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On this day: Duns Scotus

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Nov. 8, 2011 NCR Today

On this day we celebrate the feast of Bl. John Duns Scotus (1266-1308).

"No one knows precisely when John Duns was born, but we are fairly certain he came from the eponymous town of Duns near the Scottish border with England. He, like many other of his compatriots, was called 'Scotus,' or 'the Scot,' from the country of his birth. He was ordained a priest on 17 March 1291. Because his bishop had just ordained another group at the end of 1290, we can place Scotus?s birth in the first quarter of 1266, if he was ordained as early as canon law permitted. When he was a boy he joined the Franciscans, who sent him to study at Oxford, probably in 1288. . . He probably completed his Oxford studies in 1301. He was not, however, incepted as a master at Oxford, for his provincial sent him to the more prestigious University of Paris, where he would lecture on the *Sentences* a second time.

--from "John Duns Scotus," [1] by Jeffrey Hause of Creighton University, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007, an interesting and friendly introduction to the Subtle Doctor.

Duns Scotus's Oxford

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark charmèd, rook racked, river-rounded;
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did
Once encounter in, here coped & poisèd powers;

Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded
Best in; graceless growth, thou hast confounded
Rural, rural keeping ? folk, flocks, and flowers.

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;
Who fired France for Mary without spot.

--Gerard Manley Hopkins

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI delivered a Catechesis [2]on Blessed John Duns Scotus. Click here [3] to watch a video of the Pope's address.

The web site of the Research Group John Duns Scotus, [4] Utrecht, contains a great deal of information, including the "Duns Scotus Bibliography from 1950 to the Present," compiled by Tobias Hoffmann. Scroll down to the lower right for Nico den Bok's review of Richard Cross's *Duns Scotus on God.*

In *Duns Scotus on God,* [5] Richard Cross, a Tutorial Fellow at Oriel College, University of Oxford, explains the intellectual context in which Scotus operated and describes the Greek, Islamic, and Christian philosophers who influenced him.

"I deal with Scotus's proof for the existence and nature of God as first cause. . . . I discuss how Scotus tries to show that this God must be a Trinity of persons." Page 11. The "extremely well-written and accessible book" may be sampled at Ashgate Publishing's [6] site as well as at Google Books and at Amazon. [7]

Click here [8] for the Franciscan Archive.

Click here [9] for the Catholic Encyclopedia article on Bl. John Duns Scotus.

Click here [10] for images.

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