THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION IN
JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

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From the middle of thirteenth century, Aristotle’s *De anima* provided the general framework for treating psychological questions in medieval natural philosophy. Nevertheless, the reception of Aristotle did not result in a homogeneous theory, and especially the Neoplatonic tradition, particularly in the form of Augustinianism, added to the diversity of views. Theological treatises also dealt with psychological issues, some of which were definitely not found in philosophical sources, such as questions about the functions of Christ’s soul, that is to say, the human being who was included in the miraculous hypostatic union. The discussion of the supernaturally influenced human nature in the perichoretic union was considered theologically important, but it also shed light on natural human capacities from an exceptional point of view. John Duns Scotus’ interest in psychology is clearly discernible in his theology of the incarnation—in fact this is the context in which he develops the most quoted part of his influential theory of the passions of the soul. It seems that Christological themes led theologians to ask some questions that did not easily suggest themselves in traditional philosophical psychology. Even though Scotus did not apply the terminology of obligations logic in this part of his Christology, obligations theory with its special interest in counterfactual analysis became popular in English theology after Scotus.¹ Some notions of Christological psychology resembled counterfactual assumptions with respect to ordinary human psychology.

In his *The Metaphysics of Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus*, Richard Cross explores the metaphysical conceptions in the medieval discussions of the hypostatic union, paying particular attention to Scoto’s explanation of how the human substance can be a real human being even though it does not exist by itself but shares in the

existence of the divine individual person. Cross has a very high opinion of Scotus’ approach—in the last chapter of his book he develops the guidelines of Scotist metaphysics of incarnation as a contribution to contemporary theology.\(^2\) Here I shall not discuss the metaphysics of the hypostatic union, which seems hardly relevant to Scotus’ Christological psychology. My aim is to investigate Scotus’ detailed analysis of the psychology of the human nature of Christ by concentrating on his somewhat surprising defense of the actual omniscience of the human mind, the doctrine of the two wills in Christ that is embedded in the theory of the passions of the will, and the question of Christ’s mortality. The best-known part of Scotus’ Christological psychology is the discussion of the passions of the will in Christ, which in fact involves the original part of his theory of emotions in general. His view of the emotions of the intellectual part of the soul was later contrasted with Aquinas’ more Aristotelian view, and this controversy with Christological overtones made the Scotist theory widely known in early modern times.\(^3\)

**I. The Omniscience of the Human Soul**

Aquinas and Scotus follow the tradition that assumed that, while the cognitive capacities of the human nature of Christ were as perfect as possible and partially actualized in a supernatural way, he participated in human weakness in some other respects, having been “in every respect tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4,15). According to Aquinas, Jesus Christ had three sorts of knowledge: the immediate beatific vision of God’s essence, the infused knowledge of all things in the non-spiritual world, and the standard human knowledge through abstraction from the phantasms.\(^4\) The beatific vision was a grace-based perfection that the human soul could not achieve by itself. The second category of infused knowledge was different in this respect, although it was also caused by the Word, the second person of the Trinity, which was the divine nature in the hypostatic union. Aquinas

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