notes in *Insight* that, despite Husserl's brilliant albeit partial break from the animal anticipation of reality with his notion of phenomenological bracketting, the latter's conception of the transcendental ego is nevertheless based upon a biologically extroverted model (Lonergan 2005, 440).

Scotist influence. For, that discussion has been peculiarly concerned with the issue of Scotus's univocal definition of being. What is notable about this discussion is that many of the critics of Scotus would see Scotus's doctrine of the univocity of being as setting the stage for the turn to the subject in which all "objective" hierarchies or scales of meaning and value are leveled or emptied out, i.e. rendered "univocal," thereby forcing us to view all human effort as "subjective" projections or expressions of the will-to-power on an intrinsically meaningless or indifferent plane of immanence— this ironically, of course, despite Scotus's own explicitly naïve realist view of the object as the all-dominant "already, out, there now." However, the suggestion I want to make is that it may be possible to demonstrate that Scotus's univocal notion of being is a direct and in some sense necessary result of his view that the act of understanding is restricted to a grasp of concepts. The upshot of showing this, of course, would be to show that, in order to criticize Scotus at his root, it is not sufficient to revert naively to asserting a metaphysics of analogical attribution of being as first philosophy, but rather the task calls for the development and employment of an adequate cognitional theory. The point being that Scotus's univocal notion of being emerges from his cognitional theory, and not the other way around. For, if Scotus had developed a different cognitional theory, it may or may not have led him to a univocal definition of being. However, due to the cognitional theory that he in fact developed, I am suggesting that he perhaps could not but have arrived at a univocal definition of being. Indeed, this strikes me as a potentially a hugely significant opportunity for Lonergan scholars to contribute to the commentary debate over Scotist influence.²⁶

While providing a full demonstration of precisely how Scotus's notion of being emerges from his view of the act of understanding would extend beyond the scope of the present paper, nevertheless it

²⁶ See, for instance, Pickstock, Catherine. "Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance," *Modern Theology*, 21(4), 543-574, 32 p. October 2005. Pickstock, in her piece, to her great credit, does manage to indicate a significant link between Scotus's view of abstraction and his notion of being. However, she does not systematically exploit this link in the manner in which I am suggesting it could be. This fact may well have to do with the fact that her appropriation of Aquinas's notion of the act of understanding is itself, as it were, crypto-Scotist; for, in her very criticism of Scotus she rebukes him for failing to realize, as, according to her, Aquinas had, that human knowledge is primarily a matter of sensory intuition. Thus she *criticizes* Scotus for denying that "human knowledge concerns primarily sensorily intuited things" (Pickstock 2005, 561).

seems that certain preliminary indications that this would be so can be adduced with relative ease. For, it is quite clear that Scotus's notion of being just is Scotus's concept of being. Being, on Scotus account, is just the concept that may be commonly abstracted from all cognitional content.²⁷ It is the concept greatest in connotation, least in denotation. Thus, if God and creatures are both to be said to be, then, for Scotus, they must have some minimal conceptual content in common, which would thus render univocal our definition of the being of each. This fact appears to be the main bone of contention for postmodern critics of Scotus. However, it seems that insofar as they neglect the authentic turn to interiority because, ironically, they view Scotus as at the origin of this turn, they will be unable to criticize Scotus's conception of being at its root. For it would indeed seem that it is the view that the act of understanding grasps concepts which necessitates that being should be defined univocally in the Scotist fashion. Of course, the Lonergan scholar, herself, would not necessarily be bothered by a kind of univocal definition of being; for, as Lonergan clarifies, the heuristic definition of being as the objective of the detached and disinterested desire to know is a univocal definition. Yet, in showing that the notion of being is, not the conceptual content common to all cognitional content, but rather the which underpins, penetrates and goes beyond all cognitional content, Lonergan also feels that he is recovering the core of what was intended by the notion of the analogical definition of being (Lonergan 2005, 391-392, 395-396).

It should be noted, also, that it seems quite clear that, due to his concept of being and his view of abstraction in general, in Scotus, being and existence are strangely severed. Existence is "known" immediately through a biologically extroverted confrontation or intuition. In contrast, being is a concept and thus a mere representation or "*esse diminutum*." Concepts, including the concept of being, as we have seen, pull us away from existence, for existence is what is "out there." For Lonergan, on the other hand, the notion of being is what drives us to affirm existence in judgment: that is to say, a particular

²⁷ Cf. Demange: "Every formal or quidditative concept formally contains the concept of being which is thus co-apprehended with the subject of every particular science"; "All forms, whether substantial/essential or accidental, is thought in itself in the general and common form of the concept of being. Also, the form is not modified in being abstracted from its subject"; "The distinction between finite and infinite being is based, not upon a generic univocity, but on a conceptual univocity, with their intrinsic modes being incompatible"; "All the concepts of metaphysics have the property that a common concept of being can be abstracted from it" (Demange 2007, 197; 300; 305; 306).

affirmation of existence is simply an incremental determination of the overarching anticipation of being which Lonergan defined heuristically precisely as all that which can be intelligently understood and reasonably affirmed. In other words, for Lonergan, in contrast with Scotus, we head for being from experiencing, through understanding, to judgment. This severing of being and existence seems to be just another strange consequence of Scotus's cognitional theory, one which could likely use a more sustained critical treatment.

What we have attempted to over in this section, then, is merely a suggestion as to the direction a Lonerganian critique of Scotus's concept of being would go. Such a critique would likely seek to penetrate to the root of that univocal concept in Scotus's conceptualist view of the act of understanding. On the basis of that analysis it could then go on to contrasting that notion of being with the notion that Lonergan develops in Chapter 12 of *Insight* and elsewhere.

Conclusion

This paper has been an initial exploration in critically interpreting Scotus's philosophy from a Lonerganian perspective. The goal has been to identify what would likely be the key areas of interest in any more sustained criticism of Scotus and where possible even to provide some preliminary critical remarks and suggestions.

We examined Scotus's theory of the act of understanding and found that it was rife with the conceptualist biases that Lonergan spent a large portion of his career exposing and criticizing himself. We examined Scotus's theory of science and found that it appears abstract and deductivist almost to an extreme fashion. We examined Scotus's notion of intuitive cognition and found that it contained some very seriously naïve presuppositions concerning how existence is known and generally betrayed a view of objectivity based on the biologically extroverted model. Lastly, we made a few suggestions as to how Scotus's notion of being might be critiqued, namely, by tracing its source to Scotus's problematic cognitional theory. In sum, it is hoped that something of a larger synthetic view of the Scotus as a whole has come into perspective and that the ground for a more sustained critical investigation has been laid.