

ABSTRACT

In this paper I aim to explain the view of the will put forward by John Duns Scotus in the late 13th- and early 14th-century. First, I will explain Scotus's account of the will as free and rational. Scotus takes the will to be a self-determining, and thereby free, cause of human action. He understands it as rational insofar as it possesses and applies reasons or principles in its operation, and is thereby capable of opposite effects. Second, I will explain Scotus's account of the two affections or motivations of the will: the love of justice and the love of the advantageous. For Scotus, the love of justice is a disposition of the will to choose for the sake of the intrinsic goodness of the object of choice (e.g., an act or thing). In contrast, the love of the advantageous is a disposition of the will to choose for the sake of the value that an object of choice has relative to the agent.

Finally, I will argue that recent claims to the effect that Scotus's view of moral motivation amounts to a radical break from eudaimonistic ethical views are unjustified. Indeed, I will claim that the motivational resources of Scotus's view may not be different from the resources available on Aristotle's view in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and are certainly no different from those available on a plausible eudaimonistic view of ethics. Insofar as dual motives for action—i.e., the love of the advantageous and the love of justice—seem possible on both kinds of view, and insofar as both views share a similar account of the inherent goodness of an action as grounded in the suitability of the action to human nature, the two views do not necessarily seem far apart on the issue of moral or ethical motivation.

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS ON THE WILL AND MORAL MOTIVATION

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I aim to explain the view of the will put forward by John Duns Scotus in the late 13th- and early 14th-century. First, I will explain Scotus's account of the will as free and rational. Specifically, I will suggest that Scotus takes the will to be a self-determining, and thereby free, cause of human action. I will also show that he understands it as rational insofar as it possesses and applies reasons or principles in its operation, and is thereby capable of opposite effects. Additionally, I will endeavor to explain the tight connection between the freedom and rationality of the will on Scotus's view. Second, I will explain Scotus's account of the two affections or motivations of the will: the love of justice and the love of the advantageous. For Scotus, the love of justice is a disposition of the will to choose for the sake of the intrinsic goodness of the object of choice (e.g., an act or thing). In contrast, the love of the advantageous is a disposition of the will to choose for the sake of the value that an object of choice has relative to the agent. Finally, I will argue that recent claims to the effect that Scotus's view of moral motivation amounts to a radical break from eudaimonistic ethical views are unjustified. Indeed, I will claim that the motivational resources of Scotus's view may not be different from the resources available on Aristotle's view in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and are certainly no different from those available on a plausible eudaimonistic view of ethics. As such, I will claim that it is incorrect to read Scotus's view of the motive for moral action as a radical critique of Aristotle's eudaimonistic ethical view.

THE WILL AS FREE AND RATIONAL

According to Scotus, there are two orders of causation that operate in reality: the necessary and the free. Necessary causation brings about necessary events, i.e., events that could not have been otherwise given the conditions antecedent to the event and the laws governing causation. Events of nature such as the sliding of a rock down a mountainside or the movement of a quantity of water in a river are examples of necessary events in this sense: they could not have failed to happen given the laws of nature (e.g., gravity) and the antecedent physical conditions (e.g., an earthquake that undermines the rock, or a rainstorm in the watershed of the river).¹ In contrast, free causes are self-determining and bring about contingent events, i.e., events that might not have happened as they did. Scotus takes God to be a free cause in this sense, and the creation of the world to be a contingent event caused by God. This event of creation could have been otherwise: God did not create of necessity, but rather freely. Similarly, Scotus takes the human will to be a free cause, a self-determining power of the soul to choose freely. Like the event of creation, events caused by the human will are contingent: they might have been otherwise.

On Scotus's view, the freedom of the will is expressed in two capacities: to choose between alternatives, or not to choose at all. As Scotus puts it, "In regard to any object, then, the will is able not to will or nill it, and can suspend itself from eliciting any act in particular with regard to this or that."² The first capacity—that of choosing between alternatives—is exercised in cases in which someone might choose one object

¹ Such events may also be understood as contingent insofar as there are possible worlds in which they do not occur. However, the point here is that given the laws of nature and antecedent conditions, they could not have failed to occur, and so they are necessary in that sense.

² *Ordinatio* IV, d. 49, qq. 9-10 (codex A, f. 282va), in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, select. and trans. Allan B. Wolter (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986) 195.

over another, or in which someone might choose or reject (i.e., “nill”) a single object. The second capacity—that of not choosing at all—is exercised in cases where there is opportunity to choose, but that opportunity itself is actively forgone.³

But how can the exercise of the second capacity be distinct from the exercise of the first? For example, in a case where one is confronted with a choice between chocolate or vanilla ice cream, choosing not to choose (i.e., exercising the second capacity) seems to amount to nothing more than choosing a further alternative: no ice cream at all. Is the exercise of the second capacity merely the exercise of the first with respect to a third alternative?

In response to this query, Scotus might claim that choosing not to choose is indeed a distinct capacity insofar as it is the active exercise of a *second order* choice. Recasting the ice cream example as a forced choice between three alternatives clarifies this point. Imagine that a person in an ice-cream store must choose between chocolate, vanilla, or no ice cream at all.⁴ In other words, when the choice has been made, the person will leave the store with either a chocolate or vanilla ice cream, or with no ice cream. However, rather than choosing one of the three options, the person instead chooses not to decide there and then, electing to remain in the shop undecided. Here the person has not chosen one of the first-order alternatives. Rather, she has made a second order choice not to choose yet. This is clearly different from choosing no ice cream at all, since she would have already left the shop had she chosen this option. Instead she remains in the shop, temporarily suspending her choice. This suspension of choice might

³ The foregoing discussion of causes and the capacities of the will draws on the following work: Mary Beth Ingham, Mechthild Dreyer, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus: An Introduction* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004) pp. 147-149.

⁴ This is not a very good ice cream store.

be understood as an active (and in this case temporary) second order choice not to take any of the three first order alternatives as possible objects of choice.

On Scotus's account, a further central characteristic of the will is its rationality. Scotus argues this point beginning with Aristotle's account of a rational power. In *Metaphysics* IX.1, Aristotle defines a power or potency as "an originative source of change in another thing or in the thing itself *qua* other."⁵ An oily rag is an example of the latter kind of power: it has in itself the power to be burnt, and so is an originative source of change in itself. As an example of the former kind of power, Aristotle cites both the art of building—a body of knowledge that is a source of change in objects of the physical world (i.e., building materials)—and heat—which produces heat in other objects.⁶ Aristotle's characterization suggests that powers are a kind of efficient cause: they actively produce effects or changes in the world.

In *Metaphysics* IX.2, Aristotle further distinguishes powers present in soulless things (e.g., heat which is present in caloric things, which have no soul *qua* caloric things) from powers present in things "possessed of soul, and in soul, and in the rational part of the soul..."⁷ Powers present in soulless things (and presumably things without a rational soul, such as plants and animals) are non-rational or natural, while powers present in the rational soul of things with such souls (e.g., humans) are rational in some sense. The idea here seems to be that the exercise of rational powers must include the possession and application of what Aristotle calls a "rational formula"—roughly, a set of principles or reasons—in the powers' operation. So, a power such as heat will not be

⁵ *Metaphysics* 1046a10-11. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Aristotle are from the translations contained in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001).

⁶ *Metaphysics* 1046a24-27.

⁷ *Metaphysics* 1046a37.

rational since its operation in the process of heating does not involve the possession and application of principles or reasons on the part of a caloric object. A human being might explain the process of heating according to scientific principles—e.g., perhaps the heat transfer always occurs at a rate proportional to the temperatures of the object possessing heat and the object being heated—but the caloric object possessing the power of heat does not itself thereby possess such scientific principles and apply them during the process of heating. Rather, it just heats by nature. In contrast, a power such as the art of building is rational because its operation requires that the object possessing the power, i.e., the rational soul, thereby possess and apply a set of principles or reasons. For example, in exercising the building art for the purpose of building a house, the (soul of the) builder might possess and apply the principle that a house requires a solid foundation.

Because rational powers possess and apply principles or reasons in their operation, Aristotle thinks they are distinct from non-rational powers in a further way: a rational power is “capable of contrary effects” while a non-rational power is capable of only one effect.⁸ For example, the art of building is capable of both constructive and destructive activity, while heat is only capable of heating and not of making cold. In support of this point, Aristotle notes, “the same rational formula explains a thing and its privation...in a sense it applies to both, but in a sense it applies rather to the positive fact.”⁹ The idea here seems to be that while the reasons and principles possessed and applied in the operation of a rational power principally explain the positive effect of the power, they may also explain the contrary effect in some sense. For example, the

⁸ *Metaphysics* 1046b5.

⁹ *Metaphysics* 1046b8-10.

principle that a house requires a solid foundation is chiefly used in the art of building to explain why one lays a solid foundation when building a house. However, it is possible that a builder could use the principle to explain her approach to destroying a house, e.g., undermining its foundation. Thus, both processes—building and destroying—might originate from the same rational power, in virtue of the fact that the same reasons and principles associated with the power might be applied to contrary tasks. As Aristotle puts it, “the soul will start both processes [e.g., building or destroying] from the same originative source [i.e., the same power], having linked them up with the same thing,” namely the relevant principle or reason.¹⁰

Given this Aristotelian account of rational and irrational powers, Scotus takes the will to be a rational power insofar as it is capable of producing not just a single effect on any given occasion, but contrary effects.¹¹ But, this ability to produce contrary effects is just what it means to say that the will is free. As noted previously, Scotus thinks a free cause is one that produces events that could have been otherwise. Thus, on Scotus’s view, a power or cause is free insofar as it may produce an effect or its contrary (i.e., the actual effect of the cause could have been otherwise), and this causative bivalence in turn indicates the rationality of the power or cause, standing as a sign that the power possesses and applies principles or reasons in its operation, and it is thereby rational. This discussion shows clearly that the freedom of the will and the rationality of the will are intimately related. As Ingham and Dreyer put it, for Scotus “the will’s rationality is clearly central to its freedom.”¹²

¹⁰ *Metaphysics* 1046b23.

¹¹ *Questions on the Metaphysics IX*, q. 15, n. 22 (II:608), in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 151.

¹² Ingham and Dreyer 152. While Ingham and Dreyer argue for the same point I make here, i.e., that the freedom and rationality of the will are closely connected on Scotus’s view, they do not emphasize as

Scotus's view of the intellect stands in stark, and initially counter-intuitive, contrast with his view of the will as both rational and free: according to Scotus, the intellect is an irrational power that operates deterministically, or according to necessity. In his discussion of *Metaphysics IX*, Scotus makes the following claim about the intellect: "not only as regards its own acts is it not rational, but it is not fully rational even as regards the external acts it directs. As a matter of fact, speaking precisely, even as regards its intrinsic acts it is irrational."¹³ But how could the intellect be irrational? Is it not the paradigm of rationality? Scotus's idea seems to be that when the intellect is given certain inputs, it necessarily produces certain outputs, roughly as a calculator does. Ingham and Dreyer offer a further helpful analogy: "like the eye in the presence of sufficient external conditions (light, the object, etc.), the intellect cannot fail to know, just as the eye cannot fail to see."¹⁴ Thus, the intellect is capable of only a single effect (given a particular set of external conditions), and thereby fails to exhibit the key characteristic of an Aristotelian rational power (i.e., the ability to produce contrary effects). The implication is that the intellect does not possess and apply principles or reasons in its operation. This is not to say that the operation of the intellect cannot be characterized, from the outside, as conforming to certain principles (e.g., principles of non-contradiction or induction), just as heat transfer is said to conform to certain scientific principles. Rather, it is simply to say that the human soul does not grasp and apply such principles when performing ordinary intellectual operations. Instead, the

strongly as I do that this point follows from Scotus's discussion of *Metaphysics IX*. Rather, they take Scotus's account of the two Anselmian affections of the will (which I will discuss next) to be the key text that explains the link between rationality and freedom. In my view both texts suggest the link quite strongly, and thus deemphasizing the discussion of Aristotle on this point simply misses an opportunity for clarity.

¹³ *Questions on the Metaphysics IX*, q. 15, n. 38 (II:608) in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 155.

¹⁴ Ingham and Dreyer 153.

intellect simply deploys the principles by nature. Thus, on Scotus's picture, the intellect is not a rational power, and it operates deterministically, not freely.

THE TWO AFFECTIONS OF THE WILL

In addition to the two *capacities* of the will discussed previously—i.e., choosing between alternatives, and choosing not to choose at all—Scotus follows Anselm in positing two affections, or loves, of the will: the love of justice (*affectio iustitiae*) and the love of happiness, or the advantageous (*affectio commodi*). These two loves amount to different essential motivational dispositions of the human will.¹⁵ The love of justice is a disposition to choose for the sake of the intrinsic goodness of the object of choice (e.g., an act or thing).¹⁶ Thus, this disposition responds to the objective order of goods in the world, the highest of which is God, modulating the intensity of love according to the degree of goodness possessed by the loved object.¹⁷ Unlike Anselm, Scotus does not think that the love of justice is absent from unregenerate humans as a result of original sin. Rather, Scotus holds that all humans retain this essential affection of the will, even in their fallen state.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is important to note that Scotus does not refer to the love of justice as a “natural” inclination of the will.¹⁹

Rather, the category “natural” is reserved for the love of the advantageous, as I will explain. The love of the advantageous is an essential disposition of the will to choose for the sake of the value that an object of choice has *relative to the agent*. Scotus

¹⁵ Ingham and Dreyer 157.

¹⁶ Mary Beth Ingham, “Duns Scotus, Morality and Happiness: A Reply to Thomas Williams,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74, 2 (2000): 186.

¹⁷ Ingham and Dreyer 158.

¹⁸ Ingham and Dreyer 160.

¹⁹ John Boler, “Transcending the Natural: Duns Scotus on the Two Affections of the Will,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 68, 1 (1993): 111.

claims that several distinct appetites (i.e., desires for specific kinds of objects) constitute the love of the advantageous, indeed as many appetites “as there are distinct powers of apprehension in us.”²⁰ Thus, humans have appetites associated with our senses (which appetites we share with animals), and with our intellect (the distinctively human faculty of apprehension), each of which falls under the umbrella of the love of the advantageous. Scotus describes the love of the advantageous as “...the inclination the will has towards its own perfection....”²¹ The appetites constitutive of this love reflect agent-perceived deficiencies of nature, which nature the appetites’ objects are meant to perfect. In this sense, the love of the advantageous may be understood as a drive of the will to complete or perfect its nature, and so as “natural”. Scotus also thinks the category “natural” is appropriate for the love of the advantageous insofar as it is *necessary* to human nature: “Take away this inclination and you destroy the nature.”²² Following Augustine, Scotus thinks the natural necessity of this love means that the will could never will its own misery.²³

On Scotus’s account, the two loves—that of justice and that of the advantageous—function together with the intellect to direct and govern human action. The intellect presents possible objects of choice to the will.²⁴ To the extent that the objects are advantageous to the agent, the love of the advantageous inclines the agent toward them. However, crucially, Scotus thinks neither the activity of the intellect, nor

²⁰ *Ordinatio* III, dist. 17, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 181.

²¹ *Ordinatio* IV, suppl. d. 49, qq. 9-10, n. 10, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 185. On the ancient and medieval teleological account of “nature”, it is an essential property of a nature that it tends toward its own perfection. As Scotus puts it, “...a nature could not remain a nature without being inclined to its own perfection” (ibid).

²² *Ordinatio* IV, suppl. d. 49, qq. 9-10, n. 10, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 185.

²³ Ibid, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 191.

²⁴ Ingham and Dreyer (162ff) offer a very helpful and extended account of Scotus’s view of the interaction of the intellect and the will during the process of choosing. My account here draws on their work.

the inclination of the love of the advantageous is sufficient for action. Rather, it falls to the love of justice to oversee and check the other two, regulating whether or not the agent in fact acts.²⁵ The love of justice inclines the agent toward the possible objects of choice to the extent that they are objectively valuable, and opens a space of freedom for the agent to choose (or not to choose) based on this objective value, thereby giving the will control over “both what it desires and the degree to which it desires what it desires.”²⁶ For Scotus, then, the love of justice is properly the cause of human action, it accounts for the freedom and rationality of the will, and it is, properly speaking, the “moral” inclination of the will.²⁷ However, as John Boler points out, it is important not to view the love of justice on Scotus’s account as an inclination to realize a higher sort of nature (i.e., a moral nature).²⁸ The love of justice does not compel action in a natural or necessary way on Scotus’s account. Rather, the love of justice allows the will to *transcend* the nature and necessity exemplified by the intellect and the love of the advantageous, making possible free and rational action.

The Scotist account I have just given of the interaction between the intellect and each of the two affections of the will seems to raise the possibility that the inclinations of the love of the advantageous should always be overridden or disregarded in favor of the inclinations of the love of justice. After all, the love of justice leans toward what is

²⁵ As Ingham and Dreyer point out (164-65), the strong role of the love of justice in Scotus’s view of the will has the interesting corollary that the capacity of the intellect to know the truth can be strengthened considerably from views that make the intellect the seat of freedom (such as the view of Aquinas), without the result that humans act with the necessity of nature. “Because he [Scotus] has strengthened the free causality of the will, Scotus is able to strengthen as well the ability of the intellect to know the truth. With its power to know reality both abstractively and intuitively, the intellect can present to the will the results of its own acts of investigation and analysis, acts that may be accompanied by a high level of intellectual and scientific certainty, without compromising the will’s independence as a rational potency, in control of itself” (164-65).

²⁶ Ingham, “Duns Scotus, Morality and Happiness,” 188.

²⁷ Ingham and Dreyer 157.

²⁸ Boler 117.

objectively good, and so how could it ever be good for its inclinations to be overridden by the love of the advantageous? The love of justice ought to win every time. If so, the interlocutor might press, it seems that the love of the advantageous is something of an idle wheel: why have it in the theory at all if it is not needed to account for free, rational, and moral action? Insofar as the love of justice does not force action but rather allows the agent to act (or not act) as she chooses, the love of justice seems to do all the work of accounting for such action.²⁹

In response, it should be emphasized that there will be many cases in which the two loves incline toward the same object. For example, there is clearly personal advantage in helping a friend—one thereby gains a social connection that humans both need and generally take great pleasure in. However, such an action also might be said to have value in itself, or at least value that is not merely relative to the helper; after all, the friend is being helped.³⁰ Thus, the action might correctly be understood as an object of both loves, and so we need not speak of the love of the advantageous being “overridden” in such a case. Now, we may want to say that the right motive—i.e., reason for action—to have in such a case is the motive of justice (i.e., helping the friend for the sake of the intrinsic value of such an act, or at least for the sake of the friend’s, and not the agent’s, interests). Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from understanding the action as overdetermined by reasons, and from taking the love of advantage to be a secondary, but nevertheless extant, incentive for action (despite not being the motive). The point here is that there will be many cases in which both loves incline toward the same object, and talk of “overriding” will be out of place in such cases.

²⁹ John Boler (115) raises an objection something like my “idle wheel” argument, though slightly different.

³⁰ Ingham uses a similar example to make a slightly different point in “Duns Scotus, Morality and Happiness,” 186.

Despite this point, on Scotus's view there will clearly be cases in which the love of the advantageous seems to lean toward one object and the love of justice toward another. In such cases, it must be admitted that good action will never be action in which the love of the advantageous overrides the love of justice. Nevertheless, it still seems wrong to say that the love of justice *overrides* in such cases. The reason is that the love of justice is a principle of free choice in the will, and so *need* not dominate in *any* situation involving choice. On the contrary, the love of justice simply opens space so that a free choice can be made without natural domination by the love of the advantageous. Surely, in such situations the right or good choice is that which is objectively better—i.e., that toward which the love of justice inclines—but this hardly means that the love of justice bulldozes the love of the advantageous. Rather, if the just object is chosen, it is *freely* chosen. Thus, the coercive language of “overriding” hardly seems appropriate, even in cases where the two loves seem to come apart.

Moreover, as Ingham and Dreyer point out, when the love of justice is the agent's motive for action—either in situations in which the love of the advantageous provides a sympathetic incentive for the action, or an inclination against it—on the Scotist view the agent is said to love “in an orderly manner,” to perfect her will, and thus to achieve “true human happiness,” or advantage.³¹ (Recall that Scotus characterizes the love of the advantageous, or of happiness, as a motive for the perfection of the nature of the will.) Thus, “in the right and ordered moral action, both metaphysical affections are satisfied.”³² The fact that justice and *true* human happiness are always satisfied in the same ordered moral action implies that when the two loves seem to come apart as a

³¹ Ingham and Dreyer 157.

³² *Ibid.*

matter of subjective experience, the reason for such apparent divergence is that the agent has misjudged what conduces to her advantage or happiness. As Ingham puts it, “*post lapsum* we no longer see clearly that ordered loving is that which truly satisfies the human desire for the good and is the true source of happiness.”³³ These considerations suggest that in cases where the two loves apparently come apart, though it might seem that just objects ought always to be chosen over against advantageous objects, the truth is that by choosing the just object one also chooses the advantageous object, and so the good of the self is not simply to be overlooked in such cases. The point is that on the Scotist view the love of justice and the love of the advantageous *are* always satisfied in the same object, whether or not it looks to be so from the subjective perspective.

Finally, I will address the idle wheel objection raised previously. Insofar as situations can arise in which the two loves seem to cut in different directions, the love of the advantageous does indeed do important theoretical work for Scotus’s view: it accounts for the inclination—and perhaps partially accounts for action—toward the apparently advantageous object and away from the apparently just. Put another way, if there were no love of the advantageous, then it is hard to imagine what the motive of an agent could possibly be in choosing an object that was not the apparently just object. There would simply be no other motivational principle to account for such action, and so, conceivably, no such action would be possible. Thus, it seems that nixing the love of the advantageous would restrict the freedom of the will to two options: willing the apparently just object, or not willing at all. There would be no choosing between alternative objects. This result amounts to a highly implausible account of the will, and so the love of the advantageous hardly seems to be an idle wheel in the theory.

³³ Ingham, “Duns Scotus, Morality and Happiness,” 187.

SCOTUS, ARISTOTLE, AND MORAL MOTIVATION

In light of the view of the will I have just described, I now wish to query in some depth what Scotus seems to think is the main distinction between his ethical view and the view of Aristotle as expressed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.³⁴ As some contemporary philosophers see it, Scotus makes an implicit critique of Aristotle's ethics by characterizing morally good choices as motivated by more than the mere natural drive for advantage, or self-perfection, which seems to characterize Aristotle's eudaimonistic ethical view. For example, Bonnie Kent makes the following claim:

If the will had no other inclination, so that we were determined by nature to choose what we regard as the most advantageous of the available options, we would not be free, moral agents, regardless of how rational we might be in calculating and carrying out actions to our own advantage. All eudaemonistic ethical theories accordingly strike Scotus as disastrous failures...In other words, moral responsibility requires that an agent be capable not only of different acts but also of significantly different motivations for acting.³⁵

On such interpretations, what distinguishes Scotus's view from Aristotle's, then, is Scotus's emphasis on the second affection of the will—i.e., the love of justice—as the motive of morally good action. On Scotus's view, when an agent acts well, her motive is not her own perfection or success (i.e., the love of the advantageous); rather she acts for the sake of the inherent goodness of the action (i.e., she is motivated by the love of justice). The failing of Aristotle's view, it is claimed, is that only the single motive of self-perfection, or happiness, is available.

³⁴ I say "...seems to think..." since, as Boler (122) points out, it is not clear that Scotus ever directly attacks Aristotle's ethical view. However, as Boler aptly continues, "...a very significant criticism seems...implicit in what he [i.e., Scotus] says. For Scotus cannot have missed the eudaimonist and 'naturalist' character of Aristotle's ethics."

³⁵ Bonnie Kent, "Rethinking Moral Dispositions: Scotus on the Virtues", in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 356. As noted, Boler makes a similar point (122).

Is this characterization of the contrast between Aristotle and Scotus fair? In what follows I aim to address this question from two angles. First, I will consider the extent to which Scotus's love of justice in fact amounts to a motivational principle that stands in radical contrast with the sort of "self-perfection" motive attributed to Aristotle's view. To get at this question, I will examine the content of the Scotist love of justice, i.e., the character of the inherent goodness toward which the love inclines. Second, I will consider briefly whether an Aristotelian eudaimonistic ethics necessarily lacks the motivational resources that its critics say it does.

To the first question: what is the content of the love of justice? As Ingham and Dreyer put it, Scotus's love of justice inclines toward an "objective order of goods" in the world, established by God.³⁶ The love of justice inclines toward these goods not for the sake of their advantage to the agent, but rather for the sake of their objective, inherent goodness. But what does such goodness consist in on Scotus's account? According to Scotus, although we speak of goodness as a property or quality of things, such as actions and objects, in fact the goodness of a thing—like beauty—is a proportional harmonious *relation* between features of the thing.³⁷ The essential (or primary) goodness of a thing consists in its integrity or perfection: the essentially good thing lacks no feature it ought to have by nature.³⁸ For example, an action will be good insofar as all the relevant features of it—i.e., the nature of the agent, the nature of the object upon which the agent acts, the circumstances of action, etc.—are evident and exist in the appropriate or suitable relation to each other.³⁹ An act is said to be good by nature if—regardless of

³⁶ Ingham and Dreyer 126.

³⁷ *Ordinatio* I, dist. 17, nn. 62-67, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 207.

³⁸ *Quodlibet*, q. 18, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 211.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

circumstantial considerations—the kind of act is suitable to the agent’s nature generally. For example, the act of a human eating an apple will be good by nature insofar as the agent has a physical nature that requires food, and the apple is suitable as food.⁴⁰

In addition to grounding the goodness of an act in the nature of the agent (e.g., as human being) and the object involved in the act (e.g., an apple), Scotus claims that the goodness ultimately stems from a judgment of the divine intellect.⁴¹ Insofar as God created humans and apples, God’s creative judgment is ultimately responsible for the relation of suitability that obtains between them. In this way, the goodness of human action finds its ultimate source in God. However, this ultimately divine source of goodness does not change the fact that Scotus thinks human beings make judgments of moral goodness and badness based on the objective suitability relations observed in nature.

Given this Scotist account of the objective goodness of action, it is unclear that the object of the love of justice—i.e., the good toward which it inclines—is significantly different from the object toward which humans are supposedly singularly motivated on an Aristotelian account of ethics, i.e., eudaimonia. According to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the highest good for human beings—i.e., eudaimonia, that toward which human action is directed—is to perform the human function well, i.e., in accord with the relevant excellences, or virtues, over the course of a complete life.⁴² Aristotle understands the human function as a kind of characteristically human activity. According to Aristotle, insofar as the distinguishing mark of human nature is rationality,⁴³ it turns out that the

⁴⁰ Ingham and Dreyer (181) use this example.

⁴¹ *Quodlibet*, q. 18, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 211-13.

⁴² *NE* 1098a16-18.

⁴³ *NE* 1098a4.

highest good for humans is to perform rational activity, and to perform it well. For Aristotle, then, good action is grounded in a view of human nature as rational. Action that accords with, or is appropriate to, the rational nature of human beings—specifically, action that is of the kind that Aristotle takes to follow from our rational nature—will be objectively good.

But, this Aristotelian account of good action does not seem so different from the Scotist account of good action. As we just saw, Scotus thinks the goodness of an action is dependent on the nature of the agent and whether the action exists in the right kind of relation to that nature. In other words, on the Scotist account, what is central to a good human act is whether it is appropriate to human nature. Thus, Scotus seems to account for the objective goodness of an action in the same basic way that Aristotle does. For example, both might agree that a temperate action is an objectively good kind of action for a human being to perform since human nature is such that temperate actions are suitable to it.⁴⁴ From this discussion, it seems that the objective goodness toward which the Scotist love of justice inclines is virtually identical to the goodness toward which virtuous agents incline on Aristotle's view.⁴⁵

However, an interlocutor might object that the point distinguishing Scotus's view was never that the will inclines toward a different *content* than that inclined toward on the Aristotelian view. Rather, the distinct Scotist point is that the will inclines toward this

⁴⁴ Of course, both Scotus and Aristotle would also make the goodness of a particular action dependent on the specific circumstances of the action. Indeed, Scotus seems to follow Aristotle directly on this point. However, it is enough for my purposes to focus on general action types.

⁴⁵ Of course, my point here is only that Scotus and Aristotle will both make the same kinds of arguments in order to justify their claims that certain actions are objectively good, i.e., arguments of the kind that describe the action as appropriate for, or suitable to, human nature. Whether both Scotus and Aristotle could mount *successful* arguments of that kind—i.e., arguments that effectively *show* the objective goodness or badness of certain actions given an account of human nature—is, of course, a separate and complicated question. In this essay, I set that important question aside.

content *for a different reason*. Where the Aristotelian inclines toward objective goodness solely for the sake of the perfection or realization of human nature, the Scotist inclines toward objective goodness for its own sake.

Several points may be made in response to such an objection. First, if we concede, preliminarily and for the sake of argument, that the Scotist view has a distinct “for-its-own-sake” kind of motivation which the Aristotelian view lacks, then it must also be emphasized that the supposed Aristotelian self-perfection motive is also present on the Scotist view—viz., the love of the advantageous—for any ordinary good action, in parallel with the love of justice. For example, while the Scotist might rightly claim that an act of temperance (e.g., resisting one too many drinks), if it is morally good, is done for its own sake (i.e., for the sake of its objective goodness), she must also concede that the love of the advantageous inclines toward such an action, insofar as its goodness consists in its suitability to human nature. In other words, insofar as such an act is suitable to human nature, it is advantageous for the human agent, may be understood as contributing to her perfection, and thus *could* be motivated by the love of the advantageous. The same sort of point may be made even about just (in the sense of “fair”) actions. Despite the fact that particular just acts have often been conceived as being of no direct advantage to the agent (since the agent often gives up some advantage in acting fairly), if a just act is to be understood as objectively good on Scotus’s view, he will have to argue that such an act is somehow suitable to human nature (at least in general), and so that it may be understood as advantageous or perfecting for the agent in some sense. Thus, given Scotus’s view of objective goodness, the Scotist seems

committed to the view that both motivational principles—i.e., the love of the advantageous *and* the love of justice—could be in play for all ordinary actions.⁴⁶

But, if both motivational principles are possible for all ordinary actions, then the morally good action on Scotus's view—i.e., the action motivated by the love of justice—will be one in which the agent prefers, or prioritizes in some way, the moral motive over the motive of self-perfection or advantage. The agent must relegate the advantageous aspects of the action to the status of secondary incentives, and the action must be performed for the reason of its inherent goodness or rightness, i.e., for its own sake.⁴⁷

Scotus admits of the possibility of this sort of prioritization of possible motivational considerations in the following passage:

For one could fail to seek something because of happiness either negatively or contrariwise. Negatively, because one could seek something and not consider the ultimate end of happiness, and consequently at that moment the will would not seek it because of happiness, since one would not be thinking of it then. Similarly, one could seek something without ordering it to this other end, and therefore, it would not be sought because of happiness at that time.⁴⁸

In this passage Scotus claims that even in cases where happiness or advantage might result from a certain action, the action need not be performed for the sake of happiness. Indeed, as I have argued, given Scotus's view of the objective goodness toward which the love of justice inclines, his view seems to *require* that the motive of advantage-producing

⁴⁶ The exception to this point for the Scotist might be acts that directly express love for God, without the mediation of some more ordinary act that might also be done for other reasons. Although it is unclear, in such a case Scotus might claim that the goodness of the act derives solely from the objective goodness of God, and not from the suitability relation that obtained between the agent's human nature and the character of the action. In that case, it might be incorrect to claim that such an immediate act of loving God could be motivated by the love of the advantageous, in addition to the love of justice. However, this is mere speculation on my part.

⁴⁷ My use of the language of "incentives" is here indebted to Barbara Herman's interpretation of Kant (cf. "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty," in *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 18).

⁴⁸ *Ordinatio* IV, suppl. d. 49, qq. 9-10, in Wolter, *Will and Morality*, 195.

actions need not reduce to the love of the advantageous, since he takes morally good actions to be possible.

Now I will turn briefly to the question of whether the motivational resources of the Aristotelian view are really so different from those available on the Scotist view just described. At first blush, the Aristotelian view seems to have available only a self-perfecting motive for action, equivalent to the Scotist love of the advantageous in somewhat elevated form. As Kent puts it, “In Book IX of the *Ethics* he [Aristotle] casts the virtuous person as steadily motivated by self-love...”⁴⁹ The notion of self-love seems to suggest that a good act of Aristotle’s virtuous agent would be motivated by what is advantageous or self-perfecting for the agent in an action (i.e., by Scotus’s love of the advantageous). However, in Book II (section 4) of the *Ethics*, Aristotle lays down conditions of fully virtuous acts—more specifically, conditions of the agent performing such acts—one of which is that the agent “must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes.”⁵⁰ In other words, here it looks like the motive required for a fully virtuous or good action is the love of justice, i.e., performance of the action for the reason that it is a virtuous or good action.

Here I do not aim to sort out the apparent tension between these two passages in Aristotle’s *Ethics*. However, the passage in Book II does suggest that it seems at least initially plausible to attribute to Aristotle the view that a good action is motivated by a consideration essentially the same as the love of justice. And if it turns out that Aristotle’s view does not, in fact, include this motivational notion that Scotus is so explicit about, it still seems plausible to claim that a eudaimonistic ethical view like

⁴⁹ Kent 364. She refers to *NE* 1169a12-b2.

⁵⁰ *NE* 1105a17-b5.

Aristotle's *could* include a "for-its-own-sake" kind of motive like the love of justice while still remaining eudaimonistic. Why not think, on the eudaimonistic view, that an agent could see the self-perfecting character of a certain action (or at least could tell a story about its self-perfecting character if pressed on the deep logic of her view of the action), and yet act for the sake of the objectively understood goodness of the act alone?⁵¹ As I have explained for Scotus's view, there is no reason an agent cannot prefer or prioritize one motivational consideration over another in this way. Furthermore, such an account does nothing to compromise the eudaimonistic character of the theory as long as the deep story about the goodness of the action includes the suitability of the act with respect to human nature. From this perspective, the Aristotelian and Scotist ethical views do not look very far apart at all.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, I have argued that it is not best to read Scotus's view of the motive for moral action as a radical critique of Aristotle's eudaimonistic ethical view. Indeed, insofar as it seems plausible to attribute dual possible motives for action—i.e., the love of the advantageous and the love of justice—to both views (or at least to Scotus's view and a plausible view that is both Aristotelian and eudaimonistic), and insofar as both views share a similar account of the inherent goodness of an action as grounded in the suitability of the action to human nature, the two views do not necessarily seem far apart on the issue of moral motivation.⁵² The deeper distinction between the ethical views of

⁵¹ Rosalind Hursthouse articulates a view something like this in *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵² I use the term "moral" loosely here, as it is not clear that it properly applies to Aristotle's view of action and motivation.

Aristotle and Scotus seems to be in Scotus's account of the will as free and rational, which has no parallel in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As I have shown, Scotus takes the will to be a self-determining, and thereby free, cause of human action, and he understands it as rational insofar as it possesses and applies reasons or principles in its operation, and is thereby capable of opposite effects.