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DUNS SCOTUS ON ETERNITY AND TIMELESSNESS

Richard Cross

Scotus consistently holds that eternity is to be understood as timelessness. In his early *Lectura*, he criticizes Aquinas' account of eternity on the grounds that (1) it entails collapsing past and future into the present, and (2) it entails a B-theory of time, according to which past, present and future are all onto-logically on a par with each other. Scotus later comes to accept something like Aquinas' account of God's timelessness and the B-theory of time which it entails. Scotus also offers a refutation of his earlier argument that Aquinas' account of eternity entails collapsing past and future into the present.

In this paper, I want to establish two conclusions. The main one will be that Scotus has a conception of eternity as timelessness. For an entity to be timeless, I mean that it lacks both temporal extension and temporal succession. The second is that, despite the fact that in one early passage Scotus explicitly criticizes Aquinas, their positions are not as diverse as commentators have supposed. Both of these claims are against the received wisdom concerning Scotus' position, but I will try to give good reasons for accepting them. I shall first give an account of the Thomist claim which Scotus criticizes, together with Scotus' criticism. In the second section of this paper, I shall outline Scotus' standard position on timelessness. In the third section I shall show that Scotus' position is very close to Aquinas'. In a final section, I will summarize my findings, and suggest two difficulties with Scotus' proposed account. I will also try to show what contemporary relevance Scotus' account might have.[1]

Some textual considerations need to be borne in mind, since there seems to me to be some evidence that Scotus changed his mind on the matter, and came to see that his earlier position was inconsistent. In what follows, I shall make use of two different versions of Scotus' commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. The earlier of these is the *Lectura*, the relevant parts of which date from before 1300.[2] My main source will be the *Ordinatio*: Scotus' final edited version of his commentary. Dating this work is difficult. We know that Scotus was working on it as early as 1300, and that it remained incomplete at the time of his death in 1308.[3] Nevertheless, we can reliably take it as the most important version to survive.

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I. Scotus' criticism of Aquinas in Lectura, book 1, distinction 39

In a famous passage inspired by Boethius, Aquinas claims that God can know future contingents since

> (A) All temporal things are eternally present to God.[4]

I would argue that (A) provides good evidence that Aquinas holds God to be timeless. Whether or not Aquinas did hold God to be timeless is still a matter for dispute, however, and I will not discuss it here.[5] There seem to me to be good reasons for supposing Aquinas' God to be time-less, and I shall assume, for the purposes of my paper, that Aquinas has a conception of divine timelessness. However (A) is construed, it seems *prima facie* to be open to an objection which has been clearly articulated by Anthony Kenny:

> The whole concept of a timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically inco-herent. For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relation. If A happens at the same time as B, and B happens at the same time as C, then A happens at the same time as C. If the BBC programme and the ITV programme both start when Big Ben strikes ten, then they both start at the same time. But, on St Thomas' view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Again, on his view, the great fire of Rome is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these very words, Nero fiddles heartlessly on.[6]

Although he does not point this out, Kenny's inference here will only be valid if simultaneity is both transitive and *symmetrical*. Presumably, Kenny would regard the symmetry of a relation of simultaneity to be so obvious as not to need spelling out.

William Lane Craig has raised a weaker related objection to Aquinas' account. Craig argues, on the basis of his account of God's knowledge, that Aquinas must be a "proponent of the B-theory of time," accepting that "the past, present, and future are all ontologically on a par with each other."[7] Craig's point is rather different from Kenny's, since I take it that it would be possible to hold a B-theory of time without accepting that past and future will collapse into the present.

In book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*, Scotus criticizes Aquinas' claim (A). Unfortunately, Scotus' later *Ordinatio* remains incomplete at this point, and the scribe notes that Scotus left a blank space to fill in the discussion later — presumably when he had worked out what he want-ed to say on the matter.[8] To make up for this deficiency, the scribe copied another version of the relevant discussion, a version which the Vatican editors regard as at best only dubiously authentic — possibly reconstructed by a disciple of Scotus' from lost notebooks, but certainly not representing Scotus' last thoughts on the matter.[9] Two of the argu-ments Scotus uses in the *Lectura* are relevant here. **(A'.1)** Accepting

(B) If x is present to y, then both x and y exist,

and

(C) It is not the case that the whole of flowing time exists,

Scotus concludes that (A) is false.[10] By "exist," Scotus must mean something like "exist now," or "be present." He makes this clear by contrasting the sense of "exist" he has in mind with "merely *secundum quid* existence": existence qualified in some way or another. To spell out the relevant qualification, Scotus draws an analogy with space. God cannot be present to a place which exists merely potentially; neither can he be present to a time (the future) which exists merely potentially.[11] Granted this, we can replace (B) and (C) with

(B*) If x is present to y, then both x and y are present,

and

(C*) It is not the case that the whole of flowing time is present.

The argument is that (A) will entail the falsity of (C*): and I take it that the falsity of (C*) would in turn entail

(1) All things are temporally present,

which in turn entails that all temporal things are simultaneous. (Scotus' second argument — [A'.2] — provides a good reason for rejecting [1].) Thus, (A'.1) is just a less rigorous variation of Kenny's argument against Aquinas, and anyone accepting (A'.1) will be committed to the transitivity and symmetry of relations of simultaneity or presence.[12]
   (A'.2) (A) entails

(1*) All things are actual.

But Scotus holds that

(D) Only temporally present things are actual,

and hence that (A) entails

(1) All things are temporally present.

But (1) is false, since coupled with

(E) What is actual at one time cannot be produced in actuality for the first time at a later time,

it entails the absurd conclusion

(2) Nothing will be produced in actuality in the future.

Therefore (1), and hence (A), are to be rejected.[13] The significant point here is that rejecting (D) — as Aquinas will have to — will entail holding a B-theory of time: and accepting (D) will entail rejecting a B-theory of time. Much the same point is made by Marilyn Adams:

> Aquinas is presupposing an ontology according to which every-thing that has any temporal location is timelessly given "in its own determinate existence," so that there is no difference in ontological status among past, present, and future things. . . . In advancing premiss 2 [i.e., (D)], Scotus is implicitly rejecting such an ontology in favor of one in which only the timeless and those temporal things that are temporally present are absolutely actual.[14]

Thus, Scotus' two arguments provide two different reasons for the rejection of Aquinas' position. **(A'.1)** trades on the transitivity and sym-metry of relations of simultaneity. It thus rejects the Thomist entailment, pointed out by Kenny, that past, present and future are all simultaneous. **(A'.2)** exploits the claim made in (D), and rejects the B-theory of time entailed by Aquinas' theory. William Lane Craig suggests further that **(A'.1)** entails that

> God is eternal only in that He is everlasting and exists at every temporal "now."[15]

I do not see just how **(A'.1)** entails the claim that God is everlasting, though I think I see how drawing this inference would be tempting. For example, we might draw this inference if we thought that the falsity of (A) entailed that God is successively present to successive temporal items. But I do not see that the falsity of (A) entails this: and, as we shall see, Scotus clearly denies elsewhere that God is successively present to successive temporal items. In what follows I shall try to show that there is plenty of evidence against the claim that Scotus' God is eternal in the sense of being everlasting.

On the showing in book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*, Scotus clearly rejects the Thomist position: though the account leaves unclear whether or not Scotus would hold God to be timeless. But elsewhere in both the *Lectura* and the *Ordinatio*, Scotus makes claims which are far more akin to the Thomist view which he rejects in book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*. As I have already noted, Scotus' *Ordinatio* lacks distinction 39 of book 1: this lack seems to me to be initial evidence that Scotus came to perceive that his rejection of the Thomist position in the *Lectura* is incon-sistent with other claims which he makes in the *Lectura*, and which — since he repeats them in the *Ordinatio* — he clearly does not wish to abandon. In what follows, I shall argue that Scotus accepts the Thomist position with regard to timelessness, despite his rogue arguments in

book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*. I shall refer to "Scotus' standard position" to indicate the position taken everywhere except book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*. There is good evidence that Scotus rejects **(A'.1)** and **(A'.2)** in the *Ordinatio*, and that he should have rejected them even in the *Lectura*. As we shall see, Scotus' rejection of **(A'.1)** does not entail a commitment to the falsity of (C*). Equally, rejecting **(A'.2)** allows him to accept Aquinas' claim (or something like it) that God can have knowledge of his creatures in their actual existence, irrespective of whether those creatures are now future.[16] But I shall also argue that the way in which Scotus rejects **(A'.2)** will commit him to a B-theory of time.

We should also bear in mind, however, that Scotus says a great deal about time which falls outside the parameters of his discussion of eternity. I hope to explore in a later paper some of what Scotus says expressly about time. Briefly, it seems to me that Scotus has an account of time in which the B-series is fundamental. His account clearly allows a place for A-series time, and he does not regard the past, present and future as in every sense "on a par with each other." But he has difficulty spelling out just what his account of the A-series will be, since he consistently rejects any attempt to give an account of the A-series in terms of a flowing "now."[17]

II. Scotus' position on eternity and timelessness

In his most important discussion of eternity, Scotus quotes with approval the well-known Boethian definition:

Eternity is endless life, possessed perfectly and all at once.[18]

On this definition, as construed by Scotus, eternity has, topologically, the properties of an *instant*. Like an instant, it is "all at once,"[19] a property which Scotus takes as excluding temporal succession.[20] Scotus is rightly quite clear that an instant has zero temporal extension.[21] Scotus does not suppose, however, that eternity is in every respect like a temporal instant. Unlike an instant, it does not cease immediately: but this, I take it, is not to ascribe some *topological* property to eternity, since the point which Scotus wishes to make is that eternity is not the boundary of some temporally extended continuum. To underscore this point, Scotus talks of the "now" of eternity "remaining,"[22] having "duration"[23] and, in Boethian fashion, being "endless."[24] But this again would not be taken by Scotus to have any topological implications. Specifically, Scotus is quite clear that time is a continuum which is necessarily *bounded by* instants: and an enduring eternal "now" will fail to satisfy this condition for temporality.[25]

It might be objected that Scotus is merely using language from an established Boethian and neo-Platonic tradition here, without the use of this language implying that Scotus *really* thinks that God is timeless. After all, he clearly holds that eternity has duration: and at one point he refers to it as "endless duration."[26] In reply, I would offer three arguments. First, Scotus has a clear conception of the topological differences

between an instant and a temporal continuum, and that it is reasonable to suppose that he has these differences in mind when likening eternity to an instant.

Secondly, my claim that Scotus conceives of eternity as timelessness is strengthened by the way in which Scotus deals with two problems: (i) Does God's timeless willing of some effect entail that the effect is timeless? (ii) Did God have to wait for the creation of the universe? With regard to the first of these questions, Scotus argues as follows:

> A new effect can be made by an old act of the will without a change of will. Just as I, by means of my continuous volition by which I will something to be done, will then do it just for the "when" for which I will to do it, so God in eternity willed something other than himself to be for some time and then created it for the "when" for which he willed it to be.[27]

Equally, the fact that a creature is created at t does not entail that God has to *do* anything at t. All God has to do is to will (eternally) that the creature is created at t. Thus, there can be a new effect without any change in the cause.[28]

This account, although suggestive of my point, is admittedly consistent both with a timeless God and with an immutable everlasting God. But Scotus' treatment of the second question is not. According to Scotus, God did not have to wait for the creation of the universe. First, God did not have to wait before *deciding* to create the universe. Thus, he did not wait and then start willing something. The reason for this is that God's willing is timeless. But more important is Scotus' assertion that God did not have to wait for the effect:

> [God's] will is not impotent; neither does it have existence in time, such that it would wait for the time for which it produces what it wills. It does not will this [willed thing] then to exist necessarily when it wills. Rather, it wills [it] to exist for some determined time — for which, however, it does not wait, since the operation of [God's] will is not in time.[29]

Not having to wait for any effect — whatever the effect's temporal location — entails being timeless.

Thirdly, Scotus clearly holds that time is necessarily relative to change: if there were no change, there would be no time.[30] Scotus makes this point as though merely metrical considerations were at stake: if there were no natural processes, then we would not be able to assign a measurable duration to any existing state of affairs. Richard Swinburne has pointed out that such a claim does not entail the further claim that, if there were no natural processes, there would be no temporal extension at all. On Swinburne's account, there could be temporal extension but no measurable duration.[31] Scotus' account, however, is not quite like this: and it is clear that Scotus would regard his account of time as having topological implications, despite the (Aristotelian) way in which he

phrases the point. As just noted, temporal extension is defined by Scotus as a linear continuum bounded by instants. Independent of questions of metric, it is for Scotus a necessary feature of temporal extension that it have such a topology. Scotus' eternity, however, fails to satisfy this topological description. When he claims that time is the measure of change, and that time is necessarily relative to change, I therefore take it that he is denying any kind of Newtonian absolute time. Scotus is claiming that, in the absence of any change whatsoever, there would be nothing which exhibited any of the topological properties of time. (It will of course follow as a matter of fact on this account that there is no temporal topology without a temporal metric, granted that the existence of natural processes is a sufficient condition for the existence of a temporal metric.)[32]

This third point is important for Scotus' account of God's eternity. Scotus argues that, for any item x, if x is to be temporal, then it must satisfy one of two conditions: either (i) x is undergoing some real change; or (ii) x has the capacity for undergoing some real change.[33] God can satisfy neither of these two conditions. God's simplicity entails that God cannot undergo any substantial or accidental change. Such change requires that the subject receive a new form: and it is not possible for a wholly simple being to receive a form. Furthermore, God's necessity entails that he cannot be annihilated.[34] Since these two cases cover all the possibilities for change, Scotus infers that God is immutable: and hence *a fortiori* unable to satisfy (i) and (ii).

Scotus' position here is open to an objection which I think he can successfully rebut. To understand the objection, we will need an understanding of Scotus' account of relations. Roughly, Scotus adopts a realist account of real relations, such that the following principle is true:

(F) For any item x and any item y, x is contingently really related to y, if and only if a relational property R, really distinct from x and y, inheres in x.[35]

Scotus' understanding of accidental properties in general is that they are properly classified as individual *items* (*res*), really distinct from the substance in which they inhere: and as Scotus understands a relational property, it too is classified as an individual item, really distinct from the substance in which it inheres. On this account of relations, it will look as though God could change — and thus be temporal — merely in virtue of changes in the relations holding between him and creatures.

Scotus replies that God fails to be really related to any of his creatures. God is merely rationally related to his creatures: even though his creatures are really related — in the relevant respects — to God. A rational relation satisfies the following condition:

(G) For any item x and any item y, x is rationally related to y, if and only if (a) at least one of x and y is really related to the other term, and (b) an intellectual agent cognizes this real relation.[36]

(G) allows that x could be rationally related to y, even if x is not really related to y. On (G), y's real relation — call it "R" — to x, together with an intellectual agent's cognition of R, would be jointly sufficient for x's being rationally related to y. There is thus a subclass of rational relations, which we could conveniently label "merely rational" relations:

> (G*) For any item x and any item y, x is merely rationally related to y, if and only if (a) y is really related to x, (b) it is not the case that x is really related to y, and (c) an intellectual agent cognizes the real relation between y and x.[37]

Of course, no item could simultaneously satisfy in exactly the same respect the conditions governing x in both (F) and (G*).

Scotus argues that God instantiates the conditions governing x in (G*). He reasons that there can be no real relation in God to any other being:

> (H) Nothing in God requires the existence of some item other than God for its existence;

> (I) A real relation requires some item other than itself for its existence;

therefore

> (3) There is no real relation in God to any item other than God.[38]

(3) alone, however, is not sufficient to show that God can satisfy conditions (a) and (c) of (G*), required for a merely rational relation. But Scotus would claim that condition (a) is satisfied in virtue of the fact that every creature is necessarily really related to its creator;[39] and condition (c) is satisfied if either God or some other intellectual agent cognizes any one of the real relations holding between a creature and its creator.[40]

Since Scotus accepts (3), he has no trouble accepting that there can be real, temporally successive relations between creatures and God, without this entailing that there are such real temporally successive relations between God and creatures. Thus, creatures can be changed such that there is no corresponding real (relational or non-relational) change in God. Scotus therefore affirms

> (4) There are no real temporally successive relations in God to any other item,

which he claims is entailed by (3).[41] As I will make clear in the final section of this paper, Scotus' acceptance of (3) leads to certain difficulties in his account. Accepting (4), however, is wholly unproblematic as far as I can see, and it is all that Scotus needs to block the objection that God could be temporal merely in virtue of his changing relations to his creatures.

Scotus' acceptance of (3) does not, however, commit him to the posi-

tion that God cannot undergo what a modern philosopher would label a "merely Cambridge" change: one such that different predicates can be true of an item at different times, even if that item is *in every other respect* unchanging.[42] (Scotus would want to clarify: unchanging with regard both to non-relational features and real relational properties.) God could undergo a merely Cambridge change just if the following two conditions are satisfied: (a) there is a change in a creature in any respect in which the creature is really related to God, and (b) some intellectual agent cognizes this change. Scotus is quick to point out that there is no difficulty in God's undergoing such changes, if it is the case that the real relation in a creature to God is cognized by a created (and not an uncreated) intellect.[43] Scotus' reason is that such changes will correspond to nothing whatever that is really in God. They are changes pertaining merely to our cognition of the real relations holding between some creature and God. In an important passage, Scotus puts the point as follows:

> "God begot [his Son]" consignifies the "now" of eternity, such that the sense is "God has the act of generation in the 'now' of eternity in so far as that 'now' coexisted with the past"; and "God begets" means "has the act of generation in the 'now' of eternity in so far as it coexists with the present." Thus, since the "now" [of eternity] truly coexists with any difference of time, we can truly predicate of God the differences of all times.[44]

When we refer to God using tensed propositions, then, we are drawing attention to the fact that the proposition "God exists" (tenseless) is always true. But we are not committed to holding that God is in any way temporal. On the account, present becomes past, and real relations in creatures to God come into existence and pass out of existence, with no corresponding real change in God.

I have tried to show in this section that Scotus holds that God is timeless in virtue of failing to satisfy either of temporality conditions (i) and (ii) given on p. 9 above, where timelessness entails lacking both temporal extension and succession. I therefore reject Craig's claim that Scotus construes "eternal" to mean merely "everlasting." In the next section, I will try to show that Scotus' standard position on timelessness is very similar to the Thomist account, and that Scotus' standard position is inconsistent with both **(A'.1)** and **(A'.2)**.

III. *The rejection of (A'.1) and (A'.2) in Scotus' standard account*

Granted that Scotus' God is timeless, we can sensibly raise two relevant questions about his account: (i) Does God's timelessness, as construed by Scotus, entail collapsing past and future into the present? (ii) Does God's timelessness, as construed by Scotus, entail a B-theory of time? I will argue that Scotus' standard account of divine timelessness allows him to give a negative answer to the first of these questions, but not to the second.

In book 1, distinction 13 of both the *Lectura* and the *Ordinatio*, Scotus

considers an objection to timelessness which looks remarkably like his own **(A′.1)**:

> When two things are compared to a third . . . their union to each other follows from their union in the third thing. . . . I am with eternity, and Abraham was with eternity. Therefore I am simultaneous with Abraham.[45]

Scotus argues that the premisses do not entail the conclusion, on the grounds that the first premiss, which entails the transitivity and symmetry of simultaneity, is untrue if the third *relatum* is *limitless*.[46] And the discussion above has made it clear that, according to Scotus, eternity instantiates limitlessness. In employing this argument, Scotus effectively rejects his own **(A′.1)** against Aquinas. Specifically, he would reject the crucial

(B*) If x is present to y, then both x and y are present.

(The relation of being "present to" in [B*] means that the presence of t_1 and t_2 to God, or God's simultaneity with them, will entail that t_1 and t_2 are simultaneous. Hence my conclusion that Scotus' argument here entails rejecting [B*].) Thus, Scotus standardly accepts Aquinas's

(A) All temporal things are eternally present to God,

but rejects **(B*)**. Now, if Scotus rejects **(B*)**, he will have a plausible way of blocking the inference from (A) to the rejection of

(C*) It is not the case that the whole of flowing time is present.

This amounts to the claim that, even if we accept (A), we do not need to accept the contradictory of (C*),

(1) All things are temporally present.

We might summarize this account by claiming that all temporal things are present to eternity without it following that they are *temporally* present.

   Scotus' solution, which is that God's limitlessness prevents Scotus' being simultaneous with Abraham, has some similarity with the most famous modern attempt to sidestep **(A′.1)**: Stump and Kretzmann's ET-simultaneity.[47] ET-simultaneity is the kind of relation of simultaneity which obtains between two items such that one is eternal and the other is temporal. ET-simultaneity is a different kind of relation from the ordinary kind of simultaneity which obtains between two temporal items (labeled by Stump and Kretzmann "T-simultaneity"):[48] thus, on Stump and Kretzmann's account, the ET-simultaneity of both Abraham and Scotus with God will not entail that Abraham and Scotus are T-simultaneous. It is not clear to me just what ET-simultaneity amounts to: but the crucial analogy with Scotus' position is that on both positions God's

eternity is sufficient to block the inference from the simultaneity of all temporal items with God to the simultaneity of all temporal items with each other. Scotus' argument here offers some kind of way for both him and Aquinas to block **(A'.1)**. Offering this way, I take it, means that Scotus' position represents a small improvement on the Thomist account.

In his standard account, then, Scotus rejects **(A'.1)**. Since Scotus' rejection of **(A'.1)** entails rejecting (1), Scotus' standard account also means, unsurprisingly, that he reject **(A'.2)**. According to **(A'.2)**, the falsity of (1) will entail the falsity of (A). Scotus' standard account, however, both rejects (1) and retains (A). We can see how Scotus rejects **(A'.2)** if we look at what he has to say about God's knowledge of future events. Scotus sets up the problem by looking at the following scenario. Suppose some rational relation exists in God to his creatures in virtue of the divine intellect's cognition of the real relations between creatures and God. Since these real relations are, as a matter of contingent fact, constantly changing as creatures come into existence and pass out of existence, will it not be the case that God's knowledge of his creatures is always changing? Scotus argues that it will not:

> Just as [God] in eternity compares his will "as creative" to the soul of the Antichrist as possible for some time, so he in eternity compares his will "as creating" to the soul of the Antichrist *as actually existing* at that instant for which he wills to create that soul. And these are two rational relations.[49]

Before providing an assessment of the claims made in this passage, it is worth looking a little more closely at Scotus' account of God's knowledge of his creatures. Basically, Scotus argues that God's knowledge of a creature will involve a real relation in the creature to God, and a merely rational relation in God to the creature. The rational relation in God is described by Scotus as God's comparing himself in some way to the cognized creature.[50] Now, on this showing it is quite clear that the passage just quoted will entail that God has timeless knowledge of future events in their actual existence, and that God can compare himself to these future events. The important point in this account is that there is a meaningful sense in which future events and substances have actual existence.

In the passage, Scotus claims that God has two separate divinely caused rational relations, one corresponding to the Antichrist as actually existing at t, and another corresponding to the Antichrist as potentially existing at t_{-n}. Scotus makes much the same point in a (failed) attempt to deal with the problem of God's knowledge of temporal indexicals:

> God can know himself to be creating a stone at [a time] a; but he cannot have any new knowledge that he is creating the stone. Rather, he knows in eternity that he creates the stone at a, just as he knows in eternity that, for some time, he is creative of a stone. In other words, he knows in eternity his actual relation to

[the stone] at a, just as he also knows his quasi-potential rational relation to [the stone] at some [other] time.[51]

In this passage, God's actual relation to the stone at t is, of course, a rational relation. (The relevant term contradictory to "actual" here is "quasi-potential," not "rational," as the passage makes clear.) Again, the point is that God can have timeless knowledge of his essence compared to some creature in its actual existence, whether or not that creature is now future.

Scotus invests some importance in his claim that God must have two separate timeless rational relations to his creatures: an actual rational relation to the creature as actually existent, and a "quasi-potential" rational relation to the creature considered as a future existent.[52] Accepting

> (J) Divinely caused rational relations in God to a creature necessarily correspond on a one to one basis with real relations between creatures and God,

Scotus reasons that, if God does not have two such separate rational relations, then there cannot be two distinct real relations in the creature to God: one at t_{-n} of being created in the future, and one at t of being actually created. But if there are not two such distinct real relations, Scotus reasons, then there can be no new real relations between a creature and God.[53] Presumably, Scotus is imagining that, on the proposed scenario, there would be no way of building a tense component into the actual existence of some item. Thus, for example, Scotus wants to claim that, unless there exists in the Antichrist both (i) a real relation at t_{-n} to God of being created in the future, and (ii) a real relation at t to God of being actually created, then it will not be possible to claim that the Antichrist exists at t, but not at t_{-n}.[54] It is admittedly difficult to see why this should be so. But the important point to note is that, on this account, God can have a timeless rational relation to a creature *in its actual existence* (by comparing his essence to that creature in its actual existence), even if, like the Antichrist, the existence of such a creature is now future.[55] Thus, Scotus accepts:

> (K) For any creature c, God can have a timeless rational relation to c in its actual existence at t,

(supposing as a matter of contingent fact that c begins to exist at t). But the discussion makes it clear that Scotus also accepts the related principle

> (L) For any creature c, God can have a timeless rational relation to c in its potential existence at t_{-n}

(again supposing as a matter of contingent fact that c begins to exist at t). (K) and (L) are not contradictories, because of the temporal component built in to the existence of c. (K) entails the falsity of

(D) Only temporally present things are actual,

which Scotus should therefore replace with

(D′) It is timelessly the case that all things, past, present and future, are actual.

(L) entails that Scotus also accept

(L*) It is timelessly the case that all things, past, present and future, are potential.

(D′) and (L*) are not contradictories, since implicit in each, as understood by Scotus, is a different set of temporal components. For example, the following principle is true on this account, and consistent with both (D′) and (L*):

(D*) It is timelessly the case that (i) the past is potential at t_0 and actual at t_1, (ii) the present is potential at t_0 and t_1, and actual at t_2, and (iii) the future is potential at t_0, t_1 and t_2, and actual at t_3

(where t_0 is earlier than t_1, t_1 is earlier than t_2, and t_2 is earlier than t_3). (D*) brings out a clear distinction which Scotus makes between actuality and temporal presence: an item can be actual without being (now) present. I will return to this distinction in my conclusion.

This discussion allows us to provide the positive answer to our second question, Does God's timelessness, as construed by Scotus, entail a B-theory of time? On a B-theory of time, past, present and future are all ontologically on a par with each other. The ontological parity of past, present and future is clearly suggested by (D*), which is entailed by (K) and (L) on Scotus' understanding. According to (D*), past, present and future are all actual in just the same respect, and potential in just the same respect. Scotus is therefore committed to a B-theory of time. Since he rejects (D), he will clearly have to abandon **(A′.2)**. But (K) allows Scotus to adopt something like Aquinas' position on God's knowledge of creatures in their actual existence, even if those creatures are now future. Thus (K) does not mean that God's knowledge of his creatures in their actual existence entails that they are all, irrespective of their temporal location, now present. Scotus' rejection of **(A′.2)** is therefore wholly consistent with his rejection of **(A′.1)**.

Scotus' preferred account of God's presence to his creatures is spelled out in terms of *coexistence*. God coexists with his (temporal) creatures. The relation, as Scotus crucially points out, is merely rational.[56] As such, it is not properly transitive or symmetrical at all. The reason for this is that a merely rational relation between God and a creature c requires both that c is really related to God, and that God is *not* really related to c. It thus does not entail rejecting (C*), or accepting (1). Let me quote in full a passage part of which I quoted above:

What do these temporally diverse words signify when we predi-

cate them of God? I reply that they can be more properly said to consignify the "now" of eternity than differences of time. Neither [do they signify] that "now" absolutely, since then there would not be a variation in the diverse modes of signifying time. Rather, [they consignify the "now" of eternity] in so far as it coexists with the parts of time. For example, "God begot [his Son]" consignifies the "now" of eternity, such that the sense is "God has the act of generation in the 'now' of eternity in so far as that 'now' coexisted with the past"; and "God begets" means "has the act of generation in the 'now' of eternity in so far as it coexists with the present." Thus, since the "now" [of eternity] truly coexists with any difference of time, we can truly predicate of God the differences of all times.[57]

The passage makes it clear that there is real temporal succession in creatures. But a timeless God coexists with his creatures just if it is the case both that there are real relations between creatures and God, and that there exist intellectual agents (e.g., God) actually cognizing these relations. This second condition is required to satisfy Scotus' claim, just noted, that coexistence is a merely rational relation. (God's own cognition is, as made clear above, timeless, entailing the actual existence [though not temporal presence] of the cognized real relations.) On this account, God coexists with his creatures just if it is the case that some intellectual agent cognizes the actual (though not necessarily temporally present) real relations between creatures and God.

On the other hand, Scotus' concept of coexistence does not have the same *explanatory* value as that of presence or simultaneity. We can use the idea that all of time is present to God to explain how God can have knowledge of all of time: God can know all of time since all of time is *present* to him, or simultaneous with him. Scotus' concept of God's coexistence with his creatures cannot explain how God has knowledge of all of time. Granted that creatures have real relations to God, God coexists with creatures if and only if one of two conditions is satisfied: either (a) God compares his essence to these real relations, or (b) a created intellect compares God's essence to these real relations. But neither of these conditions can possibly *explain* how God (or indeed a creature) is able to perform the relevant cognitive task. Perhaps Scotus should appeal to his standard argument against **(A'.1)**, according to which all time is simultaneous with God, to explain how God can perform the relevant cognitive task. Indeed, his standard argument against **(A'.1)** will allow him to claim that only God can perform the relevant task with regard to past and future items, since only God has the relevant access (mediated via the simultaneity of all time to God) to past and future items.

IV. Conclusion

In section 2 of this paper, I attempted to argue against Craig that Scotus' God is timeless. In addition to showing that Scotus has a clear conception of divine timelessness, I tried to show what is distinctive in

his account. I tried to show that Scotus has a clear conception of the topological properties which timelessness will exhibit, and that central to Scotus' defense of God's timelessness is God's failure to be really related to any of his creatures.

In section 3, I argued further that Scotus' rejection of Aquinas' account, in book 1, distinction 39 of the *Lectura*, needs to be treated with caution, since there is good reason to suppose that in his standard account Scotus rejects the two *Lectura* arguments. He rejects **(A'.1)** since he rejects

(B*) If x is present to y, then both x and y are present;

and he rejects **(A'.2)** since he rejects

(D) Only temporally present things are actual.

Accepting (D') and (L*) in place of (D) will allow Scotus to affirm that future existents can be known in their actual existence: though at the expense of committing Scotus to a B-theory of time. I thus reject Adams' claim, made on the basis of **(A'.2)**, that Scotus' ontology of time avoids his being a B-theorist. But Scotus still consistently rejects

(1) All things are temporally present.

Thus, his commitment to a B-theory of time does not entail collapsing the past and future into the present.

This does not mean, of course, that there are not problems with the account, even in terms of its internal coherence. Crucially, there seem to me to be two related difficulties which Scotus does not overcome. The first is his clear commitment to the claim that God's knowledge of his creatures according to their actual existence fails to be a real relation in God. We would normally think of x's knowledge of y as involving at least a relation in x (howsoever a relation is conceived). Scotus, indeed, standardly agrees with this description of knowledge.[58] Thus, I do not see how God could have knowledge of his creatures without thereby being really related to them.

Scotus' reason for denying that God, in cognizing his creatures, is really related to them is that he accepts the general principle

(H) Nothing in God requires the existence of some item other than God for its existence.

But accepting (H) seems to me to lead to a second problem in Scotus' account. The problem is that for God to have knowledge of his actually existing creatures, it is necessary that his creatures actually exist (though not, of course, that they actually exist *now*). Thus, the actual existence of his creatures is a necessary condition for God's having knowledge of them.[59] And this violates (H). How important this will be for us will depend on the strength of our commitment to (H). But (H) is clearly

important for Scotus. Since, as Scotus construes relations, it is the case that

> (M) Any item requiring the existence of some item other than itself is either (a) a real relation, or (b) really (though not formally) identical with a real relation,[60]

the falsity of (H), entailed by the account of God's knowledge which I have just outlined, will entail that Scotus' central claim

> (3) There is no real relation in God to any item other than God

is false. It is for this reason that I regard Scotus' acceptance of (3) as problematic. But the truth of (3) is not necessary for the truth of

> (4) There are no real temporally successive relations between God and his creatures,

since a God really related to his creatures in a certain respect (e.g., knowledge) need not satisfy either of the temporality conditions (i) or (ii) outlined in section 2 of this paper. Equally, the benefits of abandoning (H), and hence (3), easily outweigh the sacrifices which have to be made by retaining it. I would judge, then, that Scotus should abandon both of these claims.

Does Scotus' account have anything to offer to us today? I would argue that it appears to be a fairly clear account of timelessness, and that it is perhaps the earliest account to provide a suitable reply to the kind of objection found to Aquinas' (and Scotus' standard) account in both Kenny and Scotus' own **(A'.1)**. As we find the account of timelessness in Scotus, it depends on Scotus' acceptance of (3), a proposition which many today would find unappealing. But if we adopt the modifications to Scotus' account proposed in the final section of my paper, the account will no longer entail (3), since on my proposed modifications what is at issue is just God's knowledge of his creatures: and we can have an account of such knowledge independent of our acceptance or rejection of (3). To allow for timelessness, all we need to posit is that God's knowledge is *changeless*: not that God has no real properties contingent upon the existence of his creatures.

Scotus' distinction between actuality and temporal presence (such that past and future can be actual without this entailing that they are *now* present) has a parallel in a suggestion made by a modern philosopher, which indicates that it might still have some mileage in it. Aristotle's first argument in favor of the claim that time "does not exist at all, or hardly and obscurely,"[61] is that time is composed of merely past and future, where the past has been and gone (and hence does not exist), and the future is still to be (and hence does not exist).[62] Richard Sorabji suggests the following response to the argument:

> It is only in the irrelevant sense of *being present* that the past and future do not exist. In the sense that matters, there is a past and there is a future, and so there is time.[63]

In this response, Sorabji apparently capitalizes on a distinction between existence and presence which bears a striking resemblance to Scotus' contrast between actuality and temporal presence. This distinction allows Scotus' B-theory of time to avoid collapsing past and future into the present. Equally, his standard objection to **(A'.1)** is a striking anticipation of Stump and Kretzmann's ET-simultaneity, and provides I think a good example of Scotus' insight into a perennial and engaging problem in the philosophy of religion — whatever we might think of his (and Stump and Kretzmann's) proposed replies.

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NOTES

1.   I refer to the following works of Scotus: *Lectura* (= *Lect.*), in *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié and others (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1950-), vols 16-19; *Ordinatio* (= *Ord.*), in *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié and others, vols 1-7; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* (= *Quod.*), in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Luke Wadding, 12 vols (Lyons: Durand, 1639). I refer to the following work of Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (= *Cons.*), ed. Ludwig Bieler, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 94 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957); to the following work of Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae* (= *Sum. Theol.*), ed. Petrus Caramello, 3 vols (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952-56); and to the following work of Henry of Ghent: *Quodlibet 9* (= *Quod. 9*), in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 13, ed. R. Macken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1982).

2.   On the date of the first book of the *Lectura*, see C. Balié, *Les commentaires de Jean Duns Scot sur les quatre livres des Sentences*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 1 (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1927), p. 86; also Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié, 1:160*.

3.   For 1300, see *Ord.* prol. 2.un., n. 112 (1:77).

4.   "Omnia quae sunt in tempore sunt Deo ab aeterna presentia": *Sum. Theol.* 1.14.13 (1:86b).

5.   On the issue, see conveniently Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 103-09, who disputes the claim that Aquinas conceives of eternity as timelessness, against for example Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God. An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 114-20.

6.   "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom," in *Aquinas. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Anthony Kenny, Modern Studies in Philosophy (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 264.

7.   William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge of Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 118; for Craig's defense of the claim that Aquinas is a B-theorist, see pp. 116-118.

8.   See *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié, 6:308.

9.   See *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié, 6:26*-30*. The text (*Ord.* 1.39.1-5) is printed in an appendix in *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Balié, 6:401-44.

10.   *Lect.* 1.39.1-5, n. 27 (17:487); English translation, *Contingency and Freedom. Lectura I 39*, ed. A. Vos Jaczn and others, The New Synthese

Historical Library, 42 (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer, 1994), p. 82.

11. Glossing "merely *secundum quid* existence" as "potential existence" is clearly required here by the context. Scotus' example is the (non-existent) space outside a finite but continuously expanding universe. The point of the rather awkward example is that any such space exists *potentially*, such that it will exist *actually* when the expanding universe "reaches" it. Just the same gloss as that which I am suggesting is offered in the dubiously authentic *Ordinatio* account: see *Ord.* 1.39.1-5, n. 9 (6:409).

12. (A'.1) is found in Scotus' late *Reportatio Parisiensis*, the examined reportation of Scotus' Parisian lectures on the *Sentences* made soon after 1305 (for the reference, see Allan B. Wolter, "Scotus' Paris Lectures on God's Knowledge of Future Events," in *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990], p. 288; for the date, see Balié, *Les commentaires*, pp. 25-33). (It is also present in the dubiously authentic *Ord.* 1.39.1-5, n. 9 [6:409].) The presence of (A'.1) in the *Reportatio Parisiensis*, so late in Scotus' *oeuvre*, is puzzling. I shall, I hope, provide good reasons in this paper for the claim that Scotus should, for reasons of consistency, have rejected (A'.1).

13. *Lect.* 1.39.1-5, n. 28 (17:487); Vos Jaczn, p. 82. I owe the formulation of some of these claims to Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, 2 vols, Publications in Medieval Studies, 26 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 2:1122. Adams formulates my (D) as "Only temporally present things are absolutely actual," presumably on the basis of *Ord.* 1.39.1-5, n. 9 (6:410, lines 1-3), where it is cryptically argued that, if some item has existence in itself ("*in se*") with respect to the first cause, then it will follow that it has existence absolutely ("*simpliciter*").

14. Adams, *William Ockham*, 2:1124.

15. Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge of Future Contingents*, p. 130.

16. On Scotus' account, accepting Aquinas' claims would not, however, have any implications for God's knowledge of future contingents. According to Scotus, God's knowledge of future contingents is to be accounted for by his being a (partial) cause of all future contingent events. On this, see Wolter, "Scotus' Paris Lectures on God's Knowledge of Future Events"; also, on divine co-causality, William A. Frank, "Duns Scotus on Autonomous Freedom and Divine Co-Causality," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 2 (1994): 142-64, and the literature cited there.

17. Scotus rejects the flowing "now" as an explanation of the A-series on the Aristotelian grounds that it is impossible for an indivisible to undergo local motion. Aristotle's main reason for this claim is that

> (α) Any item moving continuously will necessarily traverse a distance smaller than itself before traversing distance equal to or greater than itself

(*Physics* 6.10 [241a6-14], cited in Scotus, *Ord.* 2.2.1.2, n. 99 [7:200-01]). (α) gains some plausibility if we bear in mind that an item which fails to satisfy the stipulation in (α) looks like it will have to move in *leaps*. But it is difficult to think of some non-arbitrary reason why (α) should obtain in the case of an item of zero extension, since what (α) aims to guarantee is just that

> (β) There is no smallest distance which a continuously moving item must first traverse.

Clearly, in the case of an extended item, satisfying (α) is a necessary (though not sufficient) reason for satisfying (β). But this is not so in the case of a non-extended item, and Aristotle's invoking (α) to prove that a non-extended item cannot move continuously is just question-begging. Scotus elsewhere sees this clearly (see for example *Ord.* 2.2.2.5, n. 424 [7:342-43]): but he fails to see that it could be used to solve the paradox of a flowing "now." Craig criticizes the account of Scotus on time found in C. R. S. Harris, *Duns Scotus*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 2:129-44, for failing to take account of the texts cited by Craig, containing **(A'.1)** and **(A'.2)** (see *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge*, pp. 259-60, n. 12). In fact, although Craig cites arguments which are genuinely found in Scotus, he takes them from the dubiously authentic account printed as an appendix in the critical edition (*Opera Omnia*, 6:401-44). As I hope to show in a future article, much of what Harris has to say about Scotus on time is fundamentally correct: although this, too, is fortuitous, since he, like Craig, bases his account on an unauthentic text (the *De Rerum Principio*). Craig's criticism seems doubly misplaced.

18. "Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio": *Quod.* 6, n. 14 (12:150), quoting Boethius, *Cons.* 5.6 (p. 101); English translation of Scotus' *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* published as *God and Creatures. The Quodlibetal Questions*, ed. Felix Alluntis and Allan B. Wolter (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 141 (par. 6.34).

19. See also *Ord.* 1.9.un., n. 11 (4:333); *Lect.* 1.9.un., n. 8 (17:112).

20. In addition to the texts cited in notes 18 and 19, see *Ord.* 2.1.3, n. 155 (7:78).

21. *Ord.* 2.2.2.5, n. 376 (7:321); *Lect.* 2.2.2.5-6, n. 374 (18:215).

22. *Ord.* 2.1.3, n. 155 (7:78).

23. *Quod.* 6, nn. 14-15 (12:150); Alluntis and Wolter, pp. 142-43 (par. 6.34-35).

24. *Quod.* 6, nn. 14-15 (12:150); Alluntis and Wolter, pp. 142-43 (par. 6.34-35).

25. *Ord.* 2.2.1.2, n. 101 (7:201-02).

26. *Quod.* 6, n. 15 (12:150); Alluntis and Wolter, p. 143 (par. 6.35).

27. "Voluntate antiqua potest fieri novus effectus sine mutatione voluntatis. Sicut ego volitione mea eadem continuata, qua volo aliquid fieri, faciam tunc illud pro 'quando' pro quo volo illud facere, ita Deus in aeternitate voluit aliquid aliud a se esse pro aliquo tempore et tunc illud creavit pro 'quando' pro quod voluit illud esse": *Ord.* 1.8.2.un., n. 294 (4:322); see also *Lect.* 1.8.2.un., n. 274 (17:104). Scotus makes a related point at *Ord.* 2.1.2, n. 86 (7:45).

28. *Ord.* 2.1.2, n. 85 (7:72-73).

29. "Nec enim voluntas eius impotens est, nec voluntas eius habet esse in tempore ut exspectet tempus pro quo producat volitum: quod utique non vult tunc necessario esse quando vult, sed vult esse pro tempore determinato, quod tamen non exspectat, quia operatio voluntatis eius non est in tempore": *Ord.* 1.8.2.un., n. 297 (4:324); see also *Lect.* 1.8.2.un., n. 277 (17:104-05).

30. *Ord.* 2.2.1.1, nn. 34, 53 (7:171-72, 180-81).

31. See Richard Swinburne, "God and Time," in *Reasoned Faith. Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 204-222.

32. Scotus is happy to talk of "quasi-imaginary time" in the absence of any natural processes whatsoever: see *Ord.* 2.1.3, nn. 160-61 (7:80-81). The term appears to have two different meanings, only the first of which Scotus regards as legitimate. On the first meaning, imaginary time refers to the

temporal extension of a static created item. In this sense, it will have to mean much the same as the privative time which I discuss in note 33. On the second meaning, it is used by Scotus' opponent to refer to the temporal extension of a temporal God. Scotus makes it clear that he rejects this opinion: "*per te* oportet Deum quievisse a causando *a* per infinitum quasi imaginatum": *Ord.* 2.1.3, n. 161 (7:81), my italics.

33. *Ord.* 2.2.1.4, nn. 171-80 (7:231-35). An item which satisfied merely the second of these conditions is said by Scotus to be subject to "privative time." Privative time quite clearly entails temporal extension. Scotus likens privative time to a spatial vacuum, and supposes that there is distance between the boundaries of such a vacuum. I take it that Scotus would modify his claim that temporal extension is relative to change to include the claim that temporal extension is relative to actual *or possible* change. His account will thus bear some relation to the position labelled by Newton-Smith "modal reductionism," according to which "all assertions about time and the temporal aspects of things can be parsed as assertions about relations between actual and possible events" (W. H. Newton-Smith, *The Structure of Time*, International Library of Philosophy [London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980], p. 47). But there are some differences between Scotus' account and modal reductionism. Scotus does not hold that all assertions about time are *reducible to* assertions about relations between actual and possible events, even though he holds that all assertions about time will entail corresponding assertions about actual and possible events. So let us label Scotus' position instead "modal relativism."

34. *Ord.* 1.8.2.un., n. 229 (4:229).

35. *Ord.* 2.1.4-5, nn. 200, 205 (7:101-04). For an excellent account of Scotus on real relations, see Mark G. Henninger, *Relations. Medieval Theories 1250-1325* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 68-97.

36. I have formulated (G) on the basis of *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, nn. 31, 39, 41 (6:181-82, 185-88).

37. Scotus frequently makes it clear that cognizing a real relation involves comparing one term to the other in the respect in which they are related. In the case of the merely rational relation of x to y, Scotus claims that the real relation between y and x is relevantly cognized in virtue of the cognizing agent's comparing x to y (see *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, nn. 39, 41 [6:185-88]).

38. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 51 (6:192); see Henninger, *Relations*, p. 68, n. 4.

39. *Ord.* 2.1.4-5, nn. 261-62 (7:129); see Henninger, *Relations*, p. 79.

40. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 41 (6:186).

41. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, nn. 30-31 (6:181-82).

42. See Peter Geach, "What Actually Exists," in *God and the Soul*, Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion (London and Henley, 1969), pp. 71-72; also "Logic in Metaphysics and Theology," in *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), p. 322.

43. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 41 (6:186).

44. "Cum dicitur 'Deus genuit,' consignificatur 'nunc' aeternitatis, ut sit sensus, Deus habet actum generationis in 'nunc' aeternitatis in quantum illud 'nunc' coexistebat praeterito, — 'Deus generat,' hoc est habet actum generationis in 'nunc' aeternitatis in quantum coexistit praesenti. Ex hoc patet quod cum illud 'nunc' vere coexistat cuilibet differentiae temporis, vere dicimus de Deo differentias omnium temporum": *Ord.* 1.9.un., n. 17 (4:336-37).

45. "Quando comparantur duo ad tertium . . . sequitur ex unione eorum in tertio, unio eorum inter se. . . . Ego sum cum aeternitate et Abraham fuit cum aeternitate, ergo simul sum cum Abraham": *Ord.* 1.13.un., n. 83 (5:110);

see *Lect.* 1.13.un., n. 30 (17:174-75).

46. *Ord.* 1.13.un., n. 83 (5:110); *Lect.* 1.13.un., n. 30 (17:175).

47. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy*, 78 (1981): 429-56 (ET-simultaneity is defined on p. 439); see also the slight modifications proposed by the same authors in "Eternity, Awareness, and Action," *Faith and Philosophy*, 9 (1992): 463-82.

48. Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," p. 435.

49. "Sicut in aeternitate comparat voluntatem suam 'ut creativam' ad animam Antichristi ut possibilem pro aliquo tempore, ita comparat in aeternitate voluntatem suam 'ut creantem' ad animam Antichristi ut actualiter exsistentem pro illo nunc pro quo vult creare illam animam: et istae quidem sunt duae relationes rationis": *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 41 (6:187-88), my italics in the translation. Scotus makes exactly the same point in *Lect.* 1.30.1-2, n. 48 (17:412-13).

50. *Ord.* 1.35.un, n. 32 (6:258). Strictly speaking, according to Scotus here, only the former of these two relations (viz., the real relation in the creature) is required for God's cognizing a creature (see also *Ord.* 1.35.un, n. 21 [6:253] and n. 49 [6:266]). Scotus seems to suppose otherwise in *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 15, which I discuss below.

51. "Deus posset cognoscere se creantem lapidem pro a; sed non posset noviter cognoscere se creantem lapidem, sed in aeternitate cognosceret se pro a creantem lapidem sicut in aeternitate cognoscit se pro aliquo tempore creativum lapidis. Hoc est dictu, in aeternitate cognoscit illam relationem actualem eius ad illud pro a, sicut et cognoscit relationem sui quasi potentialem — rationis tamen — ad illud pro aliquo tempore": *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 42 (6:188); see *Lect.* 1.30.1-2, n. 51 (17:413), also *Lect.* 1.39.1-5, n. 73 (17:504). The objection, which the reply fails to meet, is: "If there can be no new relation in God by an act of his intellect, then if . . . God could create a stone, he could not know himself to be creating that stone in the way that a created intellect could know him (when he is creating [the stone]), to be creating the stone now. But the consequent is wrong, since whatever we can know, [God] can know much more" ("Si nulla potest esse relatio nova in Deo per actum intellectus sui, ergo si . . . Deus posset creare lapidem, non posset intelligere se creantem lapidem, sicut intellectus creatus potest intelligere ipsum modo creantem lapidem, quando ipsum creat; consequens videtur inconveniens, quia quidquid est cognoscibile a nobis, multo magis et ab ipso"): *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 42 (6:188). That Scotus should see the need to raise this objection is strong evidence in favor of the claim that Scotus' God is timeless and knows things timelessly: and his failure to give a satisfactory reply is even stronger evidence. Scotus replies in terms merely of God's knowledge of the B-series, which is hardly problematic for a defender of divine timelessness.

52. Elsewhere, Scotus calls the quasi-potential rational relation an "aptitudinal" relation (see *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 15 [6:174]).

53. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 15 (6:174). Accepting (J) looks to be inconsistent with Scotus' claim, discussed in note 50 above, that God could in principle have knowledge of a creature (such that there would be a real relation in the creature to God) without there being a corresponding rational relation in God. I do not know how to reconcile these two Scotist claims.

54. Scotus takes this view against Henry of Ghent, who holds

(J*) Divinely caused rational relations in God to a creature necessarily correspond on a one to one basis with God's creative actions.

On (J*), if there is just one divine action with regard to a creature c, there

will be just one rational relation between God and *c*. Using the example of the Antichrist, Henry would argue that there is just one divinely caused rational relation in God to the Antichrist, since there is just one creative act bringing it about that the Antichrist exists (Henry of Ghent, *Quod.* 9.1 ad 1 [pp. 13-14]; see Scotus, *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 11 [6:172]). One advantage of Scotus' position is that it allows God to have some kind of knowledge of the truth values of tensed propositions. This is because, on Scotus' account, God will be able to compare his essence to two different real creaturely relations. Thus, supposing that the Antichrist begins to exist at some time *t*, Scotus argues what is known by God in (γ) and (δ) represent two separate items of knowledge:

(γ) God knows that "the Antichrist exists" is true at *t*;

(δ) God knows that "the Antichrist will exist" is true at t_{-n}.

On the other hand, although Scotus' odd position here is sufficient to allow that (γ) and (δ) fail to be synonymous, it is easy to imagine more economical theories which could allow for this.

55. *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 15 (6:172); see *Ord.* 1.30.1-2, n. 41 (6:186-88).

56. *Quod.* 6, n. 15 (12:150); Alluntis and Wolter, p. 142 (par. 6.35).

57. "Sed quid significant ista verba diversorum temporum, cum dicuntur de Deo? — Respondeo. Magis proprie possunt dici consignificare 'nunc' aeternitatis quam differentias temporis; nec tamen illud 'nunc' absolute, quia non esset tunc variatio modorum diversorum temporis significandi sed in quantum coexsistit partibus temporis, ut cum dicitur: 'Deus genuit,' consignificatur 'nunc' aeternitatis, ut sit sensus, Deus habet actum generationis in 'nunc' aeternitatis in quantum illud 'nunc' coexsistebat praeterito, — 'Deus generat,' hoc est habet actum generationis in 'nunc' aeternitatis in quantum coexsistit praesenti. Ex hoc patet quod cum illud 'nunc' vere coexsistat cuilibet differentiae temporis, vere dicimus de Deo differentias omnium temporum": *Ord.* 1.9.un., n. 17 (4:336-37). The version of **(A'.1)** found in *Ord.* 1.39.1-5, n. 9 (6:409) blurs the distinction between presence and coexistence, and crucially claims both that coexistence is a real relation and that God does not coexist with his creatures: "Aeternitas non erit ratio coexsistendi alicui nisi existendi." This doctrine is decidedly un-Scotist, and seems to me clear evidence in favor of the unauthenticity of the text at this point.

58. *Quod.* 13, n. 11 (12:311); Alluntis and Wolter, p. 292 (par. 13.34).

59. In his discussions of God's knowledge, Scotus does not seem to notice this. He consistently claims that God's knowledge of his creatures is logically and causally prior to the existence of these creatures, and thus that it is unaffected by the existence of his creatures (see for example *Ord.* 1.2.1.1-2, nn. 105, 107-08 [2:187-88]; English translation in Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Allan B. Wolter [Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987], pp. 60-61). Even supposing that God's knowledge is causally prior to his creatures, my second objection will stand.

60. Scotus consistently distinguishes between relational and absolute items. A relational item — i.e., a relation — is "a condition 'toward another'" (*Ord.* 2.1.4-5, *textus interpolatus* [7:122]; see also Henninger, *Relations*, p. 83, n. 40, and the texts cited there). This covers the first disjunct in (M). An absolute item is distinguished from a relation in virtue of the fact that the *ratio* of an absolute item does not include reference to any other item. Scotus argues, however, that all created absolute items necessarily depend on God. Since they cannot exist without this dependence, they are really identical

with it (Scotus accepts that separability is a necessary and sufficient condi-
tion for real distinction: see *Ord.* 2.1.5, nn. 200-04 [7:101-03]). But the crea-
ture and its dependence relation are formally or definitionally distinct, since
dependence on God is not a *defining* feature of any creature (*Ord.* 2.1.4-5, nn.
272-75 [7:135-36]; see also Henninger, *Relations*, pp. 78-85). This covers the
second disjunct in (M). The disjunction in (M) is exhaustive, since Scotus
defines an absolute item as one which does not require any other item for its
existence (*Ord.* 2.1.4-5, *textus interpolatus* [7:122]). An act of knowledge is not
formally a relative item. It does, however, require a relation in itself to its
object for its existence (*Quod.* 13, nn. 3-5, [12:302-03]; Alluntis and Wolter,
pp. 285-87 [par. 13.8-13.16]). It is thus an instance of the second disjunct in
(M) (*Quod.* 13, nn. 8, 11 [12:309, 311]; Alluntis and Wolter, pp. 290, 292 [par.
13.27, 13.34]).

61. *Physics* 4.10 (217b32).

62. *Physics* 4.10 (217b33-218a3).

63. Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum. Theories in
Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 13: my
italics.