

## Теория познания блаженного Иоанна Дунса Скота

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### **Аннотация**

В данной статье рассматриваются основные положения теории познания Иоанна Дунса Скота. Дунс Скот принимает базовые категории теории познания, изложенные его предшественниками. В своей концепции он противопоставляет интуитивное и абстрактное познание. Скот полагал, что разум познает не только виды, но также способен познать единичное. Абстрактное познание всегда должно предваряться интуитивным познанием. Интуиция дает индивидуальное и экзистенциальное познание, которое носит случайный характер, поскольку существование не относится к сущности конечных вещей. Напротив, абстрактное знание, отвлекаясь от наличных вещей и их индивидуальных характеристик, познает всеобщие и существенные особенности.

**Ключевые слова:** Иоанн Дунс Скот, теория познания, абстрактное познание, интуитивное познание.

## **Theory of Cognition of blessed Johannes Duns Scotus**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the main tenets of the theory of knowledge of Johannes Duns Scotus. Duns Scotus adopts the basic categories of the theory of knowledge set forth by his predecessors. In his concept he contrasts intuitive and abstractive cognition. Scott believed that the mind cognizes not only species, but can also cognize the individual. Abstractive cognition must always be preceded by intuitive cognition. Intuition gives individual and existential cognition, which is of an accidental nature, since existence does not refer to the essence of finite things. In contrast, abstractive knowledge, distracting from the existent things and their individual characteristics, cognizes general and essential features

**Keywords:** Johannes Duns Scotus, cognitive theory, abstractive cognition, intuitive cognition.

The traditional philosophical category of epistemology reflects medieval philosophy inadequately. Medieval philosophers were interested, mostly, what is now a part of the theory of knowledge, however they did not perceive knowledge as an integrated subject, around which one could develop a philosophical theory [1].

John Duns Scotus does not distinguish himself in the theory of cognition, adopting a fundamentally new theory. He adopts the predominant scope of the theory of cognition, which was set out by his predecessors with whom he didn't agree, and he did so in order to strengthen the broader contours of his theory.

Scotus distinguishes between intuitive and abstractive cognition. When he makes this distinction, he usually uses it in contexts of minor importance in relation to subjects of knowledge and cognition. When Scotus describes intuitive cognition as something that exists in his existence, he describes the way which we associate with perception - cognition that gives information about how things are now [2]. Scotus regards sensation as a form of intuitive knowledge and describes imagination as a sort of abstract cognition [3].

Scotus emphasizes the differences between the sensory and the intellectual components of cognition. Sensory powers consist of five external senses and internal senses of mind - common sense, phantasia, imagination, estimative powers and memory.

Scotus rejects one of the common ways of distinguishing between the sense and the intellect. He denies that material individuals are only an object of feelings and denies that universal essences are an exclusive object of the intellect. However, Scotus adopts another common basis for a sensory-intellectual distinction. He agrees that sensory powers have physical organs, while intellect is immaterial. This leads to a further conclusion that feelings, being material, cannot directly affect the intellect, due to its immateriality [4].

The intellect receives information from the senses. But before the intellect starts to classify and conceptualize sensory data, senses themselves process this information in various ways. The simplest form of sensation occurs when one of the five external senses perceives a sensible quality, which is an inherent object, for example, when sight sees color or hearing hears sounds. Speaking more broadly, one sees darkness or a human being. This is a sensation *per accidentis*. When internal senses of the brain store and reinterpret this information, they create phantasms. These phantasms, abstracted by the agent intellect are the only source of intellect information. A real concept naturally arises in the intellect of a wayfarer only with things that are naturally able to move our intellect (Ibid.).

Some sensory cognitions are intuitive, as when a person sees, smells, or touches something. This perception conveys information about these real things. We undoubtedly have an intellectual abstractive cognition. When sensory powers give it phantasms, the intellect can get the nature of things, and such an understanding in its turn makes scientific knowledge possible.

Sometimes Scotus admits that human beings have intellectual intuitive cognitions, in any case, people learn things intellectually via phantasms. He often claims that we regularly learn things intuitively. If we did not have intuitive

cognition of things as really existing, we couldn't talk about particular objects around us. As long as my intellectual actions are not directly accessible to my feelings, the only way that I could know them without inductive reasoning is by intuitive cognition.

Scotus offers some significant objections to the Henry of Ghent's version of cognitive theory. Henry of Ghent asserts that what is in the soul as a subject is changeable, even its own act of intellection, but if that's the case, the illuminated intellection itself is changeable. In this case, even the divine illumination cannot save the soul from mistakes. An additional point is that Henry of Ghent states that the created, as well as uncreated exemplars play a certain role in production of certain knowledge [5].

These arguments are aimed at the version of Henry of Ghent's theory of illumination, in particular, not against any and every version of the theory. Scotus caused considerable harm to any attempts to formulate the divine illumination theory, undercutting its motivation. From his point of view, we do not need illumination theory to show that certain knowledge is possible. Human intellect can achieve this by purely natural processes in four cases:

- We can have some knowledge of the principles, because they are self-evident through their terms. If a person understands the meaning of terms, he realizes that the principle is true. For example, anyone who understands the terms "part" and "whole" has a definite and immediate understanding of the principle that the whole is greater than the part.

- Experience can also lead to certain knowledge, such as the fact that magnet attracts iron. Such knowledge depends on our specific knowledge of the principle "Whatever the results are, for the most part, from the unfree cause, these are natural consequences of the cause," which is self-evident through its terms. On the basis of this principle and experience, one can obtain certain knowledge via induction.

- We can have some knowledge about our actions and mental states, such as whether we understand or want. We can even be sure that we see. If I see a flash of light, but there is no light in the room, the species that causes my visual act still must exist in my eye, and so I really see something, although not something outside my body.

- We can also possess certain sensory knowledge owing to the same self-evident principle that bases the certainty of induction. If the same object always or in most cases causes several senses to judge that it has a certain property, then one can be sure that the object really has this property (Ibid.).

Expanding the problem of Duns Scotus's cognition, R. Cross delineates the difference between intuitive and abstractive cognition. Intuitive cognition has something existing and present, the singular and its essence, the essence connected to its individuator. The object of abstractive cognition is a general entity, but abstraction precludes existence and presence, and thus basically excludes the individuating feature [6].

Scotus believed that the mind cognizes not only the species, but can also cognize the singular. The abstractive cognition of objects should always be

preceded by intuitive cognition, i.e. only through intuition one can confirm the existence and presence of a thing. He perceived intuition as an act of direct cognition of an actual object.

Intuition gives individual and existential cognition, but it has a random character, since existence does not refer to the essence of finite things. In contrast, abstractive cognition, being abstracted from an actual things and their individual characteristics, cognizes instead of this their general and essential features [7].

Duns Scotus asserts that the desire to cognize such immaterial things as the soul or the Arche is inherent in humans by nature, and such cognition is not something completely impossible, although it cannot be intuitive and direct. Thus, he opposes the restriction of metaphysics to only the material world, since to cognize this, the means of physics is quite sufficient [8].

In accordance with the study of D. Scotus, every thing can be cognized since it is existent, that is, since it is present, and things in existence can existentially affect every thing, both material and immaterial, created and uncreated (Ibid.).

Scotus adopts the generally accepted Aristotelian concept that humans, unlike animals, have two different types of cognitive abilities: senses and intellect. Senses differ from intellect in that they have physical organs while intellect is immaterial. In order for the intellect to use sensory information, therefore, it must perceive the raw material, which is provided by the senses in the form of material images and turn them into objects suitable for cognition. This process is known as abstraction.

Scotus denies that active and passive intellects are actually distinct. Most likely, there is only one intellect that has these two distinct functions or abilities.

Scotus understands intuitive cognition in contrast with abstractive cognition. The latter is related to the universal and, as such, should not be proved by an example. Sensory cognition in this respect is considered to be an intuitive one.

Intellectual intuitive cognition does not require phantasms; the cognized object causes an intellectual act by which its existence becomes accessible to the intellect. As Robert Pasnau remarks, intellectual intuitive cognition is in fact a form of extra-sensory perception.

Sometimes Scotus considers such intuitive cognition as a simple theoretical possibility, and in some situations he reasons the reality of intellectual intuitive cognition. In fact, it becomes clear that intuitive cognition is quite common in human thought. For example, he argues that since the intellect participates in reasoning which relate to the actual existence of particular sensible objects, it must know that they exist. Abstractive cognition cannot provide such knowledge. Furthermore, without intuitive cognition, a person could never know about his own intellectual states. Abstractive cognition can provide me with an abstractive concept of thinking about something, but I need an intuitive cognition in order to know that I actually give an example of this concept at the moment.

If these arguments reflect Scotus's understanding of intuitive cognition, then he makes an exception to the general rule that the intellect acquires knowledge only by turning to phantasms. Obviously, he has no choice, given the importance he attaches to our intuitive self-knowledge. Since our intellect and its acts are

immaterial, it is difficult to understand how an immaterial act can be captured in a sensory phantasm. We cannot cognize intuitively non-sensible objects or universals in this life [2].

Scotus opposed the rationalists' assertion that philosophy is self-sufficient and adequate to satisfy the human desire for cognition. He argued that a pure philosopher such as Aristotle could not really understand a person's condition because he did not know about the Fall and his/her need for grace and redemption. Not enlightened by the Christian revelation, Aristotle accepted the fallen state of mankind, which receives all knowledge via senses due to its natural state, in which the object of cognition is coextensive with all being, including the being of God. The limitation of Aristotle's philosophy was obvious to Scotus with regard to the proof of the existence of God as the primary mover of the universe. He argued that more adequate than this physical proof is his own very intricate metaphysical demonstration of the existence of God, as absolutely primary, unique, and infinite being.

Scotus asserts that the human intellect can possess intuitive cognition, that our intellects are capable of some kind of intellectual vision. Our usual ordinary way of intellectual activity is an abstractive one. We perceive the essence of things through phantasms, and this mode of cognition does not allow us to determine whether these things actually exist. We can think of any things in general or about one thing in particular. But in order to know whether there is a particular thing at the moment, we need senses. Scotus speaks in favor of theoretical possibility of some form of extrasensory perception [9].

There are two main arguments for this assertion. First of all, Scotus claims that the intellect, being the highest cognitive ability, must be able to do what our lower cognitive powers and senses can do[10]. Secondly, he refers to the generally accepted view at that time that the blessed in heaven will possess an intellectual, intuitive cognition of the divine essence[11]. This conclusion requires the establishment of what is conceivable for our intellects to have a direct, perceptual conception of reality. If God can make it, then it is at least conceivable. If senses can have this kind of cognition, then surely, it must be possible, at least theoretically, for the intellect to do so. All that is probably required is the appropriate type of causal effect of object on the intellect(Ibid.).

In contrast to the Greco-Arabic understanding of government of the universe, Scotus emphasized the causality of the universe and its complete dependence on the infinite creative will of God. He adopted the traditional voluntarism of the Franciscans, upraising the will over the mind of humans.

The teachings of Scotus on universals gave him the title "Doctor Subtilis". Universals, from his viewpoint, exist only as abstract notions, but they are based on common properties, such as humanity, that exist, or can exist, in many people. Common properties are real, they have a real unity, different from the unity of individuals in which they exist. The individuality of each individual is determined by the added positive reality, which makes the common nature of a particular person. Duns Scotus calls such a reality "an individual difference" or "thisness". This is the primary evolution of the medieval realism of universals [12].

Scotus says that the intellect's activity is more natural, less in need of some particular interference than other natural actions. It is God that gives the world the presence of meaning, and creates our cognitive abilities. But the novelty of understanding the idea by Scotus is that the mind is not a particular case. From this moment divine illumination ceases to be a serious philosophical possibility.

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