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Analogia

DIONYSIUS the Areopagite

"The higher we soar in contemplation, the more limited become our expressions of that which is purely intelligible."

Dionysius the Areopagite

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Guest Editors

Samuel Walker Bennett

NOTE
FROM THE SENIOR EDITOR

It is a real joy to present to the academic theological world this exceptional three-volume publication of Analogia dedicated to St Dionysius the Areopagite. What makes this publication exceptional is precisely its wide theological range, that is, the fact that the authors see Dionysius as one of the fundamental common sources of Christian theological awareness. Indeed Dionysius must be seen in this way: as one of the common points of departure for some gigantic representatives of the Christian Greek-Western Theological world. In an age where the need for discovering crucial points of convergence between East and West is of utmost importance, this publication can offer a good spiritual stimulation. I would also like to praise the Guest Editor of this publication, Sammuel Bennett, who, along with the Dionysius Circle Group, organised the content of this publication.

– ***Fr Nikolaos Loudovikos,*** Senior Editor

NOTE
FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

This volume primarily encompasses the proceedings from the first annual symposium of the Dionysius Circle, conducted on October 8th, 2022, dedicated to exploring the concept of the divine processions in the Divine Names by St. Dionysius the Areopagite. The symposium delved into the dynamics of God's presence in creation, epitomized by the "unparticipatedly participated" processions. By the processions, God, though unparticipated, is not detached from His creation but is unconditionally present to all, manifesting both the transcendence and immanence of God. Such explorations underscore our mission to cultivate meaningful dialogue on St. Dionysius's works, highlighting his pivotal influence across Christian traditions and fostering philosophical engagement with Christian thought.

We are deeply appreciative of the contributions from Christos Terezis with Lydia Petridou, Gregory T. Doolan, Miklos Vassanyi, Ryan Haecker, Marcus Hines, Daniel Heide, Conor Stark, and Luke Togni. Their rigorous scholarship enhances our collective understanding of the Dionysian tradition and its enduring impact.

In addition, we would like to extend our appreciation to the editorial team of Analogia Journal, whose dedication and meticulous attention to detail have been instrumental in bringing this publication to fruition. Also, to Prof Nikolaos Loudovikos, the Senior Editor, for his seminal contributions to contemporary reflection on patristic thought and the stewardship of The Analogia Journal. His profound work in bridging the gap between Orthodox Christianity and Western theological and philosophical discourses has not only enriched the academic landscape but has also significantly inspired the establishment and activities of the Dionysius Circle.

It is our hope that this volume honors both the legacy of St. Dionysius and inspires further exploration and dialogue within the academic community and beyond.

With sincere thanks,

– ***Samuel Walker Bennett*** Guest Editors
Instructor, Western Governors University
and President of the Dionysius Circle,

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Aquinas on 'The Good' as the Principal Name of God: An Aristotelian Reading of Dionysius

GREGORY T. DOOLAN
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On a number of occasions, when considering the names that can properly be said of God, Aquinas notably holds that the most proper name is 'He Who Is'. In this way, Aquinas's account of divine naming could be seen to stand in contrast to the Platonic tradition of favoring the name of 'Good' for the first principle since, in that tradition, the Good is beyond *being*. With that said, it is important to note that Aquinas himself at times speaks in terms similar to the Platonists, observing both that God is beyond *being* (*supra ens*) and that the name of 'Good' should, in a respect, be seen as the 'principal name of God' (*principale nomen dei*), namely, inasmuch as he is a cause. This paper offers clarification on how Aquinas reconciles this claim about 'Good' as the principal name of God with his position that 'He Who Is' is the most proper name of God. Fundamental to this investigation is a consideration of Aquinas's treatment of as he presents them in his commentary *The Divine Names* of Ps.-Dionysius.

Introduction

On a number of occasions, when considering the names that can properly be said of God, Aquinas notably holds that the most proper name is 'He Who Is'.[1] In this way, Aquinas's account of divine naming could be seen

[1] See, e.g., *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis* I (hereafter Super Sententiis I), ed. P. Mandonnet, vol. 1 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929), d. 8, q. 1, a. 1 (Mandonnet 1.194–97); *Super Sententiis* I, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3 (Mandonnet 1.199–201); *Liber de veritate catholicae Fidei contra errores infidelium seu Summa contra Gentiles* (hereafter SCG), ed. C. Pera and P. Caramello, vols. 2–3 (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1961), I, c. 22 (Marietti 2.33:211); *Contra errores Graecorum ad Urbanum papam* (hereafter *Contra errores Graecorum*), vol. 40 A in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1967), c. 1 (Leon. 40A.72:55–67); *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* (hereafter *In De div. nom.*), ed. C. Pera, P. Caramello, and C. Mazzantini (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1950), c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 236:635); *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* (hereafter *De potentia*), in *Quaestiones disputatae*, ed. P.M.

to stand in contrast to the Platonic tradition of favoring the name of 'Good' for the first principle since, in that tradition, the Good is beyond *being*.[2] With that said, it is important to note that Aquinas himself at times speaks in terms similar to the Platonists, observing both that God is beyond *being* (*supra ens*) and that the name of 'Good' should, in a respect, be seen as the 'principal name of God' (*principale nomen dei*).[3] Both of these observations reflect the clear Neoplatonic influences on Aquinas's thought; nevertheless, each is conditioned by his distinctive metaphysical views of *esse* as the act of existence. For as he makes clear, the reason that God is beyond *being* is not that he transcends some Platonic separate Form of *Being* (*ipsum ens separatum*); rather, God transcends it inasmuch as he is, in himself, Infinite *Esse*: the unlimited act of existing (*ipsum esse infinitum*). By contrast, Aquinas tells us, the name 'being'(*ens*) is said of 'that which finitely participates *esse*'.[4] It is for this reason, in part, that Aquinas sees the name 'He Who Is' to be the most proper name of God. Thus, in response to an objector who cites the authority of Dionysius for identifying 'Good' as God's most proper name, Aquinas clarifies that this is indeed God's principal name—but not absolutely speaking. Instead, 'Good' is the principal name of God inasmuch as he is considered as a cause.[5]

Pession, 8th rev. ed., vol. 2 (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1949), q. 7, a. 5 co. (Marietti 2.199); Thomas Aquinas, *Pars prima Summae theologiae* (hereafter ST I), vol. 4–5 in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1888, 1889), q. 13, a. 11 (Leon. 4.162).

For an excellent overview of Aquinas's treatment of the divine name *Qui est*, see Brian T. Carl, 'The Kataphatic and Apophatic Propriety of "Qui Est"' in *Summa Metaphysicae ad Mentem Sancti Thomae: Essays in Honor of John F. Wippel*, The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming.

[2] Here, and in what follows, I will follow the convention of italicizing words when they refer to notions, concepts, natures, or forms.

[3] On the former point regarding God as beyond *being*, see *Super librum De Causis expositio* (hereafter *In De causis*) (Fribourg-Louvain, 1954), prop. 6 (Saffrey 47:8–47). (For the Latin, see n. 4 below). On the latter point regarding 'Good' as the principal name of God, see n. ST I, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2 (Leon. 4.162). (For the Latin, see n. 5 below).

[4] *In De causis*, prop. 6 (Saffrey 47:8–47): 'Causa autem prima, secundum Platonicos quidem, est supra ens in quantum essentia bonitatis et unitatis, quae est causa prima, excedit etiam ipsum ens separatum, sicut supra dictum est. Sed secundum rei veritatem causa prima est supra ens in quantum est ipsum esse infinitum, ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse, et hoc est proportionatum intellectui nostro cuius obiectum est quod quid est ut dicitur in *III° De anima*, unde illud solum est capabile ab intellectu nostro quod habet quidditatem participantem esse; sed Dei quidditas est ipsum esse, unde est supra intellectum. Et per hunc modum inducit hanc rationem Dionysius I° capitulo *De divinis nominibus*, sic dicens: *Si cognitiones omnes existentium sunt, et si existentia finem habent*, in quantum scilicet finite participant esse, *qui est supra omnem substantiam ab omni cognitione est segregatus*'. Italics in original.

[5] In what follows, I will refer to the Pseudo-Dionysius by the name 'Dionysius'. For the aforementioned objection, see ST I, q. 13, a. 11, obj. 2 (Leon. 4.162): 'Praeterea, Dionysius dicit,

In this paper, I will offer some clarification of Aquinas's brief distinction by turning to his *Commentary on the Divine Names*. As I will show, his reading of Dionysius on the divine name of 'Good' is informed both by the terminist theory of semantics that Aquinas employs as well as his Aristotelian analysis of Dionysius regarding God's causality. To this end, my consideration of this topic will have four parts. (1) First, I will outline some of the major elements of Aquinas's terminist semantics. (2) Having done so, I will illustrate how that semantic theory factors into his use of the *triplex via* for naming God, a methodology that he finds in Dionysius. This consideration will reveal how Aquinas thinks we can predicate absolute affirmative names of God's very substance even though we do not know his essence, including the names of 'being' and 'good'. (3) I will then show why Aquinas considers the name 'He Who Is' to be the most proper name of God, while still acknowledging Dionysius's view of the name 'Good' as the principal divine *causal* name. (4) In the concluding section, I will address Aquinas's justification for this view of 'Good' as the principal causal name by looking at his Aristotelian-inspired interpretation of God as the cause of the goodness of things. Clarifying this point will help to reveal why, for Aquinas, from the perspective of God's causality, the divine name of 'Good' is prior even to that of 'He Who Is'.

Aquinas's Terminist Semantics

To begin to see how Aquinas thinks the names 'Good' and 'Being' can be predicated of God, we first need to consider, in general, his semantic theory of naming, which is informed both by Aristotle as well as the terminist logic of his day.[6] Like other terminists, Aquinas adopts Aristotle's semantic triangle, which holds that our spoken words signify conceptions of the intellect and that these concepts are, in turn, the

iii cap. *de Div. Nom.*, quod *boni nominatio est manifestativa omnium Dei processionum*. Sed hoc maxime Deo convenit, quod sit universale rerum principium. Ergo hoc nomen *bonum* est maxime proprium Dei, et non hoc nomen *Qui est*." Italics in original. For Aquinas's reply, see ST I, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2 (Leon. 4.162): "Ad secundum dicendum quod hoc nomen *bonum* est principale nomen Dei inquantum est causa, non tamen simpliciter: nam esse absolute praeintelligitur causae'.

[6] Espoused by such authors as Peter of Spain, William of Sherwood, and Lambert of Auxerre (Rosa E. Vargas Della Casa, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Apprehension of Being: The Role of Judgement in Light of Thirteenth-Century Semantics' [Dissertation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Marquette University, 2013], 25–26).

likenesses of things. For example, in English the term 'dog' is employed to signify *barking animal* (for want of a more precise definition).[7] This spoken and written word, of course, is a mere convention, since in other languages different spoken and written words are employed, such as 'Hund', 'chien', and 'canis'. Nevertheless, what these words in different languages are intended to signify is the same conception formed naturally regardless of the language of the speaker. And in Aquinas's view, that conception is itself the likeness of the extramental thing that the spoken and written word is intended to signify. Thus, in a mediated way, our words signify things.[8]

Here, we need to be careful to note that for the medievals, signification is not the same as meaning. Instead, signification entails what has been termed a 'psychologico-causal' property of terms.[9] Thus, the common account of signification for Aquinas along with other terminist contemporaries of his is that '"to signify is to establish an understanding" ("significare est intellectum constituere").'[10] In a mediated way, then, language is seen as connecting both speaker and listener to reality through its psychologico-causal role. Aquinas sums up this role when he observes that 'The *ratio* [account, analysis, *logos*] that a name signifies is a conception of the intellect *of* the "thing" (*res*) signified by the name'.[11] What Aquinas calls a name's *significatum* (that

[7] This definition (or description) of *dog* (viz. *animal latrabile*) is employed by no less than Aquinas himself. See, e.g. *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis* (hereafter *In Physicam*), vol. 2 in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1884, 1884), VII, lect. 8 (Leon. 2.354:8).

[8] *Expositio libri Peryermeneias* (hereafter *In Peri herm.*), 2nd ed., vol. 1*/1 in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* (Rome-Paris: Commissio Leonina-J. Vrin, 1989), I, lect. 2 (Leon. 1*1.9–13). To be precise, it is spoken words that immediately signify our concepts and through them extramental things; written words, in turn, are immediately signs of spoken words and through them signify extramental things through both spoken words and the concepts they signify.

[9] See Paul Vincent Spade, 'The Semantics of Terms', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 188. 'The psychological overtones of "to signify" are similar to those of the modern "to mean". Nevertheless, signification is not meaning. A term signifies that of which it makes a person think, so that, unlike meaning, signification is a species of the causal relation'. To say that the medieval account of signification is not the same as meaning is not to suggest that there is no understanding of the notion of meaning. Rather, 'meaning' is indicated by words like *sensus*, *sententia*, or *definitio*. See Umberto Eco, 'Denotation', in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*, ed. Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1989), 53.

[10] E.J. Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991): 44. This formulation is from Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*, 16b19–21.

[11] ST I, q. 13, a. 3 co. (Leon. 4.144): 'Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est conceptio intellectus de re significata per nomen' (Emphasis added in translation). Cf. ST I, q. 5, a. 2 (Leon. 4.58). 'Analysis' is Ashworth's preferred translation of *ratio* in these contexts (see Ashworth,

which is signified) is a *ratio* as it is conceptualized within the mind, but we should not take him to mean that the names that we speak are naming our concepts. Rather, given the semantic triangle, this conceptualization of the *ratio* is itself the likeness of some 'signified *thing*' (*res significata*), which is beyond the concept.[12] Paradigmatically, this *res significata* is something outside of the mind (*extra animam*), in reality (*in rerum natura*).[13]

Here, we need to be careful not to confuse the medieval account of signification with that of supposition, or reference. The extramental 'thing' (*res*) that a name signifies is typically not the same as what the name supposits for, or references.[14] If I say to you that 'A human is reading this article', the so-called 'thing signified' (*res significata*) of the term 'human' is not you, the reader. Instead, the term 'human' supposits for, or references, you in the context of my example proposition. But for Aquinas, what the term 'human' signifies is *human nature*.[15] In sum,

'Signification and Modes of Signifying', 50–52.).

A conception can be either simple or complex. A conception signified by a term (noun or verb) such as 'human' is simple; a conception signified by a proposition such as 'A human is an animal' is complex. In what follows, I will principally be concerned with simple conceptions. On the distinction between simple and complex conceptions, see In *Peri*. I.5 (Leon. 1*/1.29:277–86); ibid., I.6 (Leon. 1*/1.32:20–23); Vargas Della Casa, 'Apprehension of Being', 63–67.

[12] On the distinction between *significatum* and *res significata*, see Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying', 50–53.

[13] I say 'paradigmatically' because we can have meaningful language, for example, also about privations such as blindness and about fictional beasts such as the chimera. Still, as Ashworth observes, although there is debate among the medievals on aspects of signification theory, one point of agreement is that 'spoken words, with the obvious exception of syncategorematic terms such as "not" and of words picking out fictional or mental entities such as "chimera" and "concept", typically refer to things in the external world' (Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying', 45.). Regarding how there is meaningful signification not only in the cases of names for *entia rationis* such as privations and second intentions but also for names of fictions, see Gyula Klima, 'The Changing Role of *Entia Rationis* in Mediaeval Semantics and Ontology: A Comparative Study with a Reconstruction', *Synthese* 96, no. 1 (1993): 25–58; Gyula Klima, 'The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): esp. 91–97; Gyula Klima, 'Aquinas' Theory of the Copula and the Analogy of Being', *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 5 (2002): 159–76.

[14] See Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying', 52–53. There are occasions where the two—referent (*suppositum*) and *res significata*—coincide, such as when the name 'Socrates' is said of Socrates. In the context of such a proposition, the name signifies that to which it also refers.

[15] *Scriptum super Sententiis magistri Petri Lombardi* III (hereafter *Super Sententiis* III), ed. Maria Fabianus Moos, vol. 3 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1933), d. 6, q. 1, a. 2 ad 4 (Moos 3.231): 'Homo significat humanam naturam, et supponit pro subsistente in natura illa'. As noted above, I am following the convention of italicizing words when they reference a notion, concept, form, or *res significata*.

Note that whereas a term signifies in its own right, it supposits for (or references) something only in the context of a proposition. On the doctrine of supposition and its relation to signification, see Spade, 'The Semantics of Terms', 192–96; Henk J. M. Schoot, 'Aquinas and Supposition: The Possibilities and Limitations of Logic *In Divinis*', *Vivarium* 30 (1993): 193–225.

the so-called 'thing' that is signified by a name is neither an individual, nor a collection of individuals, but rather some form (nature, property, perfection). And, in fact, sometimes Aquinas will use as a synonym for *res significata* the expression *forma significata*.[16]

With the foregoing in mind, we see that Aquinas would consider the *res significata* of the term 'human' to be the form *humanity* (i.e. *humanness*). With that said, it is important to note that this form is also the *res significata* of the very term 'humanity'. In other words, both of these words—'human' and 'humanity'—signify the same *res*, although each does so in a different way, or mode. Here, we find another aspect of terminist semantics: words always signify their *res* according to some *modus significandi:* mode of signifying. Some of these modes are grammatical, identifying parts of speech inasmuch as they are parts of speech. For example, the terms 'white' and 'whiteness' both signify the formality of *whiteness*, but the former does so according to the grammatical mode of an adjective whereas the latter does so substantively according to the grammatical mode of a noun. By contrast, other *modi significandi* are logical modes, accounting for distinctions in signification between how terms sharing the same root signify the same *res*. Thus, if we consider again the terms 'white' and 'whiteness', the former signifies the formality of *whiteness* concretely whereas the latter signifies it abstractly. In a similar way, the term 'human' signifies the form *humanity* concretely whereas the term 'humanity' does so abstractly. For our own investigation of Aquinas on divine naming, we will need to consider the logical modes entailed in this distinction between concrete and abstract signification.[17]

Regarding these *modi significandi*, Aquinas indicates that there is a semantic triangle parallel to Aristotle's triangle concerning signification.

[16] Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying', 52–53; Klima, 'Semantic Principles', 103–106; Vargas Della Casa, 'Apprehension of Being', 53–54. Note, therefore, that in this semantic context the term '*res*' is not indicating the sense of *res* that is transcendental and convertible with *ens*. Moreover, it should also be noted that to say that the *res significata* of a word is some form is not to say that it is always some *metaphysical* form. For example, there is no extramental metaphysical form with terms for second intentions (like 'genus' and 'species'), privations (like 'blindness'), and fictions (like 'chimera;). On this point, see *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* (hereafter *De potentia*), 7.10 ad 8 in vol. 2, *Quaestiones disputatae*, 8th rev. ed., ed. M. Pession (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1949), 65; *Super Sententiis* I.19.5.1 (Mandonnet 1.486); Klima, "Semantic Principles," 107, n. 37; Vargas Della Casa, "Apprehension of Being," 59.

For Aquinas's use of the term *forma significata* as a synonym for *res significata*, see, e.g., *Super Sententiis* III, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5 (Moos 3.259–64).

[17] See Vargas Della Casa, 'Apprehension of Being', 40–41.

Just as words signify an extramental *res* in a mediated way via concepts, so too modes of signification follow upon extramental modes of existing (*modi essendi*) in a mediated way—namely, through modes of understanding (*modi intelligendi*).[18] In affirming this connection between this triad of modes—*significandi*, *intelligendi*, *essendi*—Aquinas shares something in common with the later speculative grammarians known as the *modistae*. But unlike the Modists, Aquinas does not, however, see a simple one-to-one isomorphism between *modi significandi* and *modi essendi*, even though modes of signification do have a foundation in reality.[19] For example, in reality, outside of the mind, human nature exists according to an individuated mode of existing, but according to our mode of understanding, that nature is understood in a universalised way. Hence, in the human intellect human nature takes on a universal *modus intelligendi*—a mode that in turn is reflected in the universal mode of signification belonging to the word 'human'. In Aquinas's estimation, Plato made the mistake of treating the *modus essendi* of forms as though in reality they had the same universal mode that they have in both intellect and in speech. What he misunderstood, in short, is that the mind not only reflects reality but also refracts it, giving those forms a mode in understanding and speech that they do not have in reality.

This is not to say, however, that Aquinas thinks that there is no connection whatsoever between modes of signification and modes of existing. On this point he is clear: words that signify their *res*, or formality, according to a concrete *modus significandi* paradigmatically do so because

[18] *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* (hereafter *In Metaphysicam*), ed. M.-R. Cathala and R.M. Spiazzi (1950; repr., Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1964), VII, lect. 1 (Marietti 317:1253). 'Licet modus significandi vocum non consequatur immediate modum essendi rerum, sed mediante modo intelligendi; quia intellectus sunt similitudines rerum, voces autem intellectuum, ut dicitur in primo *Perihermenias*'.

As Vargas Della Casa makes clear, for Aquinas modes of signification are not directly tied to grammatical properties of terms. Rather, 'The *modi significandi* of terms are for Aquinas first and foremost a function of our *modi intelligendi*.' See Vargas Della Casa, 'Apprehension of Being', 81.

[19] A clear example offered by Aquinas that there is not always a connection between a *modus significandi* and a corresponding *modus essendi* concerns abstract terms for an accident such as 'whiteness' (*albedo*). This term signifies *per modum substantiae*, because according to our *modus intelligendi* the intellect treats *whiteness* as *if* it were something subsistent. Nevertheless, its *modus essendi* is not that of a substance but of an accident. See *In Metaphysicam*, V, lect. 9 (Marietti 239:894).

On the tendency of the *Modistae* to treat speculative grammar as entailing an isomorphism between *modi significandi* and *modi essendi*, see Keith A. Buersmeyer, 'Aquinas on the "*Modi Significandi*"', *The Modern Schoolman* 64 (1987): 75–79.

of some extramental composition. We find this view exemplified with the term 'human': although it signifies the form *humanity*, it does so according to a concrete mode of signification. Thus, the complete *significatum* of the term 'human' is *a-haver-of-humanity* (*habens humanitatem*). Similarly, the concrete term 'white' (*album*) signifies *a-haver-of-whiteness* (*habens albedinem*).[20] In both cases, the formality that is signified (*humanity*, *whiteness*) is signified as *in* a haver—which is to say that, following from its mode of signification, the concrete term signifies a composition. To be more precise, Aquinas indicates that composition is not said to be signified by such terms but to be *con*signified.

In terminist semantics, consignification is a secondary, or additional, signification that is, as it were, an 'accidental property' of the term, which follows as a necessary consequence (*ex consequenti*) from a term's *modus significandi*.[21] Aquinas commonly speaks of consignification when discussing the nature of verbs: whereas verbs *principally* signify an action or a passion, by means of their tense they also *con*signify time.[22] In our examples of the concrete terms 'human' and 'white', which signify respectively the forms of *humanity* and *whiteness*, they do so according to a concrete mode of signification in such a way that what they principally signify, respectively, the simple whole that is *a-haver-of-humanity* or *a-haver-of-whiteness*. So, although these terms do not principally signify composition, given their concrete mode of signification, *ex consequenti* they *con*signify a composition between haver and had, i.e. between a subject and its form.

With the foregoing distinctions in mind concerning the notions of *res significata*, *modus significandi*, and consignification, we are now in a position to begin to consider how Aquinas synthesizes aspects of terminist semantics with Dionysian principles of divine naming. As we

[20] *Expositio Libri Boetii De Ebdomadibus*, vol. 50, Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1992), c. 2 (Leon. 50.272:129–31): 'Aliter autem se habet in hiis que significantur in concreto, nam homo significatur ut qui habet humanitatem, et album ut quod habet albedinem'.

[21] I am focusing in this paper on consignification as it occurs with categorematic terms. For a consideration of the consignification of syncategorematic terms (such as prepositions) along with an overview of consignification in general in Aquinas, see Vargas Della Casa, 'Apprehension of Being', 38–43, 103–109.

[22] In Peri herm., I, lect. 5 (Leon. 1*/1.25–31). Thus, the word 'runs' (*currit*) in the proposition 'Socrates runs' (*Socrates currit*) signifies the action of *running* (*currere*) and, inasmuch as it does so according to the present tense, the term 'runs' secondarily signifies that this action occurs in the present time.

will see, the semantic features that he identifies for categorial terms such as 'human' and 'white' are just as much features of the names of transcendental and pure perfections such as 'good', 'being', and 'wise' that Aquinas agrees with Dionysius can be predicated of God. Such divine naming thus raises the question of what and how they signify by means of their *res* and *modus*. Answering these questions will provide us with better insight into Aquinas's conclusions regarding the most proper name for God.

Signification and the Triplex Via

In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas considers the topic of the divine names in Question 13 of the Prima Pars. To be clear, the names with which Aquinas is primarily concerned in that *quaestio* are affirmative ones that are absolute rather than relative, which is to say that his focus there is not primarily on what he describes as God's causal names. In a way, causal names for God are treated in Question 2, Article 3 of the Prima Pars when Aquinas considers whether God exists and concludes at the end of each of his Five Ways that there must be some being who is a first cause and, hence, can be named as such, with names such as 'Prime Mover' (*primum movens*) or 'First Efficient Cause' (*prima causa efficens*).[23] Immediately following this article, Aquinas proceeds in Question 3 to show all of the ways in which such a being must be uncomposed, or simple, thereby providing the basis for negative names for God such as 'immaterial', 'immutable', 'eternal', and 'one' that he addresses in the ensuing questions and articles of the Prima Pars.[24] It is in Question 6 that Aquinas considers the affirmative name of 'Good' as said of God, presenting it—not as a causal name—but as an attribute of God's very essence.[25] Thus, we are told that *goodness* is 'in him in

[23] ST I, q. 2, a. 3 co. (Leon. 4.31–32).

[24] In q. 3 on God's simplicity, Aquinas first shows that God is not a body (a. 1). He proceeds in the remaining articles to show that the following compositions are absent from God: matter and form (a. 2), subject and quiddity (a. 3), essence and *esse* (a. 4), genus and difference (a. 5), as well as subject and accident (a. 6). Aquinas concludes the *quaestio* by showing that God must thus be entirely simple (a. 7) and that he does not enter into composition with his effects (a. 8). Having established God's simplicity, Aquinas proceeds to follow the *via negativa* to show that God is infinite (q. 7), immutable (q. 9), eternal (q. 10), and one (q. 11).

[25] ST I, q. 6, a. 3 co. (Leon. 4.68).

the most excellent way'[26] and that he is compared to all other goods 'by excess'.[27]

In the very presentation, then, of the first several Questions of the Prima Pars, we see Aquinas implicitly following the so-called *triplex via* for knowing and naming God, which consists of the ways of causality, negation, and eminence. From the times of his earliest writings, he attributes this threefold way of divine naming to Dionysius. Still, scholars debate about whether the way of eminence as he presents it in fact goes beyond the Areopagite's causal account of naming, for Aquinas asserts that following it we can, in a certain respect, predicate names of God's very substance.[28] This position raises the question of how such divine naming is possible given Aquinas's position that, in this lifetime, we cannot know God's essence. It is this question that Aquinas begins to address at the outset of Question 13.

In Article 1 of that *quaestio*, Aquinas considers how God is namable by us at all. To frame the problem, he reminds us of Aristotle's semantic triangle: our words are signs of our concepts, which in turn are the likenesses of things. Thus, our words signify through the mediation of our concepts. For example, he explains, we can know the nature, or essence, of a human, and that essence is expressed through the signification of the name 'human'. The reason this name can express human nature in this way, Aquinas explains, is that the name 'human' signifies the definition of this nature, thereby making it known (*declarentem*) to the listener. In support of this semantic point, he cites the Aristotelian position that the *ratio* that a name signifies is the definition.[29]

[26] ST I, q. 6, a. 2 co. (Leon. 4.67): 'Sic ergo oportet quod, cum bonum sit in Deo sicut in prima causa omnium non univoca, quod sit in eo excellentissimo modo. Et propter hoc dicitur summum bonum'.

[27] ST I, q. 6, a. 2, ad 3. (Leon. 4.67): 'Et sic comparatur ad alia per excessum. Et huiusmodi comparationem importat summum bonum'.

[28] For an overview of Dionysius on divine naming and Aquinas's adoption of his methodology, see Gregory P. Rocca, O.P., *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004). As Rocca notes, 'Aquinas will often interpret the Dionysian maxim about God's absolute unknowability to mean something quite different from what Dionysius originally intended. Aquinas will also elicit a threefold path from the statements of Dionysius, and he will tend to emphasize a domesticated version of the Dionysian via negativa, inasmuch as in his hands it becomes a "way" comfortably at ease within the contours of his positive theology' (*Speaking the Incomprehensible God*, 25). On Aquinas's adoption and adaptation of the *triplex via* that he finds in Dionysius, see also Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1992), esp. 31–41.

[29] ST I, q. 13, a. 1 co. (Leon. 4.139–40). See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III, c. 7 (1012a20–24).

But, as Aquinas reminds us, he has just shown in the prior *quaestio* that we cannot know God's essence in this lifetime.[30] Does this mean that we cannot speak of him at all? On the contrary. Although naming presupposes and is mediated by knowledge, naming does not require knowledge of a thing's very essence. Rather, something can be named by us to the *degree* (*secundum quod*) that it is known by us. Aquinas notes that even though we cannot know God as he is in himself, we nevertheless can know him from creatures (i.e. his effects), namely, by knowing their relation to him as their causal source (*habitudinem principii*), and also by way of acknowledging the excellence of that source as well as how it is not like these effects—in other words, by means of the *triplex via*. Aquinas concludes that in this way, we can name God from our knowledge of his creatures, although not such that these names taken from these effects, in signifying God, express his essence as it is in itself.[31] When we turn to the objections offered in this article, we find the first of them quoting Dionysius to the effect that there can be no name of God. Aquinas indicates, however, that this observation should not be taken too strictly: the reason that God is said not to have a name or is said to be above naming is that his essence is above everything that we understand about God and signify about him by means of words.[32] In other words, it is not to say that God is entirely unnameable in any respect.

This fact is brought out in the reply to the next objection; there, Aquinas reaffirms that we can, to a degree, know and name God, namely, from our knowledge of and language about material creatures. He points out, however, that these sorts of beings are not subsistent forms; hence, they are perfect (complete) and subsistent only as composites. For this reason, in them form is not *what* exists (*quod*); rather, it is that *by which* something exists (*quo*). Aquinas indicates that this metaphysical characteristic of the forms of composite beings is reflected in our very language. Whenever we use a word to signify something as a complete and subsisting entity, we use a concrete name that pertains to the composite (think of our earlier example of 'white' as pertaining to *a-haver-of-whiteness*). By contrast, when we employ a

[30] ST I, q. 12, aa. 11–12 (Leon. 4.134–37).
[31] ST I, q. 13, a. 1 co. (Leon. 4.139–40).
[32] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, obj. 1 & ad 1 (Leon. 4.162). See *De divinis nominibus*, c. 1.

name to signify a simple form, it does not signify that form as subsisting but as that *by which* something is. As an example, he gives the name 'whiteness', which indeed signifies a form but, to be precise, signifies it as that *by which* something is white.[33]

Herein lies the semantic problem for us in naming God. Like the created composite beings that we know and name, God subsists; but *unlike* them, he is a simple form. To express this simplicity, therefore, we need to use abstract names. Still, unlike the simple forms that we customarily name, which are not subsistent (such as *whiteness*), God is subsistent. To express this subsistence and perfection, we need to use concrete names. Aquinas clearly thinks both sorts of names signify something about God. But he also makes clear that 'both [sorts of names] fall short of his mode [of existing], just as in this life, our intellect does not know him'.[34]

Here, we return to the terminist semantics implicitly employed by Aquinas, namely with the distinction between concrete and abstract naming. It is a distinction that he brings out more explicitly in the earlier *Summa contra gentiles*. There, in Book I, c. 30, we again find him considering the topic of divine naming. He begins by reminding us that every perfection found in creatures is found in God, albeit in a more eminent way. So, the names that designate those perfections can be predicated of God. Some of these names, however, express a perfection that is properly said of creatures, such as names designating a species (e.g. 'stone' of *stone*), or those designating a property caused by the principles of the species (e.g. 'hardness' said of the *hardness* of a stone). Such names can be said of God only metaphorically, just as 'hardness' can be said metaphorically of a human. The implication is that included in these sorts of names is the imperfection of composition. But other names, Aquinas explains, designate a perfection without the defect of composition that can be said of God non-metaphorically, or literally. These are said of him supereminently in such a way that they are said of God alone, e.g. 'Highest Good' (*summum bonum*), 'First Being' (*primum ens*), and so forth.[35]

[33] ST I, q. 13, a. 1, ad 2 (Leon. 4.139–40).

[34] ST I, q. 13, a. 1, ad 2 (Leon. 4.139–40): "quamvis utraque nomina deficiant a modo ipsius, sicut intellectus noster non cognoscit eum ut est, secundum hanc vitam."

[35] SCG, I, c. 30 (Marietti 2.42–43:275–276).

How, we might ask, can these names signify a perfection without indicating defect? Aquinas tells us: as regards *what* the name is used to signify—in other words, as regards the *res significata*. Nevertheless, even names said supereminently of God fall short of fully expressing him because of their *mode* of signification (*modus significandi*). And he reminds us that the mode by which a name expresses its *res significata* follows the mode according to which the form is conceived by the intellect: the *modus intelligendi*. Offering further clarification, Aquinas notes that the starting point of all human knowledge is sensation; for this reason, our intellect can never transcend the mode of existing found in sensible things. '[I]n them', he explains, 'there is a distinction between form and the *haver* of the form'.[36] Their form is indeed simple, but it is imperfect because it is not subsisting, instead having 'concretion' (*concretio*). It is for this reason that, as we saw him explain in the *Summa theologiae*, whatever our intellect signifies as subsisting, it does according to a concrete mode of signification, which is to say as composed. By contrast, what it signifies as simple, it signifies as that *by which* something is (*quo est*) rather than as *that which is* (*quod est*).

In sum, the mode of signification of our words necessarily follows our mode of understanding. Consequently, there is imperfection found in every supereminent name said of God due to the *modus significandi* of the name. Aquinas is clear, however, that there is *no* imperfection found in its *res significata*, since *that* belongs to God in an eminent way. By way of example, he gives the names of 'good' (*bonum*) and 'goodness' (*bonitas*). Both signify the *res significata* of the formality that is *goodness*. Granting that the name 'goodness' signifies its *res significata* as a simple form, Aquinas makes clear that it nevertheless necessarily does so following our mode of understanding, which is to say that the abstract mode of the signification of this name does not signify *goodness* as something that subsists. By contrast, the concrete name 'good', does signify God's goodness as subsistent, but it does so by concretion as *con*signifying composition rather than simplicity.[37]

Having presented the foregoing semantic analysis, Aquinas concludes as follows:

[36] SCG, I, c. 30 (Marietti 2.43:277): "[I]n quibus aliud est forma et habens formam, propter formae et materiae compositionem."

[37] SCG, I, c. 30 (Marietti 2.43:277).

> [I]n this respect, no name is fittingly applied to God, but only with respect to that to which the name was applied to signify. Therefore, as Dionysius teaches, such names can be affirmed *and* denied of God. They can be *affirmed* on account of the *ratio* of the name, but they can be *denied* on account of [their] mode of signification.[38]

Aquinas ends this chapter of the *Contra gentiles* by noting that the only way we can apply names to signify the mode of supereminence of the perfection as found in God is either by negation or by (causal) relation. We should recall here Aquinas's position that modes of signification *follow upon* modes of existence (*modi essendi*) but as mediated by modes of understanding. It is because we cannot know God's supereminent *modus essendi* that our words have no mode of signification that correspond to that divine mode of existence. Or, as Aquinas puts it here, 'For we cannot grasp *what* God is, but [only] what he is not and how other [things] are related to him […]'.[39]

If we return to the Prima Pars of the *Summa theologiae*, we find Aquinas offering similar words shortly after having offered his famous Five Ways. Having shown *that* God is, Aquinas next tells us in his prologue to Question 3 that we cannot follow the usual Aristotelian scientific methodology that would entail investigating *how* he is and *what* he is "rather, because we cannot know *what* he is, but [only] what he is *not*, we cannot consider *how* God is, but rather how he is *not*."[40] On the face of it, this final statement would seem to be an endorsement of a thoroughgoing apophatic theology on Aquinas's part. If we recall Article 1 of Questions 13, Aquinas had said there that no name that we give to God can express the divine essence as it is in itself. With that in mind, we might then be surprised to find him telling us in Article 2 that absolute affirmative names for God, such as 'good' and 'wise',

[38] SCG, I, c. 30 (Marietti 2.43:277): 'Et quantum ad hoc nullum nomen Deo convenienter aptatur, sed solum quantum ad id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur. Possunt igitur, ut Dionysius docet, huiusmodi nomina et affirmari de Deo et negari: affirmari quidem, propter nominis rationem; negari vero, propter significandi modum'. See Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* I, 5; *De caelesti hierarchia* II, 3.

[39] SCG, I, c. 30 (Marietti 2.43:278) : 'Non enim de Deo capere possumus quid est, sed quid non est, et qualiter alia se habeant ad ipsum […].'

[40] ST I, q. 3, prologus (Leon. 4.35): 'Cognito de aliquo an sit, inquirendum restat quomodo sit, ut sciatur de eo quid sit. Sed quia de Deo scire non possumus quid sit, sed quid non sit, non possumus considerare de Deo quomodo sit, sed potius quomodo non sit'.

signify the divine substance and are predicated of God *substantially*, even though they fall short of fully representing him.

There, he critiques the view of Moses Maimonides and of others who hold that such names are merely disguised negative or causal names. Aquinas insists that to say that 'God is good' is not simply to say that 'God is not bad' or that 'He causes good things'. (God causes bodies, but for all that, we do not calls him 'a body'). Instead, these absolute affirmative names signify God's very substance; still, they do so only inasmuch as our intellect knows him from creatures and to the degree that they represent him. They are able to do so because God precontains in himself all creaturely perfections. This is a point that he has already shown earlier in Question 4 when considering God's perfection; there, Aquinas enunciates a key axiomatic principle in his metaphysical thought: every agent makes something like itself (*omne agens agit sibi simile*).[41] God's effects must therefore be like God, and since those effects represent God, a knowledge of them reveals something about him. Nevertheless, they do not represent him as though belonging to the same genus or species 'but rather as an excelling principle, from the form of which effects fall short, and yet from which a certain likeness follows'. Thus, although these absolute affirmative names, like 'good', do signify the divine substance, they do so imperfectly.[42]

In this way, we see, Aquinas both adheres to and seemingly goes beyond Dionysius: absolute affirmative names said eminently of God, such as 'good' and 'being', are not causal names, even though they presuppose the way of causality. As Aquinas explains, 'it does not follow that it belongs to God to be good inasmuch as he causes goodness, but rather the converse: because he is good, he pours forth goodness into things […]'.[43] As regards Dionysius's position that God is named from his processions, Aquinas agrees, but he makes clear that to say that

[41] ST I, q. 4, a. 2 co. (Leon. 4.51–52). For a consideration of Aquinas's use of this axiom regarding the naming of God, see John F. Wippel, 'Thomas Aquinas on Our Knowledge of God and the Axiom That Every Agent Produces Something Like Itself', in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 152–71.

[42] ST I, q. 13, a. 2 co. (Leon. 4.142): 'non tamen ita quod repraesentet eum sicut aliquid eiusdem speciei vel generis, sed sicut excellens principium, a cuius forma effectus deficiunt, cuius tamen aliqualem similitudinem effectus consequuntur'.

[43] ST I, q. 13, a. 2 co. (Leon. 4.142): 'Unde ex hoc non sequitur quod Deo competat esse bonum inquantum causat bonitatem, sed potius e converso, quia est bonus, bonitatem rebus diffundit, secundum illud Augustini, *de Doct. Christ., inquantum bonus est, sumus*'. Italics in original.

these names are taken from (*imponuntur a*) those processions is not to say that they are used (*imponuntur ad*) to signify those processions. For example, he notes, when we say 'God lives', we do not mean that 'life proceeds from him'. Instead, we mean to signify God as the very principle of things *insofar as life preexists in him*, although in a more eminent way than we can understand or signify.[44]

How then can names such as 'good' and 'life' be predicated of God substantially? In asserting that the *res significata* of these terms as said of God does not imply defect, is Aquinas tacitly sneaking essential predication back into the way of eminence despite explicitly rejecting such predication? Not if we consider his position about the role of modes of signification in the signification of our words. They are not merely tacked on to the *res significata* as an addendum but rather express the very way we know the formalities expressed through the *res significata*. As human knowers, we cannot help but think and speak according to either an abstract or concrete mode of understanding and signification. Going beyond the text of Aquinas, we might consider as a comparative analogy the visible behavior of light. As physicists have shown, light can be observed as behaving either as a particle or as a wave. But imagine being told that there is also a transcending form of visible light, of which the observable behaviors of both particle and wave must be denied. Presumably, if such light were visible, it would not be visible to us.

I take it that in a parallel way, for Aquinas, both concrete and abstract modes of signification must be denied when predicating affirmative absolute names said of God. Thus, in saying that names such as 'good' and 'life' can be said of God's substance, Aquinas is not saying that they signify his essence in such a way that they adequately express it: the denial of both concrete and abstract modes of signification when naming God leaves our expressions incomplete, reflecting our inadequate mode of understanding him. Saying that these names name God's substance is merely to acknowledge the fact of the matter: God is called 'good' in his very essence, and not merely as the cause of good things, but the *modus essendi* of his goodness cannot be adequately expressed because it cannot adequately be known.

[44] ST I, q. 13, a. 2, ad 2 (Leon. 4.142).

Thus far I have been focusing on Aquinas's example of the name 'good'. But as I noted at the outset, he does not consider this to be the most proper name of God. That he instead identifies as *Qui est*: 'He Who Is'. Aquinas sees this name, as with the name 'Good', as naming the diving substance. And yet, following Dionysius, Aquinas considers both names in another respect to be causal names as well. It is from that perspective, we will find, that he sees considers the divine name of 'Good' to be the principal name of God, prior even to the name 'He Who Is'.

'He Who Is' as the Most Proper Name of God

It is in the eleventh article of Question 13 in the Prima Pars that Aquinas asks which of the divine names is the 'most proper name of God' (*maxime proprium nomen dei*). We should note that in asking this question, Aquinas is not asking what the most *appropriate* name is for God. In this semantic context, a name described as 'proper' is instead the name of a particular individual, as with the name 'Socrates'.[45] Such names stand in contrast to appellative names (common nouns), such as 'human' or 'animal'. Why then speak of a '*most* proper name'? The reason is that, when it comes to God, we can have no name for him as a singular since we do not know him in his essence. As Aquinas makes clear in Article 8, even the name 'God' is the name of a nature (viz. *divinity*), and following the concrete *modus significandi* names him as a haver, or subject, of that nature (*habens divnitatem*).[46] In Article 11, he indicates that the closest thing to a proper name of God, which would be entirely incommunicable and designate him as a singular, might be the Tetragrammaton of the Hebrews. As with Maimonides, whose account of this name he read, Aquinas is unaware of its connection to God's pronouncement to Moses in *Exodus* that his name is 'I am who am'. Both thinkers instead see the Tetragrammaton as a distinctive name. (And one, moreover, that is presumably unpronounceable).[47]

[45] Which, if, said of another individual is said equivocally.

[46] ST I, q. 13, a. 8 (Leon. 4.157–58). Again, we find signification according to a concrete mode, reflecting the limitations of our knowledge and language. The concrete term '*deus*', or 'God', signifies him as something subsistent, but according to the concrete mode of composition, which is a mode that must be denied of him.

[47] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, ad 1 (Leon. 4.162). Aquinas also briefly mentions the incommunicability of the Tetragrammaton as a name for God in a. 9 of q. 13 (Leon. 4.159). Regarding Aquinas's

It is in light of these limitations on our language that Aquinas identifies 'He Who Is' as the *most* proper name: i.e. the closest approximation to a proper name. This is the case, he tells us, for three reasons: given (1) the name's signification, (2) its universality, and (3) its consignification. As regards its signification, Aquinas reminds us that everything is named from (*denominatur*) its form. This name 'He Who Is', however, does not signify any form but, instead, signifies *esse* itself. Now, God's *esse* is his very essence, which is unique to God. Thus, among all other names, this one most properly names God. The second reason Aquinas gives is the universality of this name. All other names are either less universal or add on another notion (*ratio*) to that of *being*. Since any determinate mode according to which we understand God falls short of him, Aquinas explains that the less determinate a name is, the more universal and absolute it is, and the more it is properly said of God. The name 'He Who Is', however, does not name any determinate mode of existing but is related to all of them, so from this perspective, it is again recognized as the most proper name for God. Finally, the third reason Aquinas gives follows from the consignification of this name. Recall that the consignification of a word is like a secondary signification (implied, as it were), following necessarily from the principal signification of the word. Thus, verbs principally signify either action or passion, but given their tense they also consignify time. As regards the name 'He Who Is', Aquinas explains, it principally signifies existence, but it does so with a verb in the present tense, and in that way it *con*signifies according to the mode of *present* existence, and this mode of existence, again, is most properly said of God because his existence knows no past or future.[48]

Going beyond the text, it is worth noting that the name 'He Who Is' is clearly not as such a causal name because its signification does not indicate any relation of God to creatures as his effects. If we analyze the name semantically, we find that its *res signifcata*, is *esse*: the act of existing. And it signifies this *res* according to a concrete mode, consignifying a *haver*, or subject, of existence. In this way, the name signifies the subsistence of its referent. This absolute (i.e. non-relative) character of the name is a point of concern raised in one Dionysian

use and understanding of the Tetragrammaton, see Armand Maurer C.S.B., 'St. Thomas on the Sacred Name "Tetragrammaton"', *Mediaeval Studies* 34 (1972): 275–86.

[48] ST I, q. 13, a. 11 co. (Leon. 4.162).

inspired objection in this article, which observes that since God is known to us only through creatures (i.e. his effects), every divine name, it would seem, should signify (*importare*) a relation to effects. But, the objection continues, this is not the case with the name 'He Who Is', so it does not seem to be the most proper name of God.[49] In reply, Aquinas clarifies with a Dionysian inspired response that not every divine name needs to signify a relation to creatures. All that is required is that these names be taken from (*imponantur ab*) perfections proceeding from God into creatures. And among them the first procession is *esse*, existence, from which the name 'He Who Is' is taken.[50]

We find Dionysius's authority explicitly cited in the second objection of this article. There, we are reminded of Dionysius's words from Book III of the *Divine Names* 'The name of "Good" is manifestive of all of God's processions'.[51] Therefore, it is argued, the most proper name for God should, in fact, be the name 'Good'. And it is in response to this objection that we find Aquinas telling us that 'the name "good" is the principal name of God inasmuch as he is a cause; nevertheless, not absolutely (*simpliciter*), since *existence* (*esse*) is understood prior to [the understanding] of *cause*'.[52] As is often the case in the *Summa theologiae*, his response is brief. As such, it raises a number of questions: Why is it that 'good' is the principal name of God causally considered? Does this mean that, in this respect, this name is prior even to the name 'He Who Is'? Moreover, if Aquinas views the name 'good' as said of God to be among his absolute and affirmative names, how can it also be a relative causal name? To answer these questions, we need to go beyond this text to look at what Aquinas says elsewhere on this topic, notably, in his Commentary on Dionysius's *Divine Names*.[53]

[49] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, obj. 3 (Leon. 4.162).
[50] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, ad 3 (Leon. 4.162).
[51] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, obj. 2 (Leon. 4.162). For the Latin, see n. 5 above.
[52] ST I, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2 (Leon. 4.162). For the Latin, see n. 5 above.
[53] At long last a much needed English translation of Aquinas's Commentary has appeared in print, translated and edited by Michael A. Augros, which includes as well a translation of John the Saracen's Latin translation of the *De divinis nominibus* employed by Aquinas; in addition, this volume includes the Latin for both Aquinas's and the Saracen texts: Thomas Aquinas, *An Exposition of "The Divine Names," The Book of Blessed Dionysius*, trans. Michael A. Augros (Merrimack, NH: Thomas More College Press, 2021).

'Good' as the Principal Causal Name of God

In his preface to this Commentary, Aquinas observes that the reader encounters certain difficulties in reading this work, one of which is that Dionysius 'frequently employs the style and manner of speaking used by the Platonists, to which moderns are unaccustomed'.[54] In saying this, Aquinas is by no means indicating that he himself considers Dionysius to be a Platonist. Rather, as he tells us later in the Commentary, in a way Dionysius agrees with the Platonists and in another disagrees with them. He agrees with them, for example, in positing a separately existing perfections such as Life Itself (*vita separata per se existens*), Wisdom (*sapientia*), *Esse*, and other such perfections. But he disagrees with the Platonists that these separate principles are distinct from each other. Instead, Dionysius holds that they are all in reality one principle, which is God.[55] Elsewhere, Aquinas strikingly tells us that 'Dionysius almost everywhere follows Aristotle, as is clear from a careful inspection of his books'.[56] How strictly we should take this claim as Aquinas's considered view is debatable, particularly since this observation appears in a youthful work; suffice it to say that he at least attributes to Dionysius certain Aristotelian viewpoints, as Aquinas does on the topic of the causality of God as the Good.

In our consideration of Aquinas's reading of Dionysius on the divine name of 'good', it is important that we start by acknowledging what Aquinas acknowledges: as regards Dionysius's treatment of any of the divine names in this work, 'it is not his intention to manifest the ineffable essence of God as it is in itself […]'.[57] Instead, Aquinas explains, Dionysius's intention is 'to praise God with the name "good" inasmuch as he is the cause *of all goods*; and with the name of "existence" inasmuch as *he makes* every *substance*; and with the name of "life" inasmuch as *he gives life* to everything; and the name of "wisdom" inasmuch as he gives

[54] *In De div. nom.*, Proemium (Marietti 1.II.a): "*Primo*, quidem, quia plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur platonici, qui apud modernos est inconsuetus."

[55] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 235:634).

[56] *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis II* (hereafter Super Sententiis II), ed. P. Mandonnet, vol. 2 (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929), d. 14, q. 1, a. 2 co. (Mandonnet 2.350): 'Basilius enim et Augustinus et plures sanctorum sequuntur in philosophicis quae ad fidem non spectant, opiniones Platonis: et ideo ponunt caelum de natura quatuor elementorum. Dionysius autem fere ubique sequitur Aristotelem, ut patet diligenter inspicienti libros ejus: unde ipse separat corpora caelestia ab aliis corporibus'.

[57] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 233:618): 'Et quia, sicut iam dixit non est suae intentionis ineffabilem Dei essentiam manifestare secundum quod in se est […]'.

wisdom'.[58] In short, whereas Aquinas himself in the Question 13 of the Prima Pars treats these very names as absolute affirmative names that signify the divine substance itself, he acknowledges here that in this text Dionysius is himself treating them, if not as causal names, at least from the *perspective of* their causality.[59]

Looking at the Saraccenus Latin translation of the *Divine Names*, Aquinas finds Dionysius in Chapter I addressing how God can be named and telling us that '[s]ince, as the essence of goodness, through [its] very being (*esse*), he is the cause of all existing [things], it is fitting to praise the providence of the Thearchy, principle of the good, from all caused things'.[60] Aquinas sees Dionysius here as presenting God as the very essence of goodness. It is precisely as such, Aquinas explains, that God is a cause of all things by his very being rather than by a created disposition. Thus, in himself, God prepossess the likeness of all of his effects. And every cause, Aquinas explains, can be named by the name of its effect to the degree that it is has in itself the likeness of its effects.[61] Here, we begin to find Aquinas applying Aristotelian notions of causality in his reading of Dionysius regarding the name 'good' as said of God. Taken causally, any good as such has the nature (*ratio*) of an end, he explains, because the good is what everything desires. And since the end is first among the (four) causes, it is the cause to which the nature (*ratio*) of causation belongs first.[62]

Dionysius himself turns his attention to the divine name of 'good' in Chapter 3 of his work. There, he tells us, 'And first, if it seems [right], we will first looks at the name of "good", perfect and manifestive of all of the processions of God, invoking the Trinity, principle of the good and the Supergood, which is manifestive of all of the providences generously

[58] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 232:611): 'Intentio ergo praesentis sermonis est laudare Deum nomine boni, secundum quod est causa *omnium bonorum*; et nomine existentis, secundum quod *facit* omnem *substantiam*; et nomine vitae, secundum quod *vificat* omnia; et nomine sapientiae, secundum quod dat sapientiam'. Italics in original and in my translation indicate Aquinas's quotation of Dionysius.

[59] See, e.g., *Divinis Nominibus*, c. 1 where Dionysius speaks of God as 'essentia bonitas' *Div. nom*. c. 1 in *In De div. nom.*, (Marietti 25:24).

[60] *Div. nom*. c. 1 in *In De div. nom.*, (Marietti 25:24): 'Quoniam autem, sicut bonitatis essential, per ipsum esse, omnium est existentium causa, boni principem Thearchiae providentiam, ex omnibus causatis laudare convenit'.

[61] *In De div. nom.*, c. 1, lect. 3 (Marietti 28–29:88).

[62] *In De div. nom.*, c. 1, lect. 3 (Marietti 28:87).

bestowed from it'.[63] Aquinas is well aware that among the Platonists, the name 'good' is the principal name for the first cause, or God. For this reason, he indicates that if we are to understand Dionysius's ordering of the name 'good' as the first of the divine names, we should first consider why the Platonists viewed the Good as the first cause. Referencing Aristotle's *Physics*, Aquinas notes that the Platonists did not distinguish matter from privation. As a result, they viewed matter as nonbeing.[64] Thus, when they considered the causality of the separate form of Being, the Platonists held that its causality extended only to beings and, thus, did not extend to prime matter, to which the causality of the Good, by contrast, did extend. A sign of this causal extension, he explains, is that matter most of all desires the Good. We are then told that it is the property of an effect that through desire it should turn back toward its cause. So, since for the Platonists the causality of the Good extended to more things than did the causality of Being, they considered it to be a more universal and higher cause than the form of Being. [65]

Aquinas then explains that Dionysius himself seems to touch on this Platonic point in a following chapter (which we will turn to momentarily), but he indicates that Dionysius in fact had a different rationale for viewing the name 'good' as first among God's names. Aquinas reminds us again: 'In this book, [Dionysius] intends to treat the divine names manifesting the processions of creatures from God inasmuch as he is the cause of things'.[66] Aquinas adds, moreover, that what has the nature (*ratio*) of a cause first and universally is *that which is good* (*bonum*). And he gives two reasons for this claim. The first reason is that a good as such has the nature of an end and, thus, the nature of a cause. Explaining this position in more detail, Aquinas adds that form is a cause insofar as it makes matter to be in act and matter is made to be in act first when, by some agent, it begins to be. The second reason Aquinas offers is that an agent makes something like itself—not inasmuch as the agent is a being in any respect whatsoever—but rather

[63] *Div. nom.* c. 3 in *In De div. nom.*, (Marietti 71:78): 'Et primam, si videtur, perfectam et totarum Dei processionum manifestativum, boni nominationem inspiciemus, boni principem et superbonam invocantes Trinitatem, quae est manifestativa totarum providentiarum, benigne ab ipsa donatarum'.

[64] *In De div. nom.*, c. 3, lect. 1 (Marietti 75:226).

[65] *In De div. nom.*, c. 3, lect. 1 (Marietti 75:226).

[66] *In De div. nom.*, c. 3, lect. 1 (Marietti 75:227): 'Intendit enim in hoc libro agree de divinis Nominibus manifestantibus processions creaturarum a Deo, secundum quod est Causa rerum'.

inasmuch as the agent is *perfect*. And here he cites Aristotle to the effect that whatever is perfect can make something like itself. Therefore, the perfect has the nature (*ratio*) of that which is good.[67]

With the foregoing reasons in mind, Aquinas tells us that whatever God causes in creatures—whether it is existing (*esse*), living (*vivere*), or anything else—the whole of it proceeds from the divine goodness and the whole of it pertains to the goodness of creatures. Thus, he concludes that Dionysius 'says that naming is perfect inasmuch as it comprehends everything and is manifestive of all of the divine processions'.[68] In sum, we are told that it is for the two reasons mentioned, drawn from an Aristotelian account of causality, that Dionysius places the name of 'good' as first in the order of divine names.

Dionysius himself addresses the name of 'good' in greater detail in Chapter 4, followed in Chapter 5 with a consideration of the name 'being' (*existens* in the Sarracenus edition: *that which exists*). At the outset of commenting on the latter chapter, Aquinas now attributes something of the Platonic position that he had mentioned earlier to Dionysius's ordering of the divine names. He tells us that the Areopagite treats the name 'good' as prior to that of 'being' (*ens*) because, as the Platonists said, *good* extends to more than *being*. Here, the reason Aquinas gives is that even that which is not existing in act, namely a being in potency, is good from the fact that it has an order to good and, thus, has the nature (*ratio*) of something good. This is to say, he explains, that it participates in the causality of the *good*; by contrast, the same being in potency participates in the causality of *being* (only) when it comes to be in act.[69] A few paragraphs later, Aquinas presents this greater universality of *good* as follows:

> The name of 'good' manifests all processions of the universal essence of things and extends itself both to "beings" (*existentia*) and to 'nonbeings', (*non existentia*) insofar as nonbeings have something of the good, inasmuch as they are in potency to existence (*esse*). But the name of 'being' (*nomen entis*) manifests

[67] *In De div. nom.*, c. 3, lect. 1 (Marietti 75:227).

[68] *In De div. nom.*, c. 3, lect. 1 (Marietti 75:228): 'Et ideo dicit quod nomination est perfecta, inquantum omnia comprehendit et est manifestative omnium divinarum *processionum*.' Italics in original.

[69] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 231:606).

> the procession of existence from God into 'all' beings, but inasmuch as it is said of God, 'it is above' all 'existing things'.[70]

Although there is no explicit mention of matter in this text, the reference is clear. And this reading is confirmed if we return to the Prima Pars of the *Summa theologiae*. There, when considering goodness in general in Question 5, Aquinas tells us in Article 2 that the notion (*ratio*) of *being* (*ens*) is prior to that of *good* (*bonum*). The first objection in this article cites the authority of Dionysius, noting that he tells us in Book 3 of the *Divine Names* that *good* is prior to *being*. In response, Aquinas as before notes that Dionysius considers the order of the divine names according to a relation to God as cause, since we name God from his effects. Since *good* has the nature (*ratio*) of the desirable, the name signifies the relation of a final cause, whose causality is first among causes and is the cause of causes. Thus, the causality of *good* is prior to that of *being*, just as the causality of an end is prior to that of a form. Thus, Aquinas says, 'for this reason among the names signifying the divine causality, "good" is placed prior to "being"'.

In the course of his reply, he again references the Platonists, noting that they did not distinguish matter from privation. Thus, they said that matter is nonbeing and that the participation of the Good extended to more than did the participation of Being. At this point, Aquinas makes a subtle unspoken shift to an Aristotelian reading of prime matter as pure potency, noting: 'For prime matter participates in the *good* because it desires it […]: but it does not participate in *being* since it is posited as nonbeing'. Aquinas tells us that this is why Dionysius says that 'the good extends to beings and to nonbeings'.[71] In short, he presents Dionysius as accounting for the greater universality of the name 'good' as a divine name due to the extension of God's goodness to the sort of nonbeing

[70] *In De div. nom.*, c. 5, lect. 1 (Marietti 232:610): '[N]omen *boni* manifestat omnes processus universalis essentiae rerum et extendit se tam *ad existentia*, quam *ad non existentia*, inquantum non existentia habent aliquid boni, prout sunt in potentia ad esse. Nomen vero entis designat processum essendi a Deo in *omnia* entia et secundum quod de Deo dicitur, *est super* omnia *existentia*'. Italics in original, indicating quotation of Dionysius.

[71] ST I, q. 5, a. 2 ad 1 (Leon. 4.58): 'Nam materia prima participat bonum, cum appetat ipsum (nihil autem appetit nisi simile sibi): non autem participat ens, cum ponatur non ens. Et ideo dicit Dionysius [*De div. nom.*, c. 5] quod *bonum extenditur ad non existentia*'. It is in reply to the second objection that Aquinas explicitly brings out the role of prime matter as pure potency in this consideration.

that is the pure potency of prime matter, and this causality is greater in extension than that of *being*.

With that said, we should be aware that even though Aquinas expresses agreement with Dionysius on this distinction in the context of the order and hierarchy of God's names taken causally, he does not mean to suggest that the causality of God's very being is somehow subordinate to that of his goodness since, absolutely considered, God's goodness is in reality identical with his very being inasmuch as he is *esse subsistens*. Thus, for God to cause through his goodness is to cause through his being.

Conclusion

From what we have seen, Aquinas subordinates 'Being' as the name of God to that of 'Good' insofar as both are considered to follow the Way of Causality. Since God's exemplar causality of creatures extends only to beings that exist in actuality, prime matter as pure potency is not a causal procession of God considered as *being*. But since prime matter *is* ordered to the good, Aquinas agrees with Dionysius that it is a procession of God's *goodness*. Hence, the name 'Good' as said of God acknowledges that this causality extends to the procession both of actual being and of the sort of nonbeing that is being in potency. It is from the perspective of this greater universal causality of the divine goodness that Aquinas considers the divine name of 'Good' to be the principal name of God, rather than 'He Who Is'.

If, however, we consider Aquinas's adoption and adaptation of the Dionysian *triplex via*, we see in his treatment of these two names for God an analysis not only according to the way of causality but also according to the way of eminence. Thus, if we consider what these names signify absolutely in themselves—i.e. in light of their respective *res significatae*—we find that even though they are first taken from their effects, these names nevertheless signify for Aquinas God's very substance rather than him as cause. For God exists and is good by his very essence, which is to say that he *is* and is good absolutely and not merely in relation to his effects. Thus, unlike other causal names such as 'Prime Mover' and 'First Efficient Cause', the names of 'Being' and 'Good' can also be said of God—and, indeed, are primarily said

of him—according to the way of eminence. It is because these two names can be considered from these two perspectives, therefore, that Aquinas can without contradiction follow in the Platonic tradition of acknowledging the name of 'Good' as God's principal name while simultaneously affirming his most proper name, absolutely considered, to be 'He Who is'.[72]

[72] I would like to thank my research assistant, Jane Spencer, for her assistance in researching this paper.

Gothic Fireflies: The Trinitarian Grammar of Analogy in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

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Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite should be celebrated as the Doctor of Darkness (*Doctor Tenebrarum*). In a Gothic style that reflects the depth of his many masks, his enduring achievement has been to have conceived of a theological grammar to speak of God beyond the haunting spectre of both ancient and modern nihilism. His Christian theological grammar is distinguished by speaking in the sense of a hyperbola (*ὑπερβολή*) or excess of signification, which signifies beyond yet within the world: first in the positive or cataphatic grammar, a positive judgment speaks of God; second in the negative or apophatic grammar, a higher or hyper-negative judgment annuls the positive, even as it speaks of God 'beyond being', and 'beyond intellect', as the absolutely originary source of any such positive judgment; and, third in the proportionate or analogical grammar, this procession of divine Power reciprocally annuls the infinite repetition of all such negative judgments, even as, from the centre of this cycle, it constitutes the absolutely higher ground from which alone speech of God is warranted. At the centre of this cycle, Christ can be acknowledged by faith to descend into the depths of the negative so as to shine from within the essentially proportioned and hyperbolic grammar of analogy. The elements of the Latin Scholastic analogy of being can, as this commentary will show, be reconstructed from Pseudo-Dionysius's hyperbolic grammar. In these hyperbolic arcs, the infinite repetition of hyper-negative judgments is annulled, and yet, in a reciprocal determination, equally constituted to virtually proceed from a higher ground in the essential proportions of analogy. Like fireflies that carry the torch of the Sun before the doors of night, the theological grammar of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite can be shown to be radically shaped by a Christian and Trinitarian theology, in which Christ the Logos is the originary ground and source, not only of the hyper-negative, but of the essential proportions of the *analogia entis*.

Introduction: The Gothic Style

Darkness is the oldest depth of light. As a firefly dances upon the air, its light shines, not simply from, but through the punctuated intervals of this veil of night. Like the birth of a star, it shines, not from without, but radically from within the hidden chambers of its exploding heart. The firefly can, in this way, be distinguished from woodland fairies, sprites, and will-o'-wisps by the bio-luminescent incandescence of the fire that shines from within its abdomen. Rather than shining from the source of the spirit, it radiates from a source of physical combustion. Indeed, the body of a beetle is among the most grotesque of all animals. And yet like the atomic blasts that explodes from within the oldest depths of the brightest stars, the chemical reaction of oxygen and the enzyme luciferase continually explodes its chemical bonds, releases its molecular elements, and, from this radiant nova, is freely released in a glittering image of nocturnal glory.

As a spark that dances in the dark of night, the firefly is a symbol of the Gothic. Before John Milton, Mary Shelley, and Bram Stroker, the Abbot Sugar had conceived of the style that after Petrarch would be called the 'Gothic' as a form of church architecture. In Gothic church architecture internal structural supports are erected outside as flying buttresses, vertical columns are elevated infinitely to culminate in pointed arches, and, through the soaring flight of all these buttresses, columns, and windows, the heaven-sent light of the world shines through painted glass to cast its varied colours around corners veiled in the shadow of both gloom and glory. As the patron saint and first bishop of Paris, his design of *Basilique royale de Saint-Denis* was designed to express in concrete media the spirit of the pseudonymous writer Dionysius the Areopagite.

Among late-Patristic writers, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite appears as the boldest and most brilliant of the mystical theologians of darkness. Consisting of only four books and ten letters, his literary corpus nevertheless canvasses the entire breadth of late-Patristic speculation of the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies, the ways of naming God, and the spirally ascent of this higher or hyperbolic grammar that ascends to the highest summit of mystical theology. At this summit, he speaks of a 'divine Darkness' that is illuminated from

within by a hidden source of divine radiance.[1] He writes: 'Unto this Darkness which is beyond Light we pray that we may come, and may attain unto vision through the loss of sight and knowledge, and, which, even in ceasing to see or to know, leads the mind to learn of that which is beyond all understanding'.[2]

In contrast to light, this Darkness 'beyond Light' can only be attained by a 'loss of sight', of 'knowledge', and, in 'ceasing' to 'see' or 'know', to 'learn' of that which ever awaits to be given from 'beyond all perception and understanding'.[3] It is neither simply light nor dark, but instead above all such contraries, the hidden source of divine light that shines through the outer veil of physical darkness. Hence, it is not simply the privative negation or deprivation of the light of knowing, but rather, as in a hyperbolic negation, the dialectical annulling of the visible immediate light, so as, in an ascent of successive abstractions or analyses, it more radically opens to receive the 'light' of knowing from a higher and hidden Darkness that shines from beyond all light. In the successive negation of its content, and the 'loss of sign and knowledge' of what is known, this 'darkness beyond light' proceeds in and from a hyper-luminous annulling of the ground of knowledge. To look past the wall of light is to search for it again through an outer darkness.

As the foremost anonymous writers from whose pen we have learned to wander through the night, Pseudo-Dionysius should be celebrated as the Doctor of Darkness (*Doctor Tenebrarum*). For in a double elision of both the Montanist ascent to inscrutable charism of a chaotic spirit, and the Alexandrian ascent to the Platonic Sun of celestial intelligence, he has, in a way that appears both more Cappadocian and Christological, searched for the glory of divine Beauty, Goodness, and Being that shines above Light as it leaps from within the darkest corners of the world, and of its words. More than any other Patristic writer, he expresses with a kinetic rhythm the incandescent bursts of light that irrupt from between the contrast of positive and negative judgments of what can be said of God and the world. And, in juggling both at once, he can be read

[1] Pseudo-Dionysius, Mystical Theology [MT]. In: *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. Trans. Clarence Edwin Rolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library / London: SPCK, 1920), 1., 99 (191). In the following page citations, the first page number corresponds to the page number listed in the electronic file, while the second page number in parentheses corresponds with the page number in the printed volume.

[2] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (194).

[3] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 100 (194).

to invite an explosive medley of dialectical, dialetheist, and paradoxical readings of the hyperbolic grammar of God.

Yet this proliferation of readings also raises the higher question of the essence of Darkness. As a metaphor for the negative, Pseudo-Dionysius' accent on Darkness beyond Light suggests a corresponding elevation of the negative beyond the positive. In this infinite noetic ascent beyond the light by which the physical world can be known, the soul takes an absolute leap beyond the positive, which, in its sheer excess, can initially be conceived as negative. When, accordingly, Pseudo-Dionysius speaks of God beyond being, light, and understanding, the negative or apophatic judgments of what God 'is not' appears to be elevated above the positive or cataphatic judgments of what 'God is'. Since God is the principle of being, as well as its architectonic structure or ontology, this elevation of the negative would imply at its extreme an evacuation of being into nothing, of a negative ontology or meontology, and at last the nihilistic oblivion of all that can be thought to be.

At its extreme, such an elevation of the negative could, in a daring anticipation of the speculative line of Meister Eckhart, F.W.J. Schelling, and G.W.F. Hegel, be read to virtually produce the concrete ground of existence from nothing but an abstract circuit of apriorist and reflective judgments of transcendental or hypothetical reason. Hence, after the critiques of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, this virtual productivity of existence from pure reason, appears to have been suspended before the oldest abyss, an aporetic polarity, and an immediate negation that would escape capture from within the concept that would suppress its terrible anarchic voice. The 'darkness' of a hidden God could thereafter come to be inverted by modern Atheism to disclose the more originary absence of a God, who, it seems, is not, and never truly was.

The earliest hints of this nihilistic elevation of the negative can perhaps be found in epic verse. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton inverts the Dionysian metaphor of luminous darkness:

> A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
> As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
> No light, but rather darkness visible
> Served only to discover sights of woe,...

With ever-burning sulfur unconsumed.[4]

Less than an inner spiritual light that shines through an outer darkness, Milton's darkness shines through a verisimilitude of flames that glows in the false image of light. In a parodic inversion of the Dionysian, this radiant 'darkness visible' is a spiritual darkness, in which the divine Light is successively concealed in the diabolical shapes of the dark. As the light is conjured from the dark, this figure of 'luminous darkness' carries a faint anticipation of the virtual production of the positive from the negative. As Conor Cunningham has argued, the genesis of modern nihilism can be traced to at least this counterfeit constitution of reality from a virtual production of something from nothing, which holds itself together in only a vanishing coherence of simulated or secular reason.[5] Following Schelling's later critique of Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche's collapse of eternal truth into the 'will-to-power', and Martin Heidegger's 'destruction' of metaphysics, this virtual productivity *ex nihilo* can be observed to have been successively radicalized of in an increasingly anarchic release of difference from identity, culminating today in the unstable polarity of Deleuzian virtuality and Badiouian multiplicity, from which, in Object-Oriented-Ontology, we now witness a plenitude of windowless objects, altogether lacking in both subjectivity and spirit.

At this speculative impasse, we must reflect again from the all-consuming abyss of infinite negativity unto nihilism to search for a more originary way to pass from darkness to a higher and hidden light. The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius may present the first steps forwards beyond postmodern nihilism. His glittering shadow has been cast across page after page to dazzle the insight of thinkers as diverse as Maximus the Confessor and John Scottus Eriugena, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Cusa and John of the Cross. His hyperbolic grammar of light shining from the dark has notably anticipated both the Medieval transition from Byzantine and Romanesque hyperbolic arcs to the early-Gothic circumincession of such hyperbolas in pointed

[4] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1.62

[5] Cunningham, Conor, "The Difference of Theology and Some Philosophies of Nothing", *Modern Theology*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2001): 289-312; *Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of Nothing and the Difference of Theology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

vaults, as well as later the Neo-Medieval transition from the revival of the Classical to the revival of the Gothic, which terminates in overcoming the false promise of Modern Faustian reason.

Yet so long as this hyperbolic grammar has been held under a simulacrum of reason that refuses its most originary source, the light of Christ the *Logos* could be virtually reproduced apart from its ground in a ghastly spectacle of unreason. Following Ludwig Feuerbach and Friedrich Nietzsche, this rupture of has been radicalized by Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida to release an irreducible dialectical supplement from its abject subordination under the pole of conceptual identity. The irreducible difference of the concept has thus been released from the circuit of its recycling identity, ramified across the categories of possible speech, and constructed again into the elements of an artificial grammar. Following the 'Linguistic Turn' of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida, the stage of this conflict is not, as it was for the early Church Fathers, the first principles of being *qua* being or metaphysics, but instead the way in which we can speak of God as God speaks, of a theological grammar, and, as in Rowan William's *The Edge of Words*, of the liminal traces of divinity that erupt from under the punctiliar expression of every word.[6]

In a Gothic style that reflects the depth of his many masks, Pseudo-Dionysius' enduring achievement has been to have conceived of a theological grammar to speak of God beyond the haunting spectre of both ancient and modern nihilism. In speaking hyperbolically of God beyond being, he calls upon a principle that is both beyond, and yet the creative source of all that can be. This Christian theological grammar is distinguished by speaking in the sense of a hyperbola (*ὑπερβολή*) or excess of signification, which signifies beyond yet within the world: first in the positive or *cataphatic* grammar, a positive judgment speaks of God; second in the negative or *apophatic* grammar, a higher or hyper-negative judgment annuls the positive, even as it speaks of God 'beyond being', and 'beyond intellect', as the absolutely originary source of any such positive judgment; and, third in the proportionate or analogical grammar, this procession of divine Power reciprocally annuls the infinite repetition of all such negative judgments, even as, from the

[6] Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

centre of this cycle, it constitutes the absolutely higher ground from which alone speech of God is warranted.

At the centre of this cycle, Christ can be acknowledged by faith to descend into the depths of the negative so as to shine from within the essentially proportioned and hyperbolic grammar of analogy. For the fulness of reality, beauty, and truth can neither come from the infinite repetition of negative judgments, nor from the simple annulling of this negative infinity, but rather as, in each cycle, it proceeds from a higher and hidden centre of a more originary creative plenitude. It can only continue this procession if, in each movement of ascent, it is met with a corresponding descent, and this very descent prepares the ground, from which to ascend, and then to take a leap even further. Since, further, this descent can only be intellectually completed as it can be known, and can only be known as it can be shown in the way that it is spoken, the signs of speech must take a leap of absolute reflection to proceed as given from the originary plenitude of their creative source.

This Gothic style of the metaphysics and grammar of analogy is already implicit in the *Divine Names*. The elements of the Latin Scholastic analogy of being can, as this commentary will show, be reconstructed from the hyperbolic grammar of Pseudo-Dionysius's the Divine Names and the *Mystical Theology*: in the *Divine Names*, the way to speak of the names of God is shown within the categories of naming; and in the *Mystical Theology*, not only the positive, but also the negative ways of naming God are surpassed in a series of hyperbolic arcs that both exceed and enter in to communicate all that can be named of God. In these hyperbolic arcs, the infinite repetition of hyper-negative judgments is annulled, and yet, in a reciprocal determination, equally constituted to virtually proceed from a higher ground in the essential proportions of analogy. Since this spiralling ascent of hyper-negative judgments would annul its highest ground, the 'negative way' (*Via Negativa*) of apophasis can from the beginning only be sustained by the 'analogical way' (*Via Analogia*). Hence, a half-millennium before Avicenna, Albert, and Aquinas, Pseudo-Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* can be speculatively read to anticipate the basic elements of the Medieval Scholastic grammar of analogy. And in a striking elision of Duns Scotus' later objection that such a paradoxical middle of Platonic participation (*methexis*) would

transgress the laws of logic, Pseudo-Dionysius suspends the simulated ground from of logic before the plenitude of its creative source.

In this spirit of the Gothic, this essay seeks to recover the long-submerged traces of a Christian and Trinitarian grammar of analogy in the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Like fireflies that carry the torch of the Sun before the doors of night, his theological grammar can be shown to be radically shaped by a Christian and Trinitarian theology, in which Christ the *Logos* is the ground and source, not only of the hyper-negative, but of the essential proportions of the metaphysical hierarchy of the *analogia entis*. In Part II, this essay will outline the general problematic of a poetic grammar that is designed to speak in hyperbolas that leap over abyssal negativity to speak of the God who stands in excess beyond yet enters in to create and himself be consummated within the world of being. In Part III, it will offer a speculative reconstruction of the earliest recognizable development of this hyperbolic grammar through a short commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's the *Mystical Theology* and the *Divine Names*. In Part IV, it will recollect from among these sources the earliest formulation of a theological grammar and metaphysics of analogy. And in Part V, it will conclude by arguing that as early as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the hyperbolic grammar of analogy is internally mediated by the economic dynamics of the Trinity, in a distinctly Christian and Trinitarian grammar of analogy. It is perhaps only by recollecting this analogical way of speaking from within the Church and for Christ amongst us that we can begin to recover a theological grammar that would be adequate to speak of the hyperbolic yet essential proportions of the analogy of being. And it is only by speaking of God as Christ speaks through the apostolic life of sacramental media that we can ever hope to escape from so many gloomy spectres of the imminent erasure of divine glory under the veil of night.

Hyperbolic Grammar of the Trinity

As a call to prayer, the *Divine Names* answers to the spirit that it names. It is not simply a study of names, or onomatological, but, more inventively, a spiritual exercise in creating names, that is poetical. In the course of exploring the ways of naming God, it also creates new divine

names. Hence, its radical advance has been marked by the invention of a new theological grammar. The Church Fathers had inherited from Parmenides, Plato, and Philo the grammatical problematic of speaking of a simple and transcendent God: for if God is absolutely prior to created multiplicity, and all names refer to and are combined as multiple, then it would initially seem that God cannot be a subject that could ever be designated or predicated by any name at all. And yet, already in the Book of Exodus, God names himself 'I am that I am' (Ex. 3:14). The absolutely unnameable God thus gives the name by which he can be addressed within the order of the divine names.

The decisive advance beyond this speculative impasse is finally announced indicated by the Christian belief in the Word 'become flesh' (Jn. 1:14), to show, in speaking, the way that God can and should be spoken. Since the eternally begotten Son of God becomes a flesh and blood human person, and Jesus speaks to us of how we as humans should speak of God, we can speak of God as Christ the *Logos* speaks, in the spiritual interpretation of scripture, in the analytical demonstrations of systematic theology, and in the theological logic and grammar of the divine names. Since, in the Gospels, God enters in to become flesh within the world, and Jesus speaks of God, we can, in this imitation of Christ, speak of God with the theological grammar of the divine names. Hence, after the temple veil has been torn (Mt. 27:51), the hidden name of God that could not have been legitimately spoken by the Israelites can at last be named of God, as Christ the Son has spoken of the Father, and as the Church thereafter speaks of God with the authority of Christ.

The divine names are these ways that we can speak of God beyond and in the world. Following Philo, Origen, and the Alexandrian reformulation of Platonic speculative grammar, the divine names designate the highest ways, attributes, or categories, in which God can be spoken of as God has shown us how to speak of God. As ways of speaking of God, the divine names are radically unlike the names that can be given to things in the world: for, as the creator of the world who as its creator transcends the created world, God cannot be named directly in one and the same or univocal sense as things are spoken of within the world, but in an absolute equivocation, as the divine names of God both exceed the categories of direct reference, and yet, at the

height of this excess, can also signify in a way that could enter in so as to be named of every creative act of God.

This excessive way of speaking of God beyond the world that enters in to plentifully signify God within the world can be called a hyperbolic grammar. In the sense of a hyperbole (*ὑπερβολή*), it signifies a predicate in excess of its target subject, and yet, in so exceeding the scope of its target, it also enters in to signify in a more intensive way. Accordingly, Pseudo-Dionysius attempts, in *The Divine Names*, to demonstrate how, 'in speaking about God' we speak, not with 'man's wisdom', but rather, in a way 'surpassing [human] speech and knowledge' of things extended and multiple, of 'that Union' that exceeds 'our faculty' of reason, speech, and grammar.[7]

The name of God is thus spoken of by us as God speaks in and through all names. As Plato hinted, and Origen of Alexandria more fully understood, we can only begin to speak of God by arguing in a dialectical circuit of a negative or 'apophatic' grammar of successive judgments: first, a positive judgment speaks of God; second, a higher or 'hyper-negative' judgment annuls the positive as the absolutely originary source of any such positive judgment; and, third, the divine *Logos* annuls the infinite repetition of all such hyper-negative judgments, even as it constitutes the higher ground from which to speak of God.[8] Yet, beyond the Alexandrians, Pseudo-Dionysius speaks, not merely of a finite sequence of judgments affirmed, annulled, and reconstituted, but, more radically, in an infinite hyperbolic arc, in which this movement of dialectic saturates the signs of grammar.

The kinetic and labyrinthine prose of Pseudo-Dionysius thus exhibits this straining tension to devise a new Christian grammar. He describes how, 'the more that we soar upwards the more our language becomes restricted to the compass of purely intellectual conceptions'.[9] With the *Via Negativa*, we abstract a universal by analysis from the material representations of the sensible world, the more our predicates drawn from the representations of the world, becomes 'restricted', that

[7] Pseudo-Dionysius, The Divine Names [DN]. In: *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. Trans. Clarence Edwin Rolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library / London: SPCK, 1920), 1.1., 28–29 (51–3).

[8] Plato, *Republic*, 508e-509b, *Theaetetus*, 208d-209e, *Parmenides*, 137c-142a; Origen, Commentary on the Song of Songs, 6.7., 321.

[9] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (198).

is, condensed into an assemblage of increasingly rarefied and non-representational pure concepts. This increasing brevity of speech, semantic condensation, and the abbreviation of concepts in the expressions of grammar is, moreover, a consequence of this mystical ascent to the economy of 'purely intellectual conceptions', which, in the absence of discursive elaboration, admit of no further semantic analysis, except in abbreviated locutions of a perfunctorily constructed grammar.[10] The contraction of terminology in a constructed grammar is thus a consequence of the elevation of speech beyond the categories of discursive reason to the category of transcendence.

The transcendence of the One beyond being is equally its transcendence beyond the formless things, matter, and the non-existent, where, at the outermost bounds of formless multiplicity, pure unformed matter is nothing. Hence, he writes: 'Even that which is not longs for [the object of desire], and strives to find its rest therein, and thus It creates a form even in formless things and thus is said super essentially to contain, and does so contain, the non-existent'.[11] As the kenotic descent of the Son enters into every domain of the sign, it descends into every 'formless thing', into 'that which is not', and into every conceivable flight of signification.[12] As the divine names are not only spoken of by us but shown by Christ how we should speak, the contraction of the absolute *Logos* into a singular hypostatic union of human nature shows the dynamic circuits of divine communication to be singularly concentrated in grammatical formulae.

Like Martin Heidegger, his grammatical innovations are required for his effort to speak hyperbolically of God who is signified beyond yet in and through the world—always 'towards the category of transcendence'. However, this new Christian grammar also carries a higher risk. For, in assuming this prior dialectical movement of the division, analysis, and reconstitution of meaning from a higher source, it reveals more, even as it also conceals more. The concentration of winding arguments into a single word initially enables an unprecedented range of expressive possibilities. Yet, in calling upon a canon of arguments that remain

[10] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (198).
[11] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.17., 59 (111).
[12] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.18., 58 (109).

absent, it tacitly subordinates this dialectical movement to be simulated in and for the presentation of symbolic formulae.

The movement of dialectic thus operates concurrently on two levels. As in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, this subordination of the higher or hyperbolic dialectic of divine ideas to a lower, restricted, or simulated dialectic can be designated as a 'hypo-dialectic'. Hypo-dialectic is, in this way, distinguished by the simulation of dialectical movements, such as division, analysis, and syllogism, in and for the symbolic forms of grammar. The advance of science requires the assumption of lengthy arguments within increasingly concentrated and simple words. Yet as soon as arguments are concentrated in words, reason can no longer be called upon to ask again the originary questions it had once pursued and could be challenged to pursue again. Accordingly, the artificial restriction of dialectic to a simulated formula of grammar can only be answered by showing this simulation of reason to destroy itself. This subordination of dialectic in grammar can, for this purpose, be dialectically subverted, by analysing the ground of this simulation, setting its operations in a pure opposition or contradiction against its source, and yet analysing to resolve this impasse in a circuit of ideas that is more productive of a new way of knowing and speaking.

We can hear in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius many voices of the future. Since, as for Plato and Aristotle, grammar is an invented product of dialectic, in which the forms of dialectic are poetically expressed and freely assembled, Pseudo-Dionysius' grammatical innovations of simulated dialectics produce the elements of grammar for accelerating new poetic expressions. In a style that anticipates the Gothic, his grammar is distinguished by speaking hyperbolically beyond yet within the world: first in the positive or cataphatic grammar, a positive judgment speaks of God; second in the negative or apophatic grammar, a higher or hyper-negative judgment annuls the positive, even as it speaks of God 'beyond being', and 'beyond intellect', as the absolutely originary source of any such positive judgment; and, third in the proportionate or analogical grammar, the incarnate *Logos* dialectically annuls the infinite repetition of all such hyper-negative judgments, even as it constitutes the higher ground from which we are authorized to speak of God.

Springing from this Christological centre, the divine *Logos* terminates the infinite negativity of apophasis, and, from its unsurpassably originary ground, cycles the destruction of the negative into the production of negative judgments in and from a positive plenitude. Hence, the prefix 'hyper-' (*ὑπέρ-*) designates not simply a higher negation but also a higher production of the negative in and from the positive, in which such a negation is not privative but rather plentiful, as it virtually expresses the ascent of analysis in and through participation to proceed in and from the higher ground of an ultimately transcendent source. The combination of prefixes and suffixes further concentrates these simulated dialectical movements into a growing inventory of symbolic grammar. In this accelerating poesis, Pseudo-Dionysius exceeds all previous Christian theologians, including Origen, Gregory, and Cyril. And yet, in dirempting this simulated hypo-dialectic of symbolic grammar from the higher and absolute dialectic of the *Logos*, which is communicated by the Son, in and through God as Trinity, this poetic excess of invented grammar can ever again be collected in, as it proceeds in and from, the highest principles of Christian and Trinitarian Ontology.

The Mystical Theology and the Divine Names

First attested following the closure of the Neoplatonic Academy of Athens, the Dionysian corpus presents a late incorporation of Greek philosophy into Christian theology. Its speculative grammar ostensibly exhibits an oscillation between the Proclean singularity of epistrophic negativity and the Cappadocian and Chalcedonian procession of the Son, whose theandric hypostasis authorizes the hyperbolic grammar of analogy. As the superessential (*hyperousia*) source of all being that stands beyond being, it can, ostensibly, only be spoken of by a series of higher or hyperbolic negations. In reflecting backwards to analyse upwards from effects to causes, its flights of signs exceed beyond so as to enter in, and produce that from which it signs both spring and surpass. Yet, if this hyperbolic arc is to be sustained, the supreme principle and highest cause of any such analysis must itself be emptied of its unreserved simplicity, descend from one beyond being to absolute negativity, and in the movement of annulling, also uphold its reflection

of determinations, from which can be spoken and conceived the essential proportions of analogy.

The way in which to speak of God can, accordingly, only be sustained if the generic negativity of the simple and absolute God beyond being can itself be cancelled by the spiral procession of the Son of God from God as Father. Since, however, the former elevation of the one simple and absolute God beyond being conflicts with the latter descent of the Son of God into being, and the contradiction of one and many can only be resolved dialectically, cycling as many in one, this epistrophic ascent can only be sustained by the kenotic descent from the Father of the Son through the Spirit, the creation in speech of the world from nothing, and a way of speaking hyperbolically in the essential proportions of analogy that refer back to God. And since this theological grammar of the divine names could not be known except as it was spoken in creation, shown in revelation, and performed doxologically in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and liturgy of the Church, the oscillation from the world to and from its simple and superessential source must be internally mediated by a complex embodied way of living and speaking of the divine names.

The grammatical innovations of the divine names represent a formulaic expression of this stylistic oscillation between Proclean and Cappadocian theologies. For, although many of the grammatical forms are drawn from Proclus and the Neoplatonist Henology, the epistrophic ascent to the one beyond being is internally mediated by the corresponding descent of the divine hypostases, the creation in speech from nothing of the world, and, within it, of a way of speaking in a hyperbolic grammar of essentially proportioned yet transcendent reference of ever-greater difference in and among things. In this oscillation of ascent and descent, the dialectic that descends to the forms of grammar that speaks of God are contracted into the virtual operations of grammatical formulae, in which the prefix 'hyper-' (*ὑπέρ-*) signifies and simulates the division, analysis, and a spiritual ascent of the negative in and from the positive ground of essential proportions, even as it holds this hyperbolic movement in the concentrated symbolic form of a simple prefix. And, in contrasting the complex hyperbolic arc of dialectic into the simple formulae of grammar, it recapitulates the trinitarian procession from the Father of the Son through the Spirit,

and the kenotic emptying of the uncreated ground of substance into the recreated transit of signs. The Trinitarian dynamic of Christian thought has thus extended, beyond Origen, from a dialectic of argument grounded in the *Logos*, and, beyond Augustine, extended from the rhetoric of persuasion affected in the Church, to be constituted in the concentrated formulae of a new Christian grammar.

The *Divine Names* is an exploration of the way that God can be spoken of with human words. The basic question of theological grammar is that of how God can be spoken beyond yet in and from the finite and sensible elements within the world. Since God transcends the world, God can only be spoken of as God has been communicated, and as God is spoken of from the source of divine illumination, prophetic inspiration, and scriptural revelation. The revelatory traces of scripture can then recall these higher sources for hidden discovery. The decisive contrast between theological and nihilistic visions of grammar can be drawn by the coordinates of this hyperbolic signification of the 'super-essential God' beyond being who is sacramentally performed, recollected, and celebrated in the Church. Although it carries the risk of erasing argument, this distinctly Christian and Trinitarian grammar can, as this commentary will endeavour to illustrate, be analysed to speculatively reconstruct the oldest ground of the theological grammar of analogy.

At the start of the Mystical Theology, Pseudo-Dionysius calls upon the Trinity to instruct Christians in heavenly wisdom. He writes: 'Trinity… Guide us to that topmost height of mystic lore which exceedeth light and more than exceedeth knowledge'.[13] To know the Trinity, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, is to 'press on in prayer'.[14] For to know the Good, we must 'first lift up our minds in prayer unto the Primal Goodness, and by drawing nearer Thereunto, we must thus be initiated into the mystery of those good gifts which are rooted in Its being'.[15] These hidden or *mysteria* things are not unknowable, but rather, both known and beyond knowing, in a hyperbolic negation of the conditions of knowing, such that, however, this way of knowing shines invisibly from a hidden source beyond what is known. Mysticism is thus not

[13] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 99 (191).
[14] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 3.1., 45 (79).
[15] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 3.1., 45 (79).

simply and naïvely a flight beyond the world of sense and reason, but rather a way of proceeding through the forms of reason that is saturated with sense.

Christian mysticism can initially be considered as irrational as it negates the conditions of knowing as rational, and yet ultimately supra-rational as such an infinite negation of the rational can itself be more fully known as it proceeds from its plentiful source in coming to be known. The superessential principle and universal cause of all is not irrational, and not without understanding, and yet is not any act of reason or understanding, nor can it be described by the reason or perceived by the understanding. It possesses all the attributes of the universe, as it exceeds being, goodness, knowledge, and light, yet, in the 'dazzling obscurity' of its 'secret silence', as a 'guide' to the 'height of mystic lore', paradoxically 'outshining brilliance' in the 'intensity of their darkness'.[16] He states that he holds 'the highest of the things perceived by the eyes of the body or the mind' to be 'but the symbolic language of things subordinate to' the transcendent cause of all things, as God, in his causation, transcends all effects, including all effects of signification.[17]

Since God transcends them all as the cause of its effects, God can, in his transcendence, both possess and not possess all attributes of the universe. Hence, Pseudo-Dionysius denies that God is 'any act of reason or understanding' or any 'reason perceived by the understanding'.[18] For God is 'not soul, or mind, or endowed with the faculty of imagination, conjecture, reason or understanding', in any way that can be known or spoken of in the judgement of reason.[19]

None of these attributes, either positive or negative, can be properly attributed to God beyond being, intelligence, and naming. It is neither darkness nor light; neither error nor truth; neither negation nor affirmation, but rather more radically transcends them both. In transcending 'any affirmation or negation', God 'transcends all affirmation'. And as 'the perfect and unique Cause of all things', who is 'free from every limitation [of judgement] and beyond them all',

[16] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 99 (191).
[17] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (194).
[18] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 5., 103 (201).
[19] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 5., 103 (201).

God ultimately 'transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of its simple and absolute nature'.[20] Hence, God transcends all affirmation as the prior and perfect cause of all partial, affirmative, and positive judgments. And God likewise transcends all negation as it is abstracted away to freely surpass every negative limitation of concept and reason. The transcendent excess of God's super-essential radiance then raises the question of the possibility of any discourse concerning the Divine names, any judgment of the Super-Essential Godhead, and any analogical speech of God.

The 'Darkness of Unknowing' is the 'incomprehensible presence' from which shines a higher reason that exceeds all understanding.[21] This 'super-essential ray' is, for Pseudo-Dionysius, the luminous medium with which God can communicate himself in and beyond himself, in the hyperbolic excess, first of the divine difference of Christ the Son, and thereafter in the serial differentia of every element of thought and speech, traced in scripture, and spoken again as it is framed in analogy. It is, he insists, 'the divinest and the highest of the things perceived by the eyes of the body or the mind', not only intellectually of the spirit, but also affectively of the body by the mind, in a 'symbolic language' of scriptural figures, hermeneutical archetypes, and, from these, of the divine names.[22] It is the 'brilliance' of 'dazzling obscurity' in the ascent from the nothing of being to union with the source that at its principle exceeds all being and understanding.[23] As it is the principle of being that proceeds from beyond being, it could, nevertheless, alone 'give, with proper understanding thereof, a revelation of itself', in showing the paradigmatic source of being.[24]

'While dwelling alone by itself', God communicates through this 'super-essential ray', in 'illuminations' of thought 'corresponding to each separate creature's powers'.[25] By the spiritual illumination of this super-essential ray, our minds may be made like the divine mind, 'in a union transcending our mental faculties', in an analogical speech from and for the super-essential source of speech, 'amidst the blinding blissful

[20] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 5., 103 (201).
[21] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (193).
[22] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (194).
[23] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 99 (191).
[24] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1., 28–29 (51–3).
[25] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1., 30 (54).

impulsions of His dazzling rays'.[26] The source of this super-essential ray, and of any spiritual illumination, 'wholly exceeds our knowledge', even as it contains beforehand 'the bounds of all natural sciences', including 'all the branches of knowledge', and any knowledge of speech, grammar, and logic.[27] Since, moreover, the sacred doctrines of Christianity process from and for the utterly unknowable first principles of the incommunicable Godhead, 'even the plainest article of divinity' can, while essential to any communication of divinity, not be expressed in any language, or known by any mind, except as it is always already communicated by Christ in the hyperbolic excess of its expression in grammar and logic.[28]

However, Pseudo-Dionysius expressly denies that it is his purpose 'to reveal the Super-Essential Being in its Super-Essential Nature' or divine nature of God.[29] For the name of being is 'applied by the Divine Science to Him that truly Is', as God names Godself 'I am that I am'.[30] (Ex. 3:14) When, consequently, being (*ousia*) is spoken of as a divine name of God, it is spoken of, not in a common sense, but rather in an absolute and super-abundant sense, as a super-essential power beyond and above all existence. For the 'existent God is, by nature of His power [to create all being], super-essentially [*hyperousia*] above all existence [*ousia*]'.[31] For, by his power as creator, God is 'the substantial cause and Creator of Being, Existence, Subsistence and Nature'.[32] The name of 'existent' (or being) is thus transcendental, as it 'extends to all existent things and is beyond them'.[33] However, the divine superessential nature or *hyperousia* 'is beyond even the Unity'.[34] It cannot be named or known in any sense, but can only be celebrated, as in the liturgy, by the receipt of 'the Emanation of the Absolute Divine Essence into the universe of things'.[35] In this hyperbolic surpassing of all divine names and attributes, it elevates the transcendentals to the principal source of paradigmatic

[26] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1., 32 (58).
[27] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.4., 32 (59).
[28] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.9., 42 (76).
[29] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 68 (131).
[30] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 68 (131).
[31] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5., 70 (135).
[32] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5., 70 (135).
[33] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 69 (132).
[34] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 69 (132).
[35] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 69 (132).

instantiation, even as it exceeds and so eludes 'discourse, intuition, name, and every kind of being', as well as any thought of being.[36]

Against later suspicions of ontotheology, Pseudo-Dionysius denies that God is any kind of singular or ontic thing. God is, he argues, not one thing or another, not any ontic thing, and no individual. He is 'not thing without being that; nor doth he possess this mode of being without being that'. 'On the contrary', God is absolutely 'all things as being the [principle] Cause of them all', all being, who, as the principle cause, 'holds together', 'fulfils', and 'transcends them all'.[37] He is, consequently, not one and not another, but rather he is the cause of all, holding all, and anticipating all in himself as both their beginning and their fulfilment, as the anterior and super-essential source of existence that nevertheless transcends existence. In holding together all things, 'all attributes may be [positively] affirmed at once of Him', and yet in transcending all things, 'He is no thing', nothing can be said of God, as God transcends all speech.

Pseudo-Dionysius can thus be read to have repudiated in advance Duns Scotus' 'univocity of being' (*univocatio entis*). He writes that 'God is not existent in any ordinary sense', but rather 'in Him and around Him all Being is and subsists', as 'the Essence of existence in things that exist', and 'in a simple and undefinable manner embracing and anticipating all existence in himself'.[38] Hence, God does not exist in any univocal sense, but rather is the superessential source of existence.[39] Since, further, God is beyond any common sense, 'He neither was, nor will be', nor is a being in any univocal sense of a 'common being' (*ens commune*), but rather 'is the Essence of existence in things that exist'.[40] Hence, he describes the reciprocal possession of being in God, and God in being, as even this being of which God is in God: 'He is not contained in Being, but Being is contained in Him; He doth not possess Being'.[41] For God is not contained in being, but rather being is contained in Him. For God does not possess Being, but rather Being possesses God, as God is the hyperbolic source and principle. This

[36] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.1, 28–29 (51–3).
[37] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 73 (140).
[38] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1. 71 (135).
[39] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1. 71 (135).
[40] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.1., 71 (135).
[41] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 72 (138).

reciprocal possession of God and being is, moreover, the consequence of the radical participation, not only of being in God, but of God in being in God, such that, from the top to the bottom, God is present in, and possesses all being.

This super-essential possession in God of being is the source from which flows the participation of all things in God. As all things 'participate' in these hyperbolic names, the participants are transcended by the participated. Yet as all such names are surpassed by the principle beyond being, the participants and the participated are equally surpassed by the 'unparticipated' creator of being. As all things 'participate' in these qualities, hyperbolic names, hypernymics, the participants are transcended by the participated, and yet as all such things that have been are surpassed by the superessential principle beyond being, both the participants and the participated hypernymics are equally surpassed by the 'unparticipated' creator of being.[42] This repetition of the second name after the first is thus not identical to but rather precisely differentiated by flowing in and from the excessive transcendence of the first. And this repetition is accordingly rendered as non-identical, never repeated univocally in one and the same way, but rather and always differentiated by transcendence, impartation, and the excess or surpassing of the same.

This participatory triad, comprised of participant, participated, and unparticipated, is further 'draw[n] together into the abundance' of unity that shares in the 'excess of transcendence' beyond yet overflowing into being.[43] Pseudo-Dionysius writes: 'Let us, then, repeat that all things and all ages derive their existence from the Pre-Existent'.[44] All things subsist in and through this creative gift of being: 'all things have their maintenance in Him', and 'all its other participated gifts is that of Being'.[45] Similarly, all universal forms of logic and grammar 'participate in very Being itself', which, hyperbolically, is spoken beyond yet as the creative source of being.[46] All the particular modes, qualities, and divine names of Life, Wisdom, thus participate in this hyperbolic source of being, or *hyperousia*. All that can be said of God, all divine names, and

[42] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.4., 94 (183).
[43] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.4., 94 (183).
[44] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[45] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[46] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).

all predicates thus participate as universals in the hyperbolic source of being, from which, and for which, even the being of these universals, and their particular modes, subsist and derive from their source.

As the creative source of being, God is the middle of being. For he is present, as much to the beginning and the end as the many relations. Pseudo-Dionysius writes: 'He is the Eternity, the Beginning, and the Measure of Existence, being anterior to Essence and essential Existence and Eternity, because He is the Creative Beginning, Middle, and End of all things'.[47] Hence, God is, from eternity, not only the beginning, but the 'measure of existence', as the relation from the beginning to the end, and vice versa, is measured, and this measure is the middle of existence.[48] God is present, in this reciprocal procession, not only from the beginning, but also as the relation of the end to the beginning, that is the middle, such that God is the beginning and end of all beings.

This higher or hyperbolic meaning of negation is illustrated in Pseudo-Dionysius' discussion of evil. He answers the Problem of Evil by distinguishing the universal from the particular scope of evil, opposition, and negation, in which this particular negation of some evil is subsumed under to proceed as produced in and for a higher and absolute Good. There can be no absolute contrary of the Good because the Good is the principle of both its positing and negating. It is farther removed as it stands opposed to the Good. And yet since the Good stands above both positing and negating, it ultimately annuls this standing ground of evil. As there is no absolute opposite of the Good, there can only be relative sites of opposition in and among goodness or good things. This relative negation is, further, also a negation that is a relation, and a relation that is a determination. For, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, '[evil] is preserved by the admixture of [evil in and] of the Good', through the virtual productivity of the negative, such that the Good 'giveth existence to the lack of itself', the absence of the Good or Being, and, as absent, to its privation, or subaltern negation, in which the negative itself is a product of a higher or hyperbolic production.[49]

As a mystical theologian who transcends negation, Pseudo-Dionysius invites dialetheist readings, in which contradictions can be analysed as

[47] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 72 (138).
[48] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 72 (138).
[49] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.21., 61 (116).

both true and false. Yet in a complication of dialetheist interpretations, he expressly affirms the Law of Non-Contradiction when he writes: 'For things of the same kind cannot be wholly contradictory to one another in the same respects'.[50] This preservation of the Law of Non-Contradiction authorizes him to dialectically annul, viz. the contradiction of nothing as existent, the existence of evil: 'Hence, evil is non-existent'.[51] To prosecute this dialectical argument, Pseudo-Dionysius poses a trilemma: 'Either evil must come from the Good, or the Good from evil, or else (if this is impossible) both the Good and evil must be from another origin or cause'.[52] Since, he argues, 'no duality can be an origin' and 'two entirely opposite things can[not] owe their birth and their being to the same thing', as this 'would make the origin itself not a simple unity but divided, double, self-contradictory and discordant', this trilemma can be reduced to a dilemma, as the third option, of both good and evil having another origin, can be denied.[53] And since, he further argues, the world could not 'have two contradictory origins' of 'perpetual strife' and of evil contrary to the Goodness that is attributed to God, there can be no evil in God; evil is not divine; and evil does not come from God who is wholly Good.[54]

Since the Good has no absolute opposite, there can be no determinative negation of the Good, except virtually as the Good is the principle of goodness, relationality, and determinacy. The destruction of evil is, consequently, not itself 'evil in every case', but rather and only in some cases, that is, in a restricted sense of annulling the opposite, that is, the opposition of evil.[55] For evil is not itself productive. Rather, if 'by the destruction of one thing it giveth birth to somewhat else', it does not do so 'qua destructive', or qua evil. For, qua destructive, evil only destroys, and does not produce anything new, except 'through the action of the Good'.[56] The destructiveness of evil is not simply nothing, but rather 'hath being and giveth being to its offspring', as its part of being is given as an offspring of the Good.[57] Without the Good, 'evil

[50] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.21., 61 (116).
[51] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.21., 61 (116).
[52] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 62 (118).
[53] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 62 (118).
[54] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 62 (118).
[55] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.23., 63 (120).
[56] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.20., 60 (113).
[57] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.19., 60 (113).

will be found to be a destructive force in itself, except by 'a productive force through the action of the Good'. And 'it is through the action of the Good [that evil] hath being', and, solely by the productivity of the Good, 'confers being on good things'.[58] This productivity of something new that appears to arise from the destruction of evil is, consequently, not the product of evil per se, 'not the function of evil', but rather of 'the presence of Good in a lesser form', and, for which, evil can only be said to 'exist' as it is 'reduced to a minimum' of goodness that awaits its perfection by the highest Good.[59]

The Good is, accordingly, productive not only of positing but also of negating, as well as the negation, relation, and determination, or determinate negation spirally ascending to, and asymptotically approaching the Good. Destruction is due to a failure of the natural order, the failure of the good, where 'the principle of harmony and symmetry grows weak and so cannot remain unchanged' in an essentially proportioned geometry and grammar, and of the enduring strength of its invariant form of operations.[60] Yet its weakness is not complete; for where it complete, it would have annihilated both the process of destruction and the object which it suffers; and such a destruction as this must be self-destructive, as its oppositive negativity is ultimately itself annulled. The 'weakness' of analogy is thus a negation that is due to be annulled with all negations, as the 'failure' of its invariant form is overcome, and yet sustained as it is preserved in and by the 'self-destruction' of its inner negation, negative opposition, or passing moment of evil.[61]

Evil is nothing but a privation of the Good. Pseudo-Dionysius writes that it 'hath no being, nor any inherence in things that have being', but rather 'arises not through any power [of evil itself] but through the weakness' of rational beings in the 'fall of their proper virtues' of recollecting the Good.[62] As 'evil things are not all entirely the same in all cases and in all relations', but differ in their various relations, evil is open to every determination, even as, qua evil, it is not sufficient

[58] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.20., 60 (113).
[59] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.20., 61 (116).
[60] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.22., 64 (121).
[61] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.32., 67 (127).
[62] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.35., 67 (130).

for any determination, argument, or knowledge of reason.[63] Since the dialectical opposition of evil is first and finally annulled at its originary source, there can be no enduring opposition to the Good, no simulacral production from evil, except as the absoluteness of the Good is sustained by annulling the opposition of evil as nothing but the negative moment in this productivity of goodness.

The transcendence of the Good 'above all things' is grammatically indicated by this hyper-negation.[64] The Good is 'alone not-being' as it is 'an excess of being'.[65] The negation of the Good, or the Good-being, as singularly 'not-being', is the negation, not of privation, but rather that of plenitude, that is, of an 'excess of being'.[66] This plentiful negation, of excess rather than defect, is the higher or hyper-negation that inwardly negates the infinite negation of ascending reflections or abstractions of finite judgment in and from a positive source. The Good is thus the 'Exemplar', 'originating principle', 'transcendent Beginning', and 'transcendent Goal' of 'all that exists and that comes into being', as well as the paradigmatic cause of the 'final', 'efficient', 'formal', and 'material' cause.[67] To call God 'perfect' is to say of God that the goodness of God exceeds positive and negative judgments of quantity, can be neither increased nor decreased, as it super-exemplarily 'contains all things beforehand', saturated in both the positive and the negative, even as it 'overflows in one ceaseless, identical, abundant and inexhaustible supple', as the excess of goodness enters into so as to perfect the goodness of all perfect things, and 'fills them with its own perfection', goodness, and analogical likeness to the divine goodness of God.[68]

Divine transcendence thus gestures to the hidden source of divine radiance. For the 'transcendent manner' of attribution to the Good is that of 'negative image', negative illuminations, or dark rays, in which the darkness is this negation, and yet even this negation is annulled as it proceeds in and from its source.[69] The images are negative as each passing imagination is itself negated, and annulled as an image. Yet since, as in the spiritual sense, all that can be known is first known by

[63] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.32., 67 (127).
[64] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.3., 48 (90).
[65] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.3., 47 (89).
[66] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.3., 47-48 (89–90).
[67] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.10., 54 (100).
[68] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.1., 95 (185).
[69] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 49 (90).

divine illumination, the dark luminosity of images, this negativity is a constitutive moment of knowing. As 'that Very Life is the Universal Principle of living things', and 'Very Similarity [is the Universal Principle] of similar things', so, likewise, is 'Very Unity [the Universal Principle] of unified things', and 'Very Order [the Universal Principle] of ordered things, that is, of Life, Similarity, Unity, and Order, or the vital similarity that holds in unity the order of things'.[70]

The hyperbolic source and principle of the inner similitude that holds in union the order of the modes of signification of being is thus the principle of the essentially proportioned hyperbolic grammar of being, that is, the analogy of being (*analogia entis*). This hyperbolic source of being and speech is the principle upon which converges the similitudes of all particular modes of speech, grammar, and signification, or modes of signification. The first gift of this hyperbolic source and principle is 'mere existence', or common being.[71] For, as Pseudo-Dionysius' participatory triad affirms, the simplest signification of being 'derives its first title' or name of simple being 'from the chiefest' divine name of Being, *hyperousia*, and 'the participations in Its [Divine] Being'.[72] The simplest signification of mere being is spoken of by participation in the divine name of divine Being, of *hyperousia*, and of the higher or hyperbolic superabundance of beings from Being.

All senses of being thus subsist 'from', and in this first gift of the hyperbolic source and principle of being. Since all universals, forms, and speech of beings subsists in and from the hyperbolic source of the *hyperousia*, similarly, 'all number exists as unity in number One', the numerability of the One, from which, and 'only when it goes forth from this number', that it can be 'differenced and multiplied' in and among numerical differentiated things, that can be counted as processing in and from the One.[73] The One is, in this participatory sense, the principle of number, the difference of the multiple, and the countability of numerically distinct and countable quantities among things. The hyperbolic source is thus the principle of number, of counting or arithmetic, and, as such, of mathematics, including the proportions of

[70] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[71] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.6., 71 (137).
[72] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.6., 71 (137).
[73] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.6., 71 (137).

analogy, that is, of any numerical analogy of proportion. Participation in the *hyperousia* is the essential similarity of the similars, the unity of the unifieds, and the order of the ordereds.[74] Since, moreover, 'they participate in Existence', and have this 'existence' as their 'basis' of existence, 'permanence', and 'being', this principle of the similarity is equally that which sustains in existence, not only of the sign, but ultimately of being, that is, of the signification of being.[75] For, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, it is 'only through their participation in Existence do they exist and enable things to participate in them. And if these Universals exist by participating in Existence, far more is this true of the things which participate in them'. [76] The paradox of participation arises from this annulling of the inverted negation, the annulling of its infinite negativity, as it proceeds from its originary source.

Dionysius distinguishes the negative method from the positive method: where the positive method *Via Positiva* begins from the most universal statements, and then, through the intermediate terms, speaks of the last particular titles; the negative method *Via Negativa*, on the contrary, ascends upwards from the particular to universal statements, where, by abstraction, 'we strip off all qualities in order that we may attain a naked knowledge of that Unknowing which in all existent things is enwrapped by all objects of knowledge'.[77] The *Via Positiva* is a demonstration by definition from the universal to the particular, while the *Via Negativa* is, on the contrary, an ascent by abstraction from the particular to the universal. The *Via Negativa* is thus the negative method of ascent by abstraction from the particulars to the universal, where the universal abides equivocally above the particulars, as one into many, and many with one, where we have 'naked knowledge of that Unknowing', and the 'super-essential darkness' hidden by all the light in all existent things.[78]

Where the *Via Positiva* starts by positively predicating that which is most similar to its subject, the *Via Negativa* starts by negatively predicating that which is most dissimilar to its subject, most opposed, and, for God, must abject, particular, and simple. The *Via Negativa*

[74] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[75] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[76] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.5., 71 (136).
[77] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).
[78] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).

is then described as the 'ascent' to 'being at last wholly united with Him Whom words cannot describe'.[79] This ascent demands a dialectical reversal of the natural grammar of positive judgments. For 'after beginning from the highest category [of God], when one method was affirmative [*Via Positiva*] we begin from the lowest category [of nothing] where it is negative'.[80] The *Via Negativa* is thus presented by Dionysius, in perhaps its most radical Christian rendition, as an elevation above so as to suspend and speak again *Via Positiva* of any positive judgments and attributes of the world to God who is beyond being in and through this transcendent cause of divine speech that enters into so as to hyperbolically exceed any speech of the positive multiplicity of being of analogy.

The *Via Negativa* thus 'ascends' from 'particular to universal conceptions' as it 'strips off' by successive abstraction 'all qualities' or attributes until it apprehends in this 'super-essential Darkness' how it has 'enwrapped' 'all objects of knowledge' 'hidden' behind 'the light that is in existent things'.[81] This infinite negativity of successive abstraction negates every positive judgment, even as, in its hypernegative ascent, it proceeds in and from a higher plenitude of divine attributes or names of God. The distinction between the 'negative method' (*Via Negativa*) and positive statements is that positive statements 'began with the most universal statements', that is, the affirmative predication of a subject, and 'then through intermediate terms we came at last to particular titles', in which the 'intermediate terms' are particulate modes of the universal predicate.[82] By contrast, the *Via Negativa* 'ascending upwards from particular to universal conceptions' then 'strips off all qualities in order that we may attain a naked knowledge of that Unknowing', 'which in all existent things is enwrapped by all objects of knowledge'.[83]

In beginning from the most dissimilar to the absolute, Pseudo-Dionysius follows Plato's *Parmenides*, exploring not only the positive but also the negative way, as well as Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which begins with the absolute immediacy of being in its evident simplicity. The *Via Negativa* thus starts not with the absolute, but rather with the

[79] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (198).
[80] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (198).
[81] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).
[82] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (195).
[83] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).

simple beginning of absolute complexity. This hyper-darkness is the hidden source of light that shines through, not only the dark, but also the light, as, in shining through all existence, it 'enwraps' all 'objects of knowledge' in the self-negating summit of positive judgments. Pseudo-Dionysius gives his 'preference' to the 'Negative Method', not because he terminates the *Via Negativa*, but rather because he ultimately elevates the superessential principle of naming, whether positively or negatively, beyond what can be expressed by names, even the name of the Trinity, and of the dialectic of the divine *Logos*.[84]

The hyperbolic grammar of the divine names thus both surpasses and is itself surpassed by that of which it speaks. It is surpassed and surpasses speech in one and the same speech that exceeds discursive and intuitive speech and reason. Pseudo-Dionysius seeks, in the Divine Names, to demonstrate how, 'in speaking about God' we should speak not in 'man's wisdom', but rather 'in demonstration of the power which the Spirit stirred up in the Sacred Writers', the prophetic inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the authorship of sacred scripture, 'surpassing [human] speech and knowledge', in 'that Union [of divine unity] which exceeds our faculty' of 'discursive' and 'intuitive reason'.[85] Although this principle of being is absolutely prior to being, it can, nevertheless, be spoken of from among beings, as it has been spoken of in and through the textual media of scripture. He writes: 'hence the truly Pre-existent receives from the Holy Scripture manifold attributions [of divine names] drawn from every kind [gene] of existence', the attributes, names, and predicates that can be said of anything that exists at all.[86] The divine names can, accordingly, not be spoken of from human wisdom, or of foolishness before God, and, indeed, of 'any conception' of discursive and intuitive reason, but rather and only from 'the hidden super-essential Godhead', which remains 'hidden', except as it is 'revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures'.[87] We can only speak analogically, as our speech is surpassed and surpassing, of the 'hidden super-essential Godhead', as God has spoken in and through the divine speech of scripture.

[84] Pseudo-Dionysius, 13., 97 (189).
[85] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 28–29 (51–3).
[86] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 72 (138).
[87] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 28–29 (51–3).

As the hyperbolic source and principle of all being, the *hyperousia* is the principle of all of the higher or hyper-categories. As for Origen, the titles of highest or the Platonic most general kinds (*megista gene*) are given by scripture. Nevertheless, in drawing from scripture, he translates the Platonic *megista gene* into divine attributes: greatness and smallness, same and difference, similar and dissimilar, and rest and motion. Hence, after listing the categories, Pseudo-Dionysius writes that 'all other Attributes', whether of categories or divine names, have 'by their mere existence', and 'qualify all existent things', their hyperbolic source and principle of participation in the One beyond being.[88] Since, however, all of the divine attributes are drawn from scripture, from writing in reference to corporeal things, and, as such, from a corporeal meaning of finite matter, neither Great, Small, Same, nor Different can be attributed to the *hyperousia*, that is, to the divine difference of the Son from the Father, as of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, in a trinitarian difference, except as this difference of the Trinity is shown from the principle of the same. All of the divine names, of movement, life, imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, thought, conception, being, rest, dwelling, union, limit, and infinity exist at this 'most utterly surpassing condition', and yet, only exist as it 'must draw upon the whole creation' from 'the Cause of all things' that hyperbolically exceeds even as it enters into its effects.[89]

The divine Light can be observed as an image of the predicable forms of Goodness, or the Good-Being. The Good is the 'archetype' of Light, in which the divine Good-Being is 'revealed' by Light 'in that image', that is, in the infinite series of 'negative images', the imagination of infinite negativity, and the annulling of the negative proceeding from its source.[90] The divine illumination is, accordingly, an ascent to knowing the higher genera and known as shining from the originary creative source of all that can be known. And yet, as the principle that shines through all created things, the Goodness of the 'all-transcendent Godhead', as it 'reaches from the highest' to the 'lowest', is 'still beyond them all', as, the source of all, it is ever 'remaining superior to those [genera] above and retaining those [species] below', as the species

[88] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.7., 72 (137).
[89] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.5., 33 (60).
[90] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 50 (92).

proceed in and from the higher genera, as ultimately from its creative source.[91] The Light of God is thus not a physical but a 'spiritual Light', which, in its divine illumination, is the ray that 'fills every heavenly mind with spiritual light', which, through this light, 'drives all ignorance and error from all souls' and 'giveth them all a share of holy light' that 'purges their spiritual eyes', through a procession of annulling ignorance, to discover the 'greater measure' that 'shineth in more abundance', 'looking upwards' to the higher genera, 'according to their powers' of knowing the source of light.[92]

This spiritual Light 'above all light' is 'an Originating Beam and an Overflowing Radiance', which, through its divine illumination, illumines 'with its fullness every Mind', the faculties of cognition, and the inferential operations of knowing.[93] It illuminates every aspect of the Mind, 'around it', 'within it', and 'renewing all their spiritual powers', 'embracing them all by its transcendent compass', and 'exceeding them all by its transcendent elevation'.[94] The source of this spiritual light that illumines the mind is radically transcendent, both 'exceeding' and 'embracing' all aspects and operations of the intellect.[95] The radical transcendence of God is the 'entire ultimate principle of light', the 'transcendent Archetype of Light', which, although transcendent, is also 'bearing this light in its womb'—but the exceeding principle, and the embracing receptacle of light in knowing, held together in 'one unifying light'.[96] This spiritual light 'join[s] and unite[s] together those [concepts] that are being illuminated', such that, in uniting these concepts, it both 'perfects them' and 'converts them' 'towards that which truly Is', towards the true being.[97] It 'converts them from their manifold false opinions' of partial truths, and 'unites their different perceptions', 'fancies', or phantasies of untrue concepts 'into one true, pure, and coherent knowledge', that is, 'coherent' in its whole analytical consistency, and in a dialectical unity of analytically coherent concepts, in which the circuit of concepts is completed at the centre.[98]

[91] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 49 (91).
[92] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.5., 51 (94).
[93] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (94).
[94] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (94).
[95] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (94).
[96] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (94).
[97] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (95).
[98] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (95).

As it would later be named by the Medieval Scholastics, the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) is a grammatical formula that expresses this divine Light shining in and through all forms of speech, measure, and geometry. This Light is, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, 'the measure and the numerical principle', that is, the principle of measure, number, and proportion.[99] In its gratuitous gift of all forms, the hierarchical order of forms is a product of divine Light as it gives measure and number to the receptacle content of all that can be counted, measured, and proportioned, especially in the essentially proportioned hyperbolic grammar of analogy. The unreserved gratuity of this light is a gift that 'gives light to all things', and, as a gift of the divine attributes, 'creates', 'vitalizes', 'maintains', and 'perfects them', in participation of its paradigmatic source.[100] The gift of this light shines in and through the forms, magnitudes, and 'measure' of all shapes within the 'universe', 'its eternity', and its 'numerical principle' or principle of quantity, in the 'order', 'embracing power', and 'its Cause and its End', that is the divine and spiritual Light is the source of Beauty.

The divine name of Beauty is called Beauty itself. This paradigm of Beauty itself 'imparts to all things' the 'harmony and splendour in all things', as beauty is 'flashing forth upon them all', and the essentially proportioned harmony 'flashes forth' from among the shining light of all things.[101] The Sun is the visible icon of the invisible creative act of God. For, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, quoting Paul (Rom. 1:20), the 'invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead', where, however, God is the hidden and so invisible creative source which from the Sun is shown to us in visible light.[102] The Pythagorean and Platonic metaphor of the Sun thus establishes the visible analogy of hyperbolic grammar. This 'shining' 'visible image of the Divine Goodness' continues, in its divine illumination, 'faintly re-echoing the activity of the Good', throughout the entire hierarchical order, in every mode of grammatical expression, as each expression of grammar 'can receive its light' of shining participation 'while retaining

[99] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 50 (92)
[100] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 49 (91).
[101] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.6., 51 (95).
[102] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 51 (93).

the utter simplicity of light' at its originary source, even as it 'expands above and below', in the *tonos* or turning to its source, 'throughout the visible world', shining through 'the beams of its own radiance'.[103]

The 'darkness beyond light' is the hyper-luminous annulling of the ground of knowledge, the successive negation of its content, and the 'loss of sign and knowledge' of what is known.[104] For the deprivation of the light of knowing, in the annulling of the ground of that which is known, the successive negation of its content, and the 'loss of sign and knowledge' of what is known.[105] Yet 'in ceasing thus to see or to know' by these ascending abstractions, 'we may learn to know that which is beyond all perception and understanding', of the ascent to the hidden source of knowledge, as ultimately to the superessential principle and source of the divine darkness, beyond, yet radiating in and through light.[106] To see in unknowing is thus to see the superessential darkness that exceeds and yet is causally productive of all being, light, and knowing. This divine darkness can, nevertheless, be discovered, neither in positive nor negative judgments, but rather, and hyperbolically, in the 'praises of a transcendent hymnody', in the praises of the liturgy, and, as in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, in the saturated gestures that shine through the depths of matter in accelerating flights of hyper-negative judgments.[107] To see in agnostic gnosis is thus to see the superessential darkness that exceeds and yet is causally productive of light and knowing.

Like Origen of Alexandria, Pseudo-Dionysius affirms a spiritual sense of divine being convertible to the good, as the source of all intellectual or sensible perception beyond all flux of bodily sensations. All knowledge by sensory perception begins with the Light of being, of Good-being, in the Pythagorean and Platonic metaphor of the Sun 'sharing its illumination' in 'every mode of existence', as it 'sends forth upon all things according to their receptive powers', the 'rays of its undivided Goodness'.[108] Hence, 'all Spiritual beings', whether angel or human, 'whether perceived or percipient', begin in this divine 'illumination', the shining 'ray' of Good-being, that is, in the revelatory

[103] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.4., 50 (92).
[104] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).
[105] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (196).
[106] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 100 (194).
[107] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 2., 101 (194).
[108] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.1., 47 (86).

disclosure of being as true.[109] This divine 'illumination' is a spiritual sense or 'supernatural perception' of the 'hidden nature of things'.[110] The hiddenness of things results from precisely this hyperbola of predication, beyond yet shining through the darkness of its infinite negativity, and the beyond or transcendent principle or beginning that shines through even as its source is never exhausted by its effects.

Angelic minds are non-discursive minds who apprehend divine truths in a single immaterial spiritual intuition, or single instant, prior to time, and the motion of discursive reason. The divine intelligence or angels are said, by Pseudo-Dionysius, to 'exist in a manner surpassing other existence', in life, knowledge, perception, reason, and participation in the Beautiful and the Good.[111] As a manifestation of invisible light, the angel 'kindles itself' as it receives and reflects as in an 'unburnished mirror' 'all the beauty of the Absolute Divine Goodness', of Being, and of the One beyond being or intelligence.[112] The 'light' of the angels is thus a reflection of the divine Light, Beauty, and Good, as ultimately of the 'Secret Silence' of the One beyond the clamour of auditorial intelligence.[113] This 'Secret Silence' is the annulling of the difference of locutions, of signs, and ultimately of any semiotic construction before God. This 'supernatural perception' is at 'rest' in the 'Divine Goodness', the Good-Being, and principle of divine predication or perception, wherein, he writes, all such predicates and perceptions 'are grounded', and even protected, in 'feasts' of all 'good things', the gratuitous *festum bonum* of the Good itself.[114]

Knowledge of the angels is thus distinguished by its apprehension of the 'transcendent archetypes' by illumination only, rather than, as in animal cognition, through the collection and abstraction of bodily and sensory experience amidst the flux of restlessness and change.[115] This 'simple intuition' of single, immaterial forms, and 'spiritual truths of Divine things' is the singular conclusion of a syllogistic inference, in which, as for the syllogism, the discursive, temporal, and spatial form of the premises can be virtually simulated by analysis in and from

[109] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 47 (87).
[110] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4. 48 (87).
[111] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5., 70 (134).
[112] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.22., 63 (119).
[113] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.22., 63 (119).
[114] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 48 (87).
[115] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 48 (87).

this simple ground, which shares in that of God, the Son, the *Logos*, and, through it, of the *logoi* of logic.[116] Sense-perception is an echo of wisdom, of divine wisdom, and, as such, shares in the transparent perception of the angels. The 'super-essential understanding' proceeds from beyond and proceeds in and through even while surpassing all discourse, intuition, and being.[117] This absolutely surpassing principle is characterized as the 'effluent light of the Divine Scriptures', to which we 'lift up our eyes', and towards which 'we strive to ascent unto those Supernal Rays', like Moses with whom we 'gird ourselves for the task with holiness and the reverent fear of God'. In approaching the Burning Bush and ascending Mount Sinai, he 'separates himself' from the world of 'those who have not undergone it', this purification of abstraction, his face shines with 'many lights flash forth with pure and diverse-streaming rays' of knowing the glorious and the good.[118]

The divine name 'Holy of Holies' designates this 'overflowing Causality and excess of Transcendence'.[119] It surpasses essences, intelligences, and thought, even as it unites all that it surpasses, as a universal cause beyond being that gives of being from the revelation of itself in the speech that is the gift of being. The superessential source thus surpasses even as it unites in the cause that is the gift of all that is surpassed, even as in enters in to proceed through that of which it exceeds, and exceeds that into which it enters, in a spiral of ever greater complexity. It bestows, contains, and penetrates the reason, mind, and wisdom of all things eternally united, 'more simple than all simplicity' and 'independent of all things' in 'the transcendence of its Super-Essential Being'.[120] God absolutely unites the knower and the known.

The revolution of the faithful around Truth is ultimately around the omniscience of divine Reason. This 'verily existent Truth' is that 'permanent Ground of the faithful', around which faith in divine Reason eternally 'revolves', cycles in life, and 'build them in the Truth and builds the Truth in them by an unwavering firmness', of the 'simple knowledge of the Truth of those things which they believe'.[121] Nothing,

[116] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.2., 77 (149).
[117] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.1., 28-29 (51–3).
[118] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (193).
[119] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.4., 94 (182).
[120] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.4., 79 (153).
[121] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.4., 79 (153).

he writes, 'shall separate' the faithful who 'believeth in the Truth from the Foundation of that true faith', which, in angelic intuition, as in divine Reason, 'unites the knower and the objects of knowledge', that is, the subject and the object of knowledge, in and by the 'unchanging firmness' of the generic determination of generic divine exemplars or paradigms.[122] In becoming angelic, he writes of how the hierophantic 'teachers' of the Christian faith 'die daily', while 'bearing their natural witness in every word and dee to the single Knowledge of the Truth which Christian possess', the simple absolute Knowledge of God, who, in creating in knowing all we know, is more simple and divine than all other kinds of knowing.[123]

The art of dialectic in Pseudo-Dionysius is thus distinguished by the absolute priority of this paradigmatic cause beyond any productive effect. Its absolute priority is paradigmatic rather than productive of its syllogistic and inferential operations. Logic can, consequently, never conflict with analogy, as logic is always already analogical, and the speech of analogy is spoken *Via Analogia* in and through every speech of logic, even as it enters so as to exceed the quantified forms of formal, syllogistic, and mathematical logic. Since, furthermore, this super-essential unity is 'One' that transcends and causes as its effects any count of one or many, in which the many can only be counted as many by the participation of many ones in the One, the unity of God as 'One' transcends any count of one or many, and one is prior to many. Hence, God can neither be considered as essentially dialectical, dialetheic, nor paradoxical, except in our approach.

In standing beyond the contradiction of positive and negative judgments, God also stands beyond, not only contradiction, but also beyond paradox. This hyperbolic source is the principle, not only of arithmetic, but of geometry, and any geometrical figure. The shape of the world, its shining light of proportionate forms, and the predicable forms of its intelligible perception, are altogether grounded in and given by this creative source in a hyper-geometry beyond all shape, magnitude, and quantity. Pseudo-Dionysius illustrates this higher or hyperbolic geometry, in which this simple monadic point 'contains all the straight lines', which are 'brought together within itself and unified

[122] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.4., 80 (154).
[123] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.4., 80 (154).

to one another, and to the one starting-point from which they began'.[124] Hence the 'radii of a circle are concentrated into a single unity in the centre', the circumference cycles in and from the centre, and the extended figures cycle in and from the monad at their source.[125]

Pseudo-Dionysius schematically distinguishes three motions of the spiritual intelligences of the angels: straight, circular, and spiral. In a circular motion, the angels 'are united to the beginningless and endless illumination of the Beautiful and the Good'.[126] The circular movement of the soul is a 'fixed revolution', 'turning it from the multiplicity without', as it 'draws it together first into itself, and then' from this 'unified condition', 'unites it to those powers which are a perfect Unity', to 'the Beautiful and Good which is beyond all things', that 'is One and is the Same, without beginning or end'.[127] The circular movement thus first collects external multiplicity into an internal circuit that it finally unites in the perfect unity that is paradigmatically caused to participate in the principles of the Beauty, the Good, and the One.

In a straight motion, the angels 'advance' with the 'providential guidance of those beneath them' to 'unerringly accomplish their designs'.[128] The straight motion is thus distinguished from the circular motion by its irreflexive repetition of outgoing sensations, ever progressing forward, without reflecting upon the consequences of its advance. In logic, the straight motion is that of entailment, the circular motion is that of a dialectic that presupposes its end from its beginning, and the spiral motion is that of the dialectical sublation of the inferential advance of the line from one dialectical circuit to the next. In contrast to the circular motion, the straight motion of the soul 'does not enter into itself [and reflect upon its spiritual sense] to feel the stirrings of its spiritual unity', but rather 'goes forth unto the things around it', extends its outer senses, 'and feels an influence coming even from the outer world', 'drawing it into the simple unity of contemplative acts', without the higher reflection upon the principles of its circuit.[129]

[124] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.6., 72 (137).
[125] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.6., 72 (137).
[126] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.8., 52 (97).
[127] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.9., 52 (97).
[128] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.9., 52 (97).
[129] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.9., 52 (97).

In a spiral motion, the circular motion is combined with the straight motion, advancing unerringly from beginning to end, 'immutably in their self-identity', and 'unceasingly around the Beautiful and Good when all identity is sprung'.[130] This spiral motion of the soul is to be 'enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge', explicitly by the 'process of its discursive reason', mingled with 'alternative activities' of spiritual intuition, in which the alterity of the spiral beyond the circle arises from discursive reflection.[131] The spiral is, moreover, distinguished from both the circle and the line by its advance from one circular motion to the next, from one dialectical circuit to the next, and, as such, by the sublation of the aporetic impasse of the former and lower by the latter and higher dialectical circuits. Since, moreover, this spiral is 'unerringly' that of an inferential consequence, or of a syllogism, this dialectical leap, 'sprung from the Beautiful and the Good', is never not inferential, but essentially a dialectical syllogism operating in every figure.[132]

This hyperbolic grammar of analogy is the originary ground for the predication in judgment of God in the 'divine Science' of theology.[133] We must, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, 'attribute unto It [God] all things in one All-Transcendent Unity, absolutely transcending all multiplicity', and, yet, in its radical transcendence, 'starting from Being', it is 'setting in motion the creative Emanation and Goodness, and penetrating all things, and filling all things with Being from Itself', filling being, as being possess God, and yet, even, as being is held by God beyond being.[134] God is the 'Cause and Producer and Begetter of the things signified', of transcendent signification, as well as from the other of 'the Thing signified itself'.[135] Since the power of the Good that is goodness is 'penetrating all things' and 'reacheth not only to the wholly good beings around it, but extendeth even unto the lowest things', as 'each is capable of participating therein', the unrestricted power of the Good penetrates into the productivity of signs.[136] God is the source of all signification, as the 'Bounteous Emanation' of his 'own self-Revelation' from 'his own

[130] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.8., 52 (97).
[131] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.9., 52 (97).
[132] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.8., 52 (97).
[133] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 74 (142).
[134] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 74 (142).
[135] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.14., 57 (107).
[136] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.20., 60 (113).

Transcendent Unity', as it is 'overflowing from the Good into creation', and 'once again returning to the Good'.[137] All of the signs, predicates, and names of God cycle in and from these oracular performances, as these recall and reform the revelatory *topoi* of scripture. He writes: 'all these attributes, if their divine meaning be perceived, signify that He hath a Super-Essential Existence fulfilling all our categories'.[138]

All the Platonic hyper-categories (*megiste gene*) are, in this way, fulfilled in their perfect attribution to the *hyperousia*. Although Jacques Derrida ancestrally presupposes a univocal field of signs, there is, for Pseudo-Dionysius, a higher principle, not only of signification, but also of mediation, in which the principle is the hyperbolic source of measure, similitude, and order among the modes of signification, such that, for any particular mode of signification, there is an inner and essential proportion that holds and unites the semiotic forms of grammar. In contrast to Derrida, Pseudo-Dionysius' divine hyper-semiosis is not a hypothetical regimentation of transcendental infrastructures, nor an infinite deferral of reflexively constructed determinations of meaning, but rather, beyond, not only the affirmative construction, but also, and crucially, all negative deconstruction and deferral of meaning. The super-essential source and name of existence is, in its radical transcendence, not only beyond, but also possessing of, and shown through all things, as of all signs, and the essentially proportioned relationality of signs. The infinite negative deferral of signification is, contra Derrida, thus internally mediated, radically transcendentally and yet equally processing in and through the order of signs, holding together, uniting in ever-greater similitude, and yet equally transcending every such unity of signs in a spiralling pleroma of signs.

This divine omnisemiosis is carried by this dialectical circuit, 'revolving in a perpetual circle for the Good, from the Good, in the Good, and to the Good', that is, to the principle and paradigmatic cause of all existence and signs, ever spirally advancing from one circuit of signification to the next, while 'remaining and returning to itself'.[139] Speech of the divine names is united through the dialectical 'knit together' of the diverse and separate qualities in 'a mutual Godly union'

[137] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.14., 57 (107).
[138] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.8., 73 (138).
[139] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4.14., 57 (107).

of many in one, which can be called 'the Trinity' as 'its supernatural fecundity is revealed in a Threefold Personality'.[140]

The unity of the surpassed and surpassing speech is the paradigmatic *analogon* that binds together the surpassed, apophatic, and equivocal speech of God. It is to speak in a dialectical, ascent, with which we may 'lift up our eyes towards the steep height', of though, speech, and action, the 'ascent unto those Supernal Rays', where the excess of the 'super-essential Godhead' shines amongst the traces of all visible things and intelligible thoughts. Power is convertible to divine Being, Goodness, and Truth.[141] The principle of the Good and the Beautiful is, therefore, this divine omnisemiosis, spoken of as the *Logos*, and spiralling ascent unto the cycles of the Trinity. And yet the dialectical analysis of the Divine Names is incomplete except as it can be named during the celebration of the liturgy. For without the Absolute super-essential Goodness, we celebrate it, not didactically but performatively, in the performance of ritual. The theoretical contemplation of the 'Absolute Super-Essential Godhead' is thus deferred to its liturgical 'celebrating' of It.[142] As before, God can only be predicated as the divine being, and the angelic powers, process in and through the signs of all things, as performed in the celebration of the liturgy, and in 'rejoicing in all things', as 'it anticipates all things in Itself', including the complexity of embodied gesture.[143] The liturgy of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is thus the performative epicentre of the way of speaking of to know of God that is indicated in the *Divine Names*.

The processions of the Trinity are communicated by Christ in every speech. For the undifferentiated Godhead 'becomes differentiated without loss of Undifference', of its super-essential unity, as it is differentiated in and among the divine difference of the divine persons, while yet remaining united within itself, as the difference of many in one.[144] Pseudo-Dionysius thus states that God 'remains One in the act of Self-Multiplication', in a self-differentiation and self-multiplication that paradoxically remains undifferentiated and united in the midst of

[140] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.4., 31 (56).
[141] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.1., 28–29 (51–3).
[142] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5., 69 (133).
[143] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5., 74 (142).
[144] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.9., 43 (79).

its differential multiplicity.[145] This absolute paradox cannot be reduced by analysis to either one or many, but only as the one processes by emanation of one into many, and the many remains with the one. It proceeds from one into many, and of many with one, in the hyperbolic excess of the many in and beyond itself. It is not simply the one among many, but rather the one that cannot be spoken by the many, except as the many proceeds by emanation as one into many, and as many with one. As many with one, it marks an equivocal, apophatic, and negative judgment that awaits to be reversibly mediated as it is spoken *Via Analogia* in the speech of analogy.

Dionysius thus reasserts the total transcendence of the divine undifferentiated God beyond any countable unity, multiplicity, or comparison of multiplicities.[146] As one simple Unity, God is 'raised above limitation', even as God enters in so as to exceed every limit, in a hyperbolic excess in and beyond the positive, as the positive is negated, and as even the negative is negated.[147] As the beginning and end of all things, God transcends all opposition between the finite and the infinite, time and eternity, proceeding eternally and infinitely in and from each finite interval of time in one salvific act. He writes, 'that perfect Peace [unity of opposites] penetrates to all things through the simple, unalloyed presence of Its unifying power, uniting all things and binding the extremities together' as one.[148] The one essence of the undifferentiable Godhead is beyond perfection, form, and limit, as a 'simple Unity raised above all limitation', even as it can act as a cause of form, limit, and measure, that 'penetrates to all things', speech, and grammar, in a hyperbolic grammar 'at once [in] and beyond them in its unfailing bounties and never-ending activities' of speaking in and beyond any positive judgment of being.[149] Against Giles Deleuze, Pseudo-Dionysius rejects the 'reduplication' of 'one exceeding simplicity', which embraces this total complexity elevated in an infinite transcendent unity, exceeding simplicity, affirming complexity, and yet rejecting reduplication, for an identically repeated duplication would be a complexity that does not resolve to proceed from the simple origin

[145] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.9., 43 (79).
[146] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.9., 43 (79).
[147] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.1., 95 (184).
[148] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.2., 90 (175).
[149] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.1., 95 (184).

of its principle source.[150] And in elevating God beyond the negative opposition of the finite and infinite, destroying the negative, and producing a partial good from even this destruction, he also anticipates the recycling of the negative in Hegel's dialectical *Aufhebung*.

The divine Peace thus 'bestows' upon all things 'the unities, the identities, the communions' of 'the mutual attractions' of opposites, which 'shows forth all Its power in a single act' to indivisibly unite things as one, and 'permeate the world [of difference] without departing from Its own Identity'.[151] In uniting opposites, it 'is still and silent and keeps in Itself and within Itself' such that it 'is wholly and entirely one transcendent Unity in itself', beyond all multiplicity, difference, and negation, even as, in transcending, it also possesses, and is the cause of that which it possesses, 'entering into Itself and Multiplying itself', in an immanent virtual multiplication that is preserved and for itself.[152] As the 'Fount of Very Peace and all Peace', God, as singular, unites all things as singular, without loss.[153]

The last name of God, 'God of Gods' is autonymic, that is, the name of itself, or the name itself, in which, as in the identity of the Platonic paradigms, naming itself is named without loss.[154] There can, from this end that also is its beginning, be no 'reduplication of the titles'.[155] For, in the consummation of this dialectical circuit, Pseudo-Dionysius has collected all of the divine names, attributes, and way of speaking of God, in and from the creative source of the 'divine science'. As the creative source of difference and attraction, God is the 'Fount of Very Peace and of all Peace, both in general and in particular'.[156] For God 'joins all things together in a unity', being 'mingled with their opposites', to be 'inseparably united without any interval between them', so as to 'stand unmixed each in its own form' of a 'clear and distinct individuality'.[157] All of the 'titles', divine names, and attributes, 'must be given' and spoken of 'in an absolute sense' transcending the relative, partial, and finite

[150] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 5.9., 74 (142).
[151] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.2., 91 (173).
[152] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.1., 90 (174).
[153] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.2., 90 (175).
[154] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.1., 93 (181).
[155] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.1., 93 (181).
[156] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.2., 90 (175).
[157] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 11.2., 90 (175).

senses of the corporeal world 'to the All-Transcendent Cause' of what can be spoken of God as the creative source of speech itself.[158]

To call God 'one' is likewise to say that God 'is all things under the form of Unity through the Transcendence of its single Oneness and its Cause of all things', all unities, and any count as one among the multiplicities of things.[159] The transcendental meaning of unity is, here, assimilated to the divine naming of the unity of God, without any hint of a transcendental reserve, except as this divine name can both transcend and cause the unity of being. Any semblance of the univocal speech, is, for this same reason, assimilated to a divine naming of the super-exemplary, with which being is spoken as both the transcendent cause and speech of being, even as such a speech is assimilated into analogy, as in the *analogia entis*. The 'One Cause of all things' is, thus, 'before all Unity and Multiplicity', even as it 'gives to all Unity and Multiplicity their definite bounds' *Via Analogia* in and through the speech of analogy.[160] God exceeds any judgment of quantity, positive or negative, or measure of proportion, just as God exceeds goodness, both by super-exemplarily possessing and paradigmatically causing all of these positive attributes. And God causes not any positive judgment, but, through the *Via Negativa*, by causing the effects of all positive judgments, in any judgment of quantity, measure, or proportion. The super-essential unity of God as the transcendent cause of any count as one or multiple thus effectively disallows in advance any quantified speech that could engender a contradiction in analogy, participation, or the processions of divine and human speech of analogy. God can, for this reason, be designated as the concrete *analogia entis* of all analogies, and, indeed, the absolute middle of any speech of analogy.

The unity of God, as God can be called 'One', is, for Dionysius contra Plotinus not the One (*hen*) over the multiplicity of the Intellect (*nous*), as of all of the hypostases of being, but, rather, the divine name of unity that transcends even as it can cause the unity of being, and even of any quantified speech of being, as 'the elementary basis of all things'.[161] As against Alain Badiou's argument for pure multiplicity, Pseudo-Dionysius

[158] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 12.3., 93 (182).
[159] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.2., 95 (185).
[160] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.2., 95 (185).
[161] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.3., 96 (187).

argues 'without the One there can be no Multiplicity', for what is many in parts is one in entirety, this unity contains all parts, and the multiple is the product of a prior division of the unit, that is of the One.[162] The One God, in speaking to cause one in many can also dialectically combine, mix, and 'knit together' many in one, in a dialectical circuit of the one in many and the many in one, in a hyperbolic speech that hyperbolically enters into so as to exceed both the *Via Positiva* and the *Via Negativa*.[163] Hence, the 'One God' is not a one over many, but, on the contrary, one that enters into so as to exceed the many, a one in many, and a many with one, where any speech of the many is spoken hyperbolically in excess of the many, as the many is suspended by participation in many ones, and of ones in the One God, who alone causes to enact one in many, and many with one.

The goal of this mystical ascent is 'union with him whom neither being nor understanding can contain', as, in 'the absolute renunciation of thyself and all things', one 'shalt be led upwards to the ray of that divine darkness which exceeded all existence'.[164] This spiralling ascent to union with God or *theosis* thus demands a dialectical reversal of positive in negative judgements, an exploration of the negative, and of the nothing below God. The *Via Negativa* that ascends by abstraction from the particular of the universal results in the restriction of the semantic scope of language, in a semantic restriction that is a semantic negation, or, more simply, a negation of the negative speech of the *Via Negativa* that is a double-negation that annuls the *Via Negativa*. The negative method is, in this auto-annulling negativity, a negative moment prior to and productive of the positive proportioning of analogy *Via Analogia*.

With his reversal, of unknowing in knowing, Pseudo-Dionysius claims 'the Divinest Knowledge of God' is 'received through Unknowing', as it 'transcends the mind', as the mind is 'turning away from all things', 'leaving itself behind', so that, in turning from, leaving, and being 'united to the Dazzling Rays' of divine Light, this way of knowing is 'being from them and in them, illumined by the unsearchable depth of

[162] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.2., 96 (186).
[163] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.3., 96 (187).
[164] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.1., 99 (191).

Wisdom'.[165] The path to know of God has, in this way, been prepared by God. For the path to knowledge of God is projected from God, 'through all things, and apart from all things', not in the world, but rather beyond and possessing the world, by 'Intuition, Reason, Understanding, Apprehension, Perception, Conjecture, Appearance, Name'.[166] Hence, although God cannot be 'grasped', or known as 'anything in the world', God can, nevertheless, come to be known by the path that God has prepared, that is, through revelation, inspiration, and illumination.[167]

At the completion of this movement, Pseudo-Dionysius reaches a coincidence of knowledge and non-knowing. Since God of the divine essence cannot be known, all knowledge of God is ignorance. Yet since God can be known as God as shown Godself through illumination, revelation, inspiration, and God creates in knowing all creatures as they know, every discursive movement of judgment, argument, and coming to knowledge terminates in non-knowledge, cycling through lines of knowing in and from the centre of unknowing, that is, knowing in unknowing. God is known through all knowing, and equally unknown in all unknowing, or knowing in unknowing. And yet, this ostensibly paradoxical coincidence of knowing and unknowing is reversed from above, as God knows in creating all creatures, even as creatures know of God, and, in creating, also illuminates, to prepare the path for knowledge of God. For God is, he writes, 'called "Word" [*Logos*] or "Reason" by the Holy Scriptures [Jn. 1:1]' because God 'is the Bestower of Reason and Mind [*Nous*] and Wisdom [*Sophia*]', 'because [God] contains beforehand His own Unity the causes of all things, and because He penetrates all things'.[168] As in Alexandrian *Logos*-theology, God can, for Pseudo-Dionysius, be known in and by a dialectical ascent to knowledge of the divine *Logos*.[169] God is thus, not only darkness, but the 'Dazzling Rays' of divine illumination into the 'unsearchable depth of Wisdom' in a simple unification of knowing and being in and by these dazzling rays.[170] Hence, Although Pseudo-Dionysius concludes in unknowing, and restricts dialectic to hyper-negative spirals, his

[165] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3, 79 (152).
[166] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3., 79 (152).
[167] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3., 79 (152).
[168] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3., 79 (152).
[169] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.4., 79 (153).
[170] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3., 79 (152).

paradoxical coincidence of knowing and unknowing can be dialectically reversed, as God knows in creating all creatures who know in and by the light of divine Rays.

Knowledge of God thus advances through negation, to the annulling of negation, along the path projected, in and from the cause beyond all things, both positive and negative. Since God, of the divine Nature, cannot be known directly, God can only be known indirectly, not by a positive judgment of what God is, but rather by a negative judgment of what God is not. This 'advance' through 'negation and transcendence', heavenly, or hyper-negations, is, furthermore, implicitly dialectical, as, even when restricted to a lower or hypo-dialectical sphere, it divides, abstracts, and analyses the negations of any negative judgment in an ascending series of condensed dialectical functions of abstraction above and determinations in and from the ground of the 'divine Exemplars'.[171] Since, however, even this opposition that stands in and against its originary source is a negation that will be annulled, the grammatical declension of this 'diabolical intelligence' can itself be annulled in and by the dialectic of hyper-negative judgments proceeding in and from its source. For, Pseudo-Dionysius writes, the 'lack' of Mind, Sensation, and so on, 'must be predicated of God', 'not by defect', privation, or absence, but rather, and plentifully, 'by excess', that is, as a hyper-negative judgment, beyond yet in mind, that is, supra-rational.[172] Since, he writes, 'the Mind of God embraces all things in an utterly transcendent knowledge', not only the positive, but also the negative, and, as such, this negative opposition of intelligence that stands in and against its source, the divine Mind 'anticipates within Itself the knowledge of them all'.[173] Similarly, angelic knowledge is, not that which proceeds from particular species to universal genera, but rather from the genera in and through their specific determinations. In anticipating from the 'very beginning', and 'bringing them into existence' all things within itself, the divine Mind absolutely, and the angelic intelligences relatively 'know all other things inward', through an inward, unmediated, and

[171] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.3., 78 (151).
[172] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.2., 78 (150).
[173] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.2., 78 (150).

transparent intuition of truth.[174] It knows in creating all who know, and even as they know.

The divine Intellect is the principle of knowing that contains in its simple absolute centre of causal operations knowledge of all things in knowing itself alone. It 'gains Its knowledge of things from those things, but of Itself and in Itself', as 'it possesses, and hath conceived beforehand in a causal manner' 'the knowledge and the being of them all'.[175] It does not perceive genera under species, but rather, proceeding from universal to particular, from the genera in and through their specific determinations. Hence, it does not know things from an object as opposed to the subject, from predicates of subjects, or from finite syllogistic inferences, but rather, transparently and immediately, as all circuits of knowing circulated in and from the centre that is eternally known of and in itself.

Although God knows in creating all creatures, Pseudo-Dionysius denies that creatures can know God as God knows all things of and in Godself. We 'know not God by His Nature'.[176] For the divine nature is 'unknowable and beyond the reach of all Reason and Intuition'.[177] And yet, he affirms that 'by means of that ordering of all things, which (being as it were projected out of Him)', 'images and semblances of His Divine Exemplars', and the radiant showing of the divine nature through the circulation of images, he writes, 'we mount upwards' by 'advancing through the Negation and Transcendence of all things and through a conception of an Universal Cause, towards That Which is beyond all things'.[178]

Divine knowledge is not simply of God beyond the world, but absolutely of all things as created and known by God. One creative act contains the knowledge of all that can be discovered in a singular inventive act. And yet this one creative act adds nothing to God. For God knows absolutely all things in and through the simple knowledge of God. The divine Intellect thus knows in creating, and creates in knowing all things. Similarly, the angels know in creating and create in knowing, first through themselves, then of God, and finally of all things

[174] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.2., 78 (150).
[175] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.2., 78 (150).
[176] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 3., 78 (151).
[177] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 3., 78 (151).
[178] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 3., 78 (151).

as created, always cycling in and from God. All the forms of grammar, of negation, and of hyperbolas cycle, in this way, in and from God, who knows in creating all forms. And, in creating even those creatures who know, God knows all things in and through the knowing of creatures.

Pseudo-Dionysius thus describes how God can be known in a heavenly, hyperbolic, and 'transcendent sense'.[179] As examples of hyper-negative and alpha privative judgments, he lists 'ineffable', 'nameless', 'incomprehensible', 'unsearchable'.[180] 'Very Wisdom' is the 'Fount of wisdom' that is 'Transcending all wisdom and understanding'.[181] For 'God [is] so overflowing with wisdom that there is no limit to His understanding', as 'He even transcends all Reason, Intelligence, and Wisdom'.[182] The paradox of divine foolishness is the 'absurdity implied in the word' that 'hints at the ineffable truth', in a leap from the contradictory implication to a higher ground.

The 'transcendence' of Wisdom, is likened to the 'divine foolishness' of human wisdom before the Wisdom of God.[183] All human thought is, he suggests, a kind of error, or every particular and relative judgment is false, when spoken of the God who is absolute and thereby beyond any and all relative judgments. This 'higher sense', from the 'strangeness and absurdity implied in the word', is the hyperbolic sense, transcending yet proceeding in and through the senses of the world, of hyper-negative judgments, which, he writes, 'transcends [in] its intellectual nature' the 'superficial meaning of the Divine and Ineffable Truth', even as 'the Intellect communes with the things that are beyond it', and proceeds in and from the superabundant plenitude of transcendent signification.[184]

The transcendent cause from which God creates the world thus contains a paradoxical coincidence of positive and negative judgments of all attributes as it causes every effect of creation. The 'Universal and Transcendent Cause' must, through this *Via Analogia*, in which there is the coincidence of contrary *Via Positiva* and *Via Negativa*, 'both be nameless and also possess the names of all things': for, *Via Negativa*, it is nameless in that it cannot be named by any positive judgment; and

[179] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 77 (147).
[180] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 76 (147).
[181] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 76 (147).
[182] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 76 (147).
[183] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 76 (147).
[184] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 7.1., 76 (147).

yet it must also 'possess the names of all things', as the principle analogy and paradigmatic cause of any positive judgment of any analogate of any speech.[185] And yet, in this coincidence of contraries, he denies that there can be any contradiction in both affirming and denying all attributes of the transcendent cause: for since the transcendent cause 'proceeds and surpasses' all effects, including any of the effects that can be called contradictions, the transcendent cause is 'beyond all positive and negative distinctions', neither positive nor negative, as one in many and many with one.[186] Rather, this 'transcendent' cause, as the superessential or universal cause 'possesses all the positive attributes' that could be affirmed as true, good, and beautiful of the world, even as, in a 'stricter sense', it does not possess them, as it 'transcends them all', that is, all such positive judgments or attributions of these positive attributes.[187]

There can, accordingly, be 'no contradiction between affirming and denying' the attributes of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.[188] For, as the superessential principle and source of all being, intelligence, and any attribution at all, it 'surpasses all deprivation', all that is deprived of its plenitude, all lesser degrees of perfection, and, as such, stands 'beyond all positive and negative distinctions' of judgments or attributions of its source.[189] The 'transcendent cause' of speech can, through this inversion of the *Via Negativa*, proceed, through the chain of analogical causation, to cause as its effects the analogates of any speech, in a procession from divine to human speech, and of human in imitation of divine speech, in which the hyperbolic excess of speech imitates the hyperbolic excess of signification.[190]

The Trinity thus shines from the beginning to the end of the Dionysian Corpus. In the *Outlines of Divinity*, Pseudo-Dionysius recounts how he has exhibited the positive method, where, in a descent of division, God's undifferentiated unity can be called single, and God's differentiated divine persons can be called 'trinal', or trinitarian, in the natures of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.[191] Again in the *Divine Names*, Pseudo-

[185] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 1.6., 35 (63).
[186] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (193).
[187] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 99 (192).
[188] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 99 (192).
[189] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (193).
[190] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 1., 100 (193).
[191] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).

Dionysius describes God as 'trinal', three-nal, or trinitarian.[192] He refers to the 'those conceptions' of the 'affirmative method' in the *Outlines of Divinity*.[193] He names God's 'single', 'holy nature', as 'trinal', and as three-nal, or trinitarian.[194] He elaborates 'the nature of the Fatherhood and Sonship which we attribute unto It', that is, the relation of Fatherhood and Sonship of one single divine nature, or *ousia*.[195] He also elaborates upon those 'articles of faith' 'concerning the Spirit', without, however, attributing the Spirit alongside the Father and the Son.[196] The *Via Positiva* is thus a descending division of positive attributes of one God in three divine persons, first of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and, thereafter, through the differential divisions of all things. The way to attribute these hypostatic relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit is, likewise, through the *Via Negativa*, through an infinite hyper-negative ascent proceeding in and from the principle source of the 'interior rays of Its goodness', which, in lieu of the hypostatic processions, these 'rays' 'have their being and remain immovably in that state of rest, which [are] both within their Origin and within themselves co-eternal', that is, eternally coincident, radiant, and yet originally and immovably at rest as the principle source of the highest genera.[197]

The Trinity is undivided as a 'common Unity' of three in one 'without distinction' of names, except as the undifferentiated name of God is differentially named of the divine persons, proceeding, through this difference, from the Father to the Son, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son.[198] Its undifferentiated name is that of a 'oneness above Unity', in a paradoxical coincidence of unitary 'namelessness' and a 'multiplicity of names', that is, of one and many, in which the many proceeds through the difference of its hyperbolic excess from and for the making of many as one.[199] In its undifferentiated oneness, the unity of the 'utterly Undifferentiated and Transcendent Unity' is 'above all Affirmation and Negation' in 'its universal Affirmation and universal Negation', of divine positive and negative judgments proceeding in

[192] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[193] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[194] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[195] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[196] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[197] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 101 (196).
[198] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.3., 39 (69).
[199] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.3., 39 (69).

and beyond the judgments of the *Via Positiva* and the *Via Negativa* of differentiated discourse.[200]

The differential speech of the three divine persons thus radiates as it is reflected in and through one another, mingled as many made one, even as, through this reflective radiance, it is also distinguished as many in one. An 'undifferentiated' name belongs to one God, as the entire Godhead, and yet 'the differentiated names', the 'super-essential names', belong to the Father, Son, and Spirit, in which the divine names are first differentiated in the naming of the Son from the Father, and second differentiated in the naming of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, even the difference of naming is super-essentially united in the undifferentiated name of God.[201] The difference of the divine persons is first differentiated into 'divine off-shoots of the Paternal Godhead', where the paternity of God is the fecund generation like the 'blossoms' and 'super-essential shinings' of differential multiplicity from and for the undifferentiated unity of God.[202] This differentiation of the naming of the Son is, moreover, repeated in the differentiation of the naming of Jesus, as this difference is repeated in 'our nature', as well as in 'all the mysteries of Love and Being therein displayed' in each hyperbolic excess over a prior and generic identity.[203] This divine difference is, thereafter, traced through the differential grammar of scripture, as scripture is inscribed by the power of the Holy Spirit with the 'super-essential shinings' of this trinitarian procession in creation.[204]

The Trinity, that God is one and three, one and many, or one and not-one is not an absolute contradiction precisely for the reason that God cannot be counted, and contradicted, in any count of many one, as one and three, except as the 'utter self-Union' of the undifferentiable One God is, in its 'divine fecundity' expressed differentially in the three titles of the three divine persons, of Father, Son, and Spirit.[205] The negative judgment of any quantified speech, counting of number, and of contradiction, can, accordingly, negate so as to disallow in advance any contradiction of the Trinity. The Trinity is at once also the

[200] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.3., 39 (69).
[201] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.3., 38 (68).
[202] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.6., 41 (74).
[203] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.3., 38 (68).
[204] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.6., 41 (74).
[205] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 13.3., 97 (188).

differentiation of the super-essential God, as 'each of the divine persons' 'possesses its own distinct existence', and as the 'attributes of the Super-Essential divine generation' can be not interchangeably attributed in their difference to these differentiable divine persons.[206] For since the 'All-creative Godhead transcends all such symbols' of speech, writing, and thought, the source of speech is 'beyond apprehension', and cannot be communicated, except first *Via Negativa* in negative judgments, and yet finally, through the negation of its negativity, *Via Analogia* in the procession of positive judgements suspended in the speech of analogy.[207]

This trinitarian procession of the speech of analogy from and for the 'undifferentiated activity of the whole Godhead' is 'wholly and entirely communicated' by each of the divine persons of the Trinity, as the centre of a circle is shared in equally by the infinitude of its radii, or as the form of a single seal is shared in and by all of its impressions, in the paradigmatic procession from one into many, which can be equally communicated in and by all three of the divine persons, paradigmatically and apophatically in and through the created world.[208] The difference of the divine persons of the Trinity is thus the focal difference of any and all differentia, in the *Via Negativa* of equivocal speech of divine transcendence, as well as in the *Via Analogia* speech of analogy. Pseudo-Dionysius writes: 'we must not suppose that Difference in God means any variation of His utterly unchanging Sameness'.[209] All negation, difference, and multiplicity are rather subsumed as nothing in a higher plenitude, sameness, and 'undisturbed' unity, in which the attribution of difference is annulled, except as this difference of the ever-greater dissimilarity is enacted by its transcendent excess.[210]

As God is the Cause and condition of Similarity, and even the 'Fount of Very Similarity', 'all Similarity in the world possess its quality' of similarity as 'a trace of divine Similarity'.[211] Since, moreover, this divine Similarity is hyperbolic, transcending yet possessing Similarity, it also transcends Similarity, and, as such, is evermore dissimilar, or an ever-greater dissimilarity. This 'ever-greater dissimilarity' thus coincides

[206] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.5., 39 (71).
[207] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.5., 40 (72).
[208] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.5., 40 (72).
[209] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 9.5., 85 (165).
[210] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 9.5., 85 (165).
[211] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 9.5., 86 (166).

with ever-greater similarity, as the same thing is both like and unlike God, that is, both more and less similar and dissimilar in every way that it is spoken. The originary creative difference, of creation from its creator, and of the *hyperousia* creative source of the hypercategory of difference is thus the originary source from which derives every difference.

Not only the superessential source, but Jesus too is above all essence. Pseudo-Dionysius characterizes Jesus as 'being above all essence'.[212] Hence, it is not merely God beyond the world that is superessential, but, in Christ, God within the world, and God celebrated in the sacraments who is superessential, as God in Christ is incarnationally present throughout the whole world. Analogy is differentiated as by an 'act of God's benevolence', in the kenotic gift of the 'Super-Essential Word', as it can 'completely take Human Substance and human flesh', in the divine differentiation, filial procession, and incarnation of Christ, in which this divine difference is consummated on the cross wherewith God can 'do and suffer all those things', every difference, and every opposition, in an absolute opposition, negation, and negativity of apophatic and equivocal speech in and for a further reversal, positing, and proportion, which is the mediation in Christ as the absolute middle of the *Via Analogia*.[213]

In the incarnation of the Son, Jesus who is above all essence has entered into an essential state 'where all the truths of human nature' and 'all the other revelations of Scripture' of the Trinity meet to be communicated by Christ, from divinity to humanity, and from humanity of the sacred doctrines of divinity, in the divine names or 'metaphorical titles' that are 'applied to the nature of God', in a reciprocal communication of the divine names.[214] The incarnation of Christ is thus the central communicative channel, with which the equivocal apophatic speech of the divine, in its absolute opposition and negativity, is reversibly mediated in the positing of proportions, and the proportions that are traced through any speech of the *analogia entis*. Since, further, this speech of the divine is of the first principles of any possible speech, writing, and knowledge, all knowledge, including of

[212] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (197).
[213] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.6., 40 (73).
[214] Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 3., 102 (197).

the science of logic, depends upon this Christic communicability of the speech of analogy in the absolute middle of the *analogia entis*.

Christ is, for this reason, central to the *Via Analogia* and indeed to any analogical judgment, with which humans can speak of and for Christ in God. For the communicability of the Trinity in the speech of analogy is, moreover, the only way in which 'all Divine things' can be communicated from divinity to humanity, and by humanity of divinity, as 'their ultimate nature' and 'their own original being' is, apart from this communicability, 'beyond Mind, and beyond all Being and Knowledge', even of any knowledge of analogical judgments that would be affirmed in the speech of analogy. The speech of analogy is thus the speech, not only of divinity to humanity, but of divinity by humanity, in any speech of God—any theology.

Via Analogia: The Way of Analogy

At the centre of this Trinitarian grammar is a way of speaking of God by analogy. The word Analogia (*αναλογια*) was first used in ancient Greek mathematics to name a relation (*ana*) of two words (*logia*), measures, or ratios.[215] In a proportion, the relation of two terms is reflected from the first ratio to determine the relation of the first to the second ratio. The infinite reflection of these successive ratios is then determined in the relation of one to another, as ultimately of the relationality of all as one, in the ordered hierarchy of the internally proportioned created world. Although the expression 'analogy of being' (*analogia entis*) was first used in the thirteenth century by the Latin Scholastic reception of Avicenna by Albert and Aquinas, and was only later rigorously formulated by Francisco Suárez and Thomas Cajetan, the intellectual coordinates of this grammatical formula can arguably already be discovered in the speculative grammar of Pseudo-Dionysius.[216]

[215] For the earliest known use of the word *analogia*, see Hermann Diels & Walther Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 5th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann Verlag, 1934–1935), 396, 435. Cf. Battista Mondin, The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), 1–4; J.F. Anderson, The Bond of Being (London: Herder, 1954), p. 15, n. 37.

[216] Alain de Libera, "Les sources Greco-Arabes de la theorie medieval de l'analogie de l'etre", Les Études philosophiques (1989): 330-332. See Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of its Background and Interpretation of its Use by Thomas Aquino*

As the foregoing commentary has begun to illustrate, the way of speaking of the divine names is also the creation of a new grammar, in which the hyper-negative judgments of the 'Way of Negation', that is the *Via Negativa*, are carried along by the hyperbolic, transcendentally referring, yet essentially proportioned judgments of the 'Way of Analogy', that is, the *Via Analogia*. The *Via Analogia* can thus be shown to be the proper name for the *Via Negativa*, the way of hyperbolic or hyper-negative judgments, and the ascending series of negations, which, in its infinite negativity, are finally annulled, and yet, from a source beyond both the positive and the negative, are produced in the kenotic descent of the divine *Logos* into the virtual depths of the sign.

Before modern nihilism, Pseudo-Dionysius has collected this flight of infinite negativity into the hyperbolic arcs of the angelic hierarchy that continuously answers to the kenotic descent of Christ, who on the Cross destroys the tragic agon of ungrounded negation. Negation is, in the Dionysian Corpus, more than simply the immediate opposition to affirmation. For, in its ascending series of negative judgments of what 'is not' God, this infinite repetition of hyberbolic or hyper-negative judgments of God is annulled by the God who transcends all negations, and yet, in a reciprocal determination, is equally constituted from the higher ground in the circuit of creation that is consummated in the incarnation.

In this reciprocation of relations, the originary meaning of negation is shown to be a syncategorematic opposition of one from another, of difference, and, ultimately, of an absolute differentiation of sameness to otherness that descends from unity into multiplicity. The 'nothing' is, accordingly, reconceived, not simply as the inverse 'not' of something, and not nihilistically as the chthonic non-ground that produces the ground both of being and nothing, but rather, and more Christologically, of a dissimulation of this theological grammar of analogy in an infinite repetition of negation that would attempt to hold its infinite negativity in a fixed and unremitting opposition against its creative source and consummate finale.

(Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1953); George Klubertanz, St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Synthesis (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1960); Bernard Montagnes, The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas, trans. E.M. Macierowski (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004).

As later in John Scottus Eriugena and Nicholas Cusanus, the focal meaning of the negative is, for Pseudo-Dionysius, the '*Maior Dissimilitudo*' of the 'ever-greater dissimilitude' of the world from God. For, the expression 'superessential' (*hyperousia*) is a poetic synecdoche for the hyperbolic grammar, in which, as in ritual doxologies, God is spoken of in hyperbolic arcs of essential proportions that exceed so as to enter into that of which God first creates and in every moment consummates. The *Via Negativa* of equivocal judgments is thus essential to the *Via Analogia*, in which the positive judgement of the analogates is related as by a proportionate similitude to the principle analogon. And yet since the negative is spoken of from this superessential source, there could be no *Via Negativa*, no negation, and, indeed, no difference at all, apart from this Christological centre that is grammatically approached in the *Via Analogia*.

This Christian and Trinitarian grammar can thus be called upon to answer the challenge of Deconstruction. Jacques Derrida argued, in his essay 'How to Avoid Speaking: On Denials', the *Via Negativa* is either surreptitiously produced from the circuitous processions of divine power, or, if its ground is annulled, of the negation of that negativity, which anarchically negates its own posited ground, in a lateral flight of negation *ad infinitum*.[217]

As Jean-Luc Marion has described, he argues that apophantic predication is always presented as a 'paradoxical hyperbole' where 'negation is everywhere but never by itself', so that 'negative theology' does not annul the essence, Being, or truth of God, but rather denies them so as to better re-establish them, in something like a hyperbole.[218] Marion distinguishes, at this point, the 'paradoxical hyperbole', in which the negation 'hides within' a 'secret reaffirmation' of the subject, from the dialectical hyperbole as described above, in which the negation of the immediate mode of attribution is produced in and from the self-mediating circuit of analogy.[219]

[217] Jacques Derrida, 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials'. Trans. Ken Frieden. In: *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 73–142.

[218] Jean-Luc Marion. 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"'. In: God, the Gift, and Postmodernism (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 23.

[219] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 23.

Derrida instead defines negative theology as the hypothesis that all predicative language is 'inadequate to the essence, in truth, to the hyperessentiality (the being beyond Being) of God: consequently, only a negative ("apophatic") attribution can claim to approach God, and to prepare us for a silent intuition of God'.[220] It is, thus, defined negatively as a hypothesis of the inadequacy of predicative language to attribute qualities of God. And since the subject is absolute, this inadequacy of attribution results in an infinite repetition of negations, or an infinite negativity: 'this rhetoric of negative determination, endlessly multiplying the defences and the apophatic warnings... neither positive nor negative... not even subject to a dialectic with a third moment, without any possible sublation'.[221] There can, for Derrida, be no *tertium quid* intermediation of the first positing and the second negating in a 'third moment' simply because he disallows in advance the dialectical analysis of negation or denials into the essential proportions of analogy.

Once, however, apophantic discourse is analysed into logical-grammatical form without a 'third possibility', then it becomes 'sterile, repetitive, mechanical' as a 'becoming theological of all discourse'.[222] This infinite inadequate attribution then 'calls for another syntax' that exceeds the 'order and structure of predicative discourse', as a 'rhetoric that renounces knowledge, conceptual determination, and analysis'.[223] 'God's name would', he writes, 'then be the hyperbolic effect of that negativity or all negativity that is consistent in its discourse'.[224] He, thereafter suggests that apophatic theology leads to atheism, where God is the 'truth of all negativity'.[225] In analysing apophatic discourse into a univocal grammar, he renders the negative as 'absolutely heterogeneous', or as absolutely other—utterly bereft of internal and analogical relations.

In response to Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion argues that Pseudo-Dionysius 'isolates "negative theology"' from the internally mediated circuits of the celestial and ecclesial hierarchy.[226] Where Derrida had denied a 'third moment' of any 'possible sublation' of the negative

[220] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 74.
[221] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 74.
[222] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 76.
[223] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 75.
[224] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 76.
[225] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 76.
[226] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24.

in and by the positive,[227] Marion argues that Pseudo-Dionysius uses negation in a 'process that includes not two but three elements'.[228] For since the infinite series of ascending negative judgments terminates at its superessential source that hyperbolically exceeds so as to enter in and produce both the negative and the positive, this abstract opposition of one to another is internally mediated in concentric circuits of the reciprocating production of all such hyperbolic or hyper-negative judgments in and by an unsurpassably higher positive plenitude. 'The game is', Marion writes, 'therefore not played out between two terms, affirmation and negation, but between three, different from and irreducible to each other: it is possible to not understand, indeed to not take seriously, this three-fold division, but it cannot be denied that Dionysius spoke and thought in this way'.[229]

The third term that stands 'between' the 'two terms' of 'affirmation and negation' is nothing less than the divine name of God 'beyond being', the contrast of the positive and the negative, and any dyadic opposition of one to another.[230] As such, it is above any series of negations, even the infinitely repeated negation of the differed difference that is *différance*. Hence, Marion interprets the God who 'transcends negation' as the agent of the cancellation of contraries in an 'inadequate attribution' of negation, while Derrida refuses the double-negation that cancels the contraries, so as to infinitely repeat the negativity of the inadequate attribution.[231]

One could, however, argue, at this critical point, that Marion has neglected to develop the stronger dialectical argument against Derrida. For we can, in a more Trinitarian way, argue that if the divine *Logos* is the ground of dialectic, and this dialecticity of the *Logos* is in Pseudo-Dionysius not totally suppressed but more radically grammatically articulated, then the grammatical force of negation could only be sustained as both the positive and the negative are first annulled but finally produced in a dialectical reversal and reciprocal determination of all negations.

[227] Derrida. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials', 74.
[228] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24.
[229] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24.
[230] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24.
[231] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, MT, 5., 103 (201).

In its utmost acceleration, the arc of ascending negations terminates in an infinite negativity that is equally an absolute negation of any prior metaphysical ground, whether of God or of grammar. Yet since this absolute negation ultimately destroys its own ground, and in displacing one ground for another ultimately turns the negative into the positive, this acceleration must be cancelled and reversed in the production of both the positive and the negative from the creative source of a more originary plenitude, which can, through the circuits of systematic theology, again be collected into the angelic hierarchy of a Christian and Trinitarian ontology.

Since, therefore, Marion calls for a dialectical double-negation, even as he, in this triple *epoche* of logic as metaphysics, refuses to admit of the conceptual sublation (*Aufhebung*) of Hegelian dialectic[232], his answer to Jacques Derrida's critique can arguably only succeed if Pseudo-Dionysius' hyperbolic grammar can again be collected into the angelic hierarchy of a Christian and Trinitarian ontology. In Trinitarian Ontology the accelerating flights of infinite negativity are reciprocally produced in and by the kenotic descent of the divine *Logos* unto the ritual performance of incarnational prayers, rites, and liturgy. Most expressly in the liturgy, the negation of the *Via Negativa* is not the empty denial of an equally naked presence. Rather, it is the hyperbolic or hyper-negation that exceeds the fixed opposition of the positive and the negative, annuls the negation even of this abstract opposition, and proceeds through hyperbolic arcs in the proportions of analogy.

Modern suspicions of the *Via Negativa* have typically resulted from a prior suspension of the *Via Analogiae*. In Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, this hyperbolic grammar of analogy is hermeneutically sustained by parallel commentaries on Peter the Lombard's Sentences and Pseudo-Dionysius' Divine Names. Yet as early as Duns Scotus, the trinitarian reflections, created economy, and hyperbolic yet essential proportions of the grammar of analogy had begun to be rendered under a univocal syntax of a pure simulacrum of reason, or secular logic. Once rendered univocally, negation could no longer be carried above by the dialectical circuits of analysis to both exceed and enter in any counter-posited and successive iteration. This naked and immediate

[232] Marion, 'How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"', 24.

negation could instead be serially enacted in the simulated registers of secular logic, transcendental reflections, and the negative dialectic of deconstruction. In each iteration, such metaphysically ungrounded negations function as inverted ciphers for a hidden mechanics of a more univocal grammar that can be momentarily suspended from the procession of its kenotic descent and accelerating poesis.

In the absence of such excessive hyperbolas, negation could either be held in a fixed opposition to a contrary affirmation, or an infinite succession of negations that could not be cancelled by a concluding affirmation, such that in both this fixed opposition of negation to affirmation and in this infinite succession of inconclusive negations, the weight of the negative is paradoxically held under a finite scope of positive and present apprehension. Hence, in contrast to the 'paradoxical hyperbole' of Jacques Derrida, the negations of this dialectical hyperbole are not the simple denials of an immediate mode of attribution that could finally coincide under concealment in a surreptitious reaffirmation of the subject. Rather, in the circuit of the *Via Analogia*, the simple immediacy of negations in the *Via Analogia* is already annulled, elevated, and collected into the self-mediating hyperbolic grammar and essential proportions of analogy.

Long before modern nihilism, Pseudo-Dionysius had already explicitly rejected the univocity of being. For, as against the Stoics, he writes that existence extends in and beyond all existent things, beyond the universe of things, and, as such, in and from the creative source of superessential being. Against this reduction of divine or superessential Being to common being, he argues, to the contrary, that 'all things [could not] have a uniform share in the Good [or in being]', but rather, 'even here is to be found some kind of participation in [the Good and Being]', the hyperbolic principle of the productivity of beings. The negation of participation, or un-participation, is thereafter not due to a deficiency of the participated distribution of light but rather due to the un-receptiveness of the participants, which, in their multiple plurality, 'do not attain sufficient singleness' or union perfected at its source 'to participate therein'.[233]

[233] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 50 (92).

The negation of every attribute of divine perfection, whether in participation, or the grammar of participation, is, accordingly, due to what he describes as a deficiency of 'singleness', of having been made single, and, as such, of a plurality, in which the participant holds itself opposed to its perfecting source. As in John Scottus Eriugena, even the 'non-existent shares in the Beautiful and the Good', and, as such, 'is itself beautiful and good', 'when, by the Negation of all Attributes it is ascribed super-essentially to God', as the non-existent at the utmost negation of all attributes is ascribed to God.[234] There is thus a coincidence of nothing and being itself, where, at the apex of all hyper-negations, the infinite negativity of nothing coincides with its source.

The *Via Analogia* is this distinctly Christian and trinitarian way of speaking of God. For, in Christian theology, God has shown in Christ how to speak beyond the world in a way that enters in to be consummated in the recreation of the world. Pseudo-Dionysius indicates this when he writes: 'the term "Differentiation"' is 'applied to the bounteous act of Emanation', following from the first divine difference to the differentiation of the divine names or attributes, where the undifferentiated 'Divine Unity' is of itself differentiated, from 'Undifferenced Unity' to 'Multiplicity', and yet where this 'undifference unity' of the Trinity 'worketh even in those differentiated acts', of the divine persons, and of the divine names, such that 'in ceaseless communications, it bestows' all of the divine names, of Being, Life, and Wisdom, as well as all of the other gifts of the all-creative God.[235]

Hence, the procession, from the analogon to the analogates is the hyperbolic excess of the first to the second of the three first principles of God as Trinity, in which the generation from the Father to the Son is repeated in the generativity of the Son in creation, just as every analogate hyperbolically exceeds it principle analogon so as to be related to its source in successive triadic proportions. Derrida's critique of Pseudo-Dionysius can, in this way, be cancelled by activating the *Via Analogia*, in which the negativity, even of this opposition, polar cycling, and deconstruction is not only annulled, but, as such, preserved from within the middle of its spiritual constitution.

[234] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 4., 52 (97).
[235] Pseudo-Dionysius, DN, 2.5., 39 (71)

The analogy of being (*analogia entis*) can thus be regarded as a grammatical formula of the Trinity. For since the spiritual mediation of the *analogia entis* is a grammatical reflection of the absolute mediation of Christ the Son, who communicates from the Father in the Spirit, in and through God as Trinity, the *Via Analogia* is the first and final divine and human mode of speaking, first as it is spoken in and through this trinitarian procession, and finally as this trinitarian procession may be imitated in any subsequent speech of a trinitarian logic and a trinitarian ontology.

Hence, in contrast to nihilistic readings of apophaticism that would sustain the repetition of infinite negativity, we can, on this reading, assume this infinite negativity of the flight to speak of what 'is not' God into a hyperbolic grammar, in which the higher or hyper-negative judgment is reciprocally produced in and from the higher metaphysical ground of the divine *Logos*, such that, in its kenotic descent, it enters in to sustain even the utmost depth of the negative. Once, therefore, the *Via Analogia* has been acknowledged as a vestigial reflection of the Trinity (*vestigia trinitatis*), the hyperbolic grammar of the *Mystical Theology* and the *Divine Names* can be spoken of in the circuitous procession of the angelic spirits, in the hyperbolic arc of naming God, and, absolutely, in the circuits of the world that ever cycle in and for its divine creative source.

Conclusion: Nocturnal Flashes

Grammar can be called 'speculative' when it reflects from the conventions of its use to 'observe' (*speculari*) the pure forms that are dialectically divided and poetically combined in the discursive constitution of natural language. As Plato's *Phaedrus* hints, the concentration of dialectical arguments in grammatical formulae simulated the subjective freedom of thought in objectified techniques that mechanically operate by the fiat of the simple invocation of thought. The simulation of living speech, questioning, and dialectic in the concentrated formulae of grammar had since both accelerated the making of words in poetics, and created an occasion for the forgetting of this simulations more originary meaning, as the concentration of the

force of argument in the objectified form of words suppresses the free discursive elaboration of the subject.

The word 'Trinity' (*τριάδος* / *trinitatis*), like the word 'analogy' (*αναλογια* / *analogia*), invokes a dynamic circuit, whether, in the case of analogy, of the infinite reflection of finite ratios held in the united ground of an essential proportion, or, in the case of the Trinity, of the procession of the second from the first ground of God, which, in and through the third, is eternally mediated and shared in creation. Yet since this triadic circuit of processing *hypostases* in the Trinity is absolute, while the essential ground of analogy is relative to the terms of its ratios, the word 'Trinity' also invokes the dynamic circuit of analogy in a Christian and trinitarian theology, in which the filial procession of the Son from the Father is first constituted in creation, and finally consummated on the Cross before the restoration of the world in the concrete analogy of Christ.

As the *Doctor Tenebrarum*, Pseudo-Dionysius has often been read to speak in two voices: gnostically, as the darkness of ignorance is punctuated by the trinitarian light of knowing; and, agnostically, as the simulated light of finite and false knowledge is finally overcome in spiralling ascends in and from the darkness of unknowing. As early as Maximus the Confessor, and continuing in John Scottus Eriugena, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas, his theological grammar of analogy had been read in and from the Trinity. Yet, in hyperbolic arcs of epistrophic ascent to an uncreated source, he more often appears to elevate the unity of the *hyperousia* over the multiplicity of its 'trihypostatic' relations. After this dialectic that carries negations in hyperbolic arcs in and from the ground of its originary production has been simulated in the formulae of grammar, and such formulae have become an occasion of forgetting, all such negations could be rendered univocally on an increasingly flat ontological plane of simulated iteration.

The grammatical formulae of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) had both captured under a single concentrated expression the hyperbolic arc of transcendent yet essentially proportioned modes of signification, even as it could also create the occasion for the eventual collapse of its transcendent reference under the flat ontology of a secular grammar. Hence, after Duns Scotus simulated the *analogia*

entis as a proportionate equivocation under a univocal syntax, and Immanuel Kant regimented the finite construction of concepts at an infinite remove from its unconditional ground, this spiralling ascent of signs could no longer be conceived as circuitously given in and from a hierarchical pleroma of divine and heavenly powers. Secular readings of Pseudo-Dionysius have accordingly held his grammar apart from his theology and tended increasingly to render the hyperbolic arcs of the *Via Negativa* as an infinite series of finite negations, which, in its serial finitude, is equally finite, and, as such, ultimately inadequate as a grammar of transcendent reference. The result has been to annul the superessential being or *hyperousia*, rupture the subsistent relations of God from God, and evacuate being into nothing, as this infinite negativity of hyperbolic ascent turns around to destroy its originary creative source.

In the obscurity of his pseudonymity, Pseudo-Dionysius is partially culpable for this contested reception. He appears to bracket systematic theology, an 'ordered system with all questions of Divinity', as having previously been compiled by Hierotheus in *The Elements of Divinity*. In the abeyance of the central circuit of systematic theology, Pseudo-Dionysius, like his predecessor Pseudo-Hierotheus, appears to suspend dialecticity, analyticity, and systematicity, as he ultimately abolishes all difference, including the divine differences of the Trinity, and render the trinitarian differences as grammatical differences. As in Stephen Bar-Sudailli, Pseudo-Dionysius would suspend even the title of 'Trinity' as an appropriate way to speak of God, 'beyond all titles', as a way of 'expressing under the form of Being that Which is beyond Being'.[236] He denies that 'we can speak of the All-Transcendent Godhead as an Unity and a Trinity': for 'it is not an Unity or a Trinity such as can be known by us or by any other creature', except as the names 'unity' and 'trinity' (*τριάδος*, threeness) 'express the truth of its utter self-union and its divine fecundity', that is, the fecundity of its excessive or radical transcendence of overflowing causality.[237]

Accordingly, Dionysius denies that any creature can know of the Unity or Truth or any name of God. He writes: 'no Unity or Trinity or Number or Oneness or Fecundity or any other thing [or name] that

[236] Pseudo-Dionysius, Divine Names, 13, 97 (188).
[237] Pseudo-Dionysius, Divine Names, 13, 97 (188).

either is a creature or can be known to any creature is able to utter the mystery, beyond all mind and reason, of that Transcendent Godhead which super-essentially surpasses all things', and which 'hath no name, nor can it be grasped by reason', as it 'dwells in a region beyond us'.[238] This purported unknowability of the Trinity is a consequence of the former elevation of the superessential source of naming above all names, of the God above the way in which God has shown himself, spoken of himself, and beyond the self-communication of God in the divine *Logos*. Although he ostensibly suspends systematic exploration, he, from the beginning, calls upon the Trinity in prayer, describes the descending powers, and concludes with a spiralling ascent of hyperbolic arcs in kenotic terms proceeding in and from the highest ground of the Trinity.

We can, on the contrary, begin to critique Pseudo-Dionysius for having conceived of a speculative grammar that accelerates the continual diremption and subsumption of his signature poetic excess. The principles of the Trinity, transcend and yet proceed as the cause of all combinations of symbolic grammar, even, in having been cast as such a form, its processions are concentrated in a singular unity—named in the formula '*trihypostatos henad*'—from which process triadic participations. The created difference, of creation from the creator, is thus elevated above to an axial centre, from which the trinitarian difference, of the Son from the Father, as of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, can be virtually produced in the assembled media of symbolic grammar. Once suspended, the virtual operations of Proclean henology can be effectively translated into Christian theology, simply because the *trihypostatos* has been rendered as One.

As he elevates divine Unity beyond multiplicity, difference, and negation, he at once restricts dialectic to a lower or hypo-dialectical sphere, which, in the virtual production of its simulation, can only ascend, through the extrinsic reflection of an infinite series of hyperbolic or hyper-negative judgments of what 'God is not', as even this infinite negativity is annulled, and every negation is virtually produced as it is also preserved in the cycling procession of divine powers. This elevation of the divine *hyperousia* beyond being, intelligence, and any exercise of

[238] Pseudo-Dionysius, Divine Names, 13, 97 (188).

reason would seem to suspend the truth of theology. Although, in his extended corpus, he suspends a systematic investigation of the divine *hyperousia*, and rarely speaks of the divine names in an explicitly trinitarian register, nevertheless the originary source, kenotic release, and spiral ascent of signs externally reflects the internal and immanent processions of the Trinity. The theological grammar of analogy remains internally related by its equivocal reflection to ever-greater difference to this kenotic release, and to this spiral ascent, in angelically and ecclesiastically constituted imitations. In annulling its infinite negation, and yet producing these hyperbolic arcs of signification in essentially proportioned yet essential relations, it recapitulates the kenotic release and spiritual relations of all signs and symbols of grammar on heaven and on earth.

Yet the many masks of Pseudo-Dionysius also admit for a variety of surprising and conflicting readings. He initially appears to speak in two distinct voices: the disguised voice of an orthodox, apostolic, and trinitarian theology, in which epistrophic ascent is sustained by kenotic descent; and a heretical Proclean henology, in which this same ascent terminates without reciprocity in a simple and absolute source. However, as this short commentary has attempted to show, these two voices of light in darkness and of darkness in light are but two aspects that fade in and out like nocturnal lights in an oscillating dynamic of dialectical simulation and poetical articulation. The divine *Logos* is the centre of divine knowing: first intra-trinitarianly, from the Son to the Father, and from the Father and the Son to the Spirit; then extra-trinitarianly, in the creation of the world, and the simulated recreation of syllogistical concepts; and finally, as it is collected from among the circuits of ideas, to proceed in the power and glory of the angelical and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

The 'ever-greater' difference of analogy that proceeds in and from the created difference of creation from the creator is thus assumed into the most originary trinitarian difference, of the Son from the Father, as of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, and, at the Cross, as it is centred upon the site of sacrificial atonement, from which flows the creative plenitude of all poetic and sacramental media. From the end to the beginning, the absolute mediation of Christ is thus immanently operative in the logical and grammatical mediation of analogy, the

kenotic annulling of infinite negation, and the atoning restoration of its posited dissimilitudes, from the lower and higher ground of the essentially proportioned modes of signification. His oft-rehearsed denials that we can with reason come to know of the divine *hyperousia*, essence, and Trinity, should therefore be read, not finitely, but rather hyperbolically, in which, once it is plentifully negated, it is equally posited from an infinitely higher ground, in an essentially proportioned grammar of analogy, which proceeds in and from its source – glittering in bursts of light through the dark veil of unknowing.

Pseudo-Dionysius can, in this way, be read as the foremost Patristic voice of rational hope of a Christian and trinitarian grammar. For as this study of the *Mystical Theology* and the *Divine Names* has begun to illustrate, his theological grammar can be shown to be shaped by a theological logic, in which, through the communication of the *Logos*, and the dialectical circuits of angelic powers, the infinite negativity in the spiral ascent of the *Via Negativa* is internally mediated by the hyperbolic arcs of the *Via Analogia*. His poetic grammar of freely invented combinations leaps in hyperbolic arcs of speech beyond yet in and through successive modes of signification: in a finite positive judgment; an infinite negative judgment; and, in annulling the negative, of the essential proportions of equivocally distinct elements, in an ever-greater dissimilitude of internally mediated signs. As for Plato and Proclus, this annulling and positing of the negative, of opposition, and of contradiction is, not only grammatical, but dialectical, as it pivots upon the contradiction that destroys the prior ground from which is posited this infinite negation. For the infinite series of ascending, higher, or hyper-negative judgments can only be suspended from annulling its posited ground, insofar as this infinite negativity is immanently annulled, and yet equally posited as the created difference of transcendent reference from the internally mediated ground of every judgment.

The Trinity is thus the holy middle of the grammar of analogy. For the triple relationally or triadic circuits of three persons or hypostases cycling in and from one essence is here rendered as the radically transcendent *exittus-redditus* economic circuit of creation proceeding, through the leaping signs of speech, in and from a superessential source beyond all that can be said under being of anything at all. In

our petitions, it enters to be spoken of again in every response of our prayers. For it is precisely this Christian and Trinitarian mediation of hyperbolic grammar of epistrophic ascent that *Via Analogia* both sustains the infinite reflection of ever-greater dissimilitude, and, by this kenotic descent of the divine Son into the depths of the negative, upholds the relations, determinations, and essential proportions of the theological grammar of analogy. And since the absolute middle of Christ, in dialectic, as in analogy, is communicated in and from the principal ground of the divine hypostases, the *Via Analogia* ever ascends to and from the Trinity.

Beyond the curtain of the night, the firefly leaps over the negative to carry the torch of the Sun. The night of infinite negativity is punctuated again and again by an incandescent flicker that gestures beyond its insectile body to the atomic blasts that irrupt from within the bellies of the brightest stars. And, in this gesture from a lesser to a greater light, it calls upon the uncreated source of divine light that irradiates and animates the signs of all speech. The light of learning to know takes a leap to find this hidden source that ever shines through the veil of night.

A Transformation of Mediation: Procline Hypostases as Dionysian Processions

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Recently, I have argued that both Dionysius and Maximos Confessor subscribe to a doctrine of creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation, such that all things are grounded in, and hence derived from, the One God as the ultimate *archē* of existence. This raises a crucial problem: if all things are derived from God in what sense can they be affirmed to be genuinely other than God? Proclus accounts for this otherness through the proliferation of mediating terms. Dionysius transforms this pagan approach into a more 'immediate', *energeic* model of mediation. For Dionysius, creation *ex deo* is *not* creation from the divine *ousia* but from the uncreated energies, or grace, of God. This view is not pantheism but pan*en*theism.

Introduction

Recently, I have argued that both Dionysius and Maximos the Confessor subscribe to a doctrine of creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation, such that all things are grounded in, and hence derived from, the One as the ultimate *archē* of existence. In this, they are in continuity with pagan Neoplatonists such as Plotinus and Proclus who affirm the necessity of a unifying principle of reality without which multiplicity itself could not exist. Everything, according to the logic of Neoplatonism, depends upon oneness—for to *be* is to be *one*. Christian Neoplatonists such as Dionysius and Maximos take up this idea and adapt it to their own Christian ontologies, transforming the pagan metaphysics of monism into the Christian metaphysics of monotheism. God alone is the source of being, the irreducible simplicity at the heart of reality constitutive of all things. Now, this metaphysics of monism—or monotheism—raises a crucial problem: if all things are derived from

God, in what sense can they be affirmed to be genuinely other than God? How can the One God produce the multiplicity of creation from himself without becoming implicated in it?

The pagan Neoplatonists try to account for this otherness through the proliferation of mediating terms, such that multiplicity emerges progressively from unity. Dionysius, following the lead of the Cappadocians, rejects this pagan approach in favour of a more 'immediate' model of mediation. The antinomy of sameness and otherness is located within the Triune Godhead itself. Simply put, whereas Proclus conceives of being emanating from the Source by means of successive subordinate hypostases, Dionysius (following the Cappadocians) understands it in proto-Palamite fashion as flowing directly from the Godhead by way of dynamic or *energeic* communications. I argue that this transformation of mediation leads, paradoxically, to both a heightened immediacy between God and creation, and to the emergence of a stronger distinction between them. For the Christians, creation *ex deo* is *not* creation from the divine *ousia* but from the uncreated energies, or grace, of God. This view is not pantheism but pan*en*theism. As Dionysius proclaims: 'God is all things in all things and nothing in any'.

Proclus

As noted above, the Neoplatonic response to the problem of the One and the many involves the multiplication of mediating terms. For Plotinus, this takes the relatively simple form of the three hypostases: One, Intellect, and Soul. Plotinus argues that the One (*ἕν*) 'overflows', as it were, and produces another which is less than itself—the one-many (*ἓν πολλὰ*) of Intellect. This latter then repeats the process in producing the unity-in-multiplicity (*ἓν καὶ πολλά*) of Soul, which in turn informs the unified multiplicity of nature, the term of the emanative process. In this way, the simplicity of the One progressively gives birth to the multiplicity of the world by means of mediating terms, each lesser than its prior until it finally comes to a halt.[1] The basic logic remains that of the innate productivity of perfection: 'The One is always perfect and

[1] See *Enn*.V.2.1, 1–20; *Enn*.V.I.8, 25.

therefore produces everlastingly; and its product is less that itself'.[2] Why is the product less than the producer? For the simple logical fact that if it were equal, it would be indistinguishable from its prior and nothing would actually be generated.[3] In order for the One to generate reality, a bare minimum of otherness (*ἑτερότητι*)[4] is needed. Thus, from the simplicity of the One emerges the subtle duality of Intellect, whence comes the unity-in-multiplicity of Soul, and finally the unified multiplicity of the world. By means of these mediating terms, the simplicity of the One successively expands into, and as, the diversity of the world.

The problem of mediation acquires a much fuller development in Proclus, the vast complexity of which can scarcely be touched upon in this brief treatment. In contrast to the simple triadic scheme of Plotinus, Proclus posits at least five hypostases: the One (*τὸ ἕν*) produces Being (*τὸ ὄν*); Being begets Life (*ζωή*); Life produces Intellect (*νοῦς*); and Intellect begets Soul (*ψυχή*).[5] In addition, it seems that Nature (*φύσις*) represents a sixth, and final, hypostasis.[6] Striking here is the separation of Being from Intellect, which together form the Plotinian Nous understood as the unity of thought and being. This is illustrative of Proclus' systematic and highly logical approach to the problem of mediation conceived in terms of universal and particular. After the One (which transcends categorization), Being is the most universal all-inclusive genus, and thus is the first principle to emerge into existence; everything which is participates in Being. Next is Life, which is a specification of Being (i.e. living being); followed by Intellect, a specification of Life (i.e. intellectual living being); and finally Soul, a specification of Intellect (i.e. rational intellectual living being). If Nature is the final hypostasis, one could perhaps take it as a specification of Soul in the Aristotelian sense of an irrational, appetitive principle characteristic of plants and animals.

[2] *Enn.*V.1.6, 40.

[3] The only other option would be that the effect is distinguished by its *superiority* to its cause, which is logically impossible—for whatever added value it has it must have received from its cause. See *Enn.*V.7, 40.

[4] See *Enn.*V.1.6, 50.

[5] See Dodds, E.R., *Proclus: The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, (Clarendon Press, 1962), 232; Proclus, *Elements*, Prop.101.

[6] See Proclus, *Elements*, Prop.21; *On Parmenides*, VI. 1046.

Following Dodds' schematization, the One (*τὸ ἕν*) is uncaused and possesses maximal unity while all the subsequent hypostases are caused and possess, respectively: unity and maximal being (*τὸ ὄν*); unity, being, and maximal life (*ζωή*); unity, being, life, and maximal intelligence (*νοῦς*); unity, being, life, intelligence, and maximal discursive reason (*ψυχή*).[7] With each successive term a new element emerges such that the simplicity of the One progressively unfolds into an ever more specific multiplicity of causal principles. It might appear at first glance that the higher principles (i.e. unconscious inanimate being) are inferior to the lower principles (i.e. living intellective existence). In truth, however, the lower are pre-contained in the higher, and the higher, by way of mediation, are present to the lower.[8] As we have noted, being depends first and foremost upon unity—the One. Similarly, there is no life apart from being and no intellective being that is not alive. Each principle provides the necessary ground for its subsequent and pre-contains it in a more unified (and thus ontologically superior) manner.[9] Being, in other words, is not merely the cause of inanimate existence in the world but, insofar as it is the source of all the subsequent and more specific hypostases, it is the ultimate—albeit mediated—cause of life and intelligence in the world as well. In this way, reality unfolds from the One in stages, progressively revealing the richness of its implicit multiplicity.[10]

Proclus' solution involves a further multiplication of entities, namely his doctrine of henads according to which there is a kind of unity-in-multiplicity within each hypostasis—including the One. What I want to focus on, however, is Proclus' construal of the internal relations of these 'pleromic' principles in terms of participation. Within each hypostasis there is a threefold division into unparticipated/participated/participating. Each hypostasis, in effect, possesses an

[7] See Dodds, *Elements*, 232.

[8] See Proclus, *Elements*, Prop.7: 'Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces'. Prop.18: 'Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively (*πρώτως*) possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients'. See also, Prop.56 & Prop.101.

[9] See *Elements*, Prop.61: 'Every power is greater if it be undivided, less if it be divided'.

[10] By extension, this logic ought equally to apply to the One which, though radically simple, must somehow pre-contain the totality of existence that proceeds from it. This is of course problematic. As Dodds puts it in relation to Plotinus: 'The One cannot be, in Plotinian language, *δύναμις πάντων* (the power of all things) without being also *δυνάμει πάντα* (all things in potentiality): but to admit this is to infect the One with at least the seeds of plurality'. *Elements*, 259.

'unparticipated' (*ἀμέθεκτος*) and a 'participated' (*μεθεκτός*) aspect, or 'moment' as Dillon renders it.[11] Proclus states: 'All that is unparticipated (*ἀμέθεκτον*) produces out of itself the participated (*τὰ μετεχόμενα*); and all participated substances (*αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις*) are linked by upward tension to existences not participated (*ἀμεθέκτους ὑπάρξεις*)'.[12] Each hypostasis possesses its own monadic principle as the transcendent source of its unity. This principle is 'unparticipated' insofar as it is not directly implicated in multiplicity but preserves its simplicity, what Proclus calls a 'one prior to the many' (*ἕν πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν*). Though unparticipated, the monad generates terms capable of being participated; Proclus terms this emergent multiplicity a 'one yet not-one' (*ἕν ἅμα καὶ οὐχ ἕν*). Finally, there are the participating terms, the most manifold aspect, or 'moment', within each hypostasis which are a 'not-one yet one' (*οὐχ ἕν ἅμα καὶ ἕν*).[13]

This internal participatory relation extends equally to the external relations between hypostases. Strictly speaking, only the One is absolutely imparticipable, while the monads of subsequent hypostases are only relatively imparticipable. In other words, the 'imparticipable' monad of Being participates the One via the latter's lowest aspect, the participating henads, and so on for each of the hypostases. In this sense, the monadic principle is at once a participant (in relation to its prior) and unparticipated (in relation to its subsequent). The lowest stage of one hypostasis coincides with the highest stage of the next. In this way, Proclus attempts to safeguard the radical simplicity of the One while allowing for a kind of mediated, participatory procession into multiplicity. Typical of the Neoplatonic approach, the generative activity of the One (what Proclus terms 'the given' [*τὸ δοθὲν*]) is immediately hypostasized as a participated term (*αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις*). This proliferation of mediating terms linked by mutual relations of participation is illustrative of the Procline principle of continuity,[14] such that a seamless bridge is constructed between the One and the many. The extreme realism of Proclus dictates that each link in the chain acquires substantial existence as a divine or quasi-divine principle.

[11] See Dillon, John, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, (Princeton, 1987), xix, xxii.
[12] Proclus, *Elements*, Prop.23.
[13] See Proclus, *Elements*, Prop.24.
[14] See Dodds, *Elements*, 216; Dillon, *On Parmenides*, xvii.

The Cappadocians

From a Christian theological point of view, the pagan solution to the problem of the One and the many is obviously problematic insofar as it is both subordinationist and polytheistic. After Nicea, there is no longer any question concerning the consubstantiality of the Christian Hypostases. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *homoousios*, one in essence and activity, distinguished only by relation: the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit proceeds.[15] With the anathematization of Arius—and later Eunomius—Christianity closes the door to any kind of descending hierarchy of mediating principles, so fundamental to the pagan Neoplatonists. Henceforth, the distance between the Creator and his creation will have to be overcome by other means. For the Cappadocians this involves distinguishing between God's essence and activities. It is the *energeiai*, or 'energies'[16] *ad extra* that mediate between God and world. While it would be anachronistic to claim that these early Christian Fathers posit a developed essence/energies doctrine akin to the Palamite doctrine in the fourteenth century, a basic distinction between the unknowable *ousia* of God and His knowable attributes, or energies, is already present in the Cappadocian Fathers.[17] Before we get to Dionysius, then, a brief sketch of the Cappadocian understanding of the relation between God's *ousia* and his *energeia* is in order.

It is in response to the challenge of Eunomius who boldly asserted the knowability of the divine *ousia*, that a nascent essence/activity distinction emerges in the thought of Basil and the two Gregorys, Nazianzus and Nyssa. For Eunomius, names are indicative of essence such that to know the name of God is to know the essence of God. Beyond the obvious philosophical problems that arise from defining—and thus finitizing—God, Eunomius' position leads to the theological problem of subordinationism. If the appellation 'unbegotten' applies

[15] See Gregory Nazianzus, *On God and Christ, The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*., (SVS Press, 2002) Oration 29.16.

[16] It has become conventional in the Orthodox tradition to translate *energeia* as 'energy'. As Tollefsen rightly notes, however, the exclusive use of the term 'energy' risks obscuring the philosophical continuity and historical context of *energeia*. Following Tollefsen, I alternately translate *ἐνέργεια* as 'energy', 'activity', 'actuality', or simply transliterate it as *energeia*. See Tollefsen, Torstein, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*., (OUP, 2012) 4–5.

[17] See Bradshaw, David, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, (CUP, 2004)153–207. See Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*.

essentially to God the Father, while 'begotten' applies essentially to the Son, then clearly the latter cannot be *homoousios* with the Father—for 'unbegotten' and 'begotten' are *essentially* two different things. In response to this, the Cappadocians categorically deny that the divine *ousia* is in any way knowable and that the divine names are in any way *essentially* predicable of God. In terms of 'unbegotten', 'begotten', and proceeding, these are simply terms of relation (*σχέσεις*) pointing to the fact that the Father is the *archē* of the Son and the Holy Spirit. All other names refer not to the divine *ousia* but to the *energeiai*, the activities of God *ad extra*. It is by way of these latter that we receive knowledge of the Unknowable.

It is here that we encounter the source material for Dionysius' treatise on the Divine Names. In speaking of the various names ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures—be it Door, Bread, Vine, Way, Light, Stone, Shepherd, etc.—Gregory of Nyssa argues that these apply not to the divine *ousia* but to the *energeiai*:

> Each one of these titles (*ὀνομάτων*) is not the nature (*φύσις*) of the Only-Begotten, not his deity, not the character of his being. Nevertheless he is so named, and the naming is valid; for it is right to consider that there is nothing idle or meaningless among the divine words….What we say is this: as the Lord in various ways provides for human life, each variety of benefit is identified in turn by one or other such title, the foresight (*προνοίας*) and action (*ἐνεργείας*) therein observed becoming a particular kind of name (*ὀνόματα*).[18]

Gregory proceeds by denying that the multiplicity of divine names is applicable to the simplicity of the divine essence, while affirming that they are nonetheless valid and meaningful in relation to God. In a sense, Gregory shares the robust realism of Eunomius; if words are to have meaning, if Scripture is not mere idle talk, if theology is to be a legitimate pursuit, then it must be possible to talk about God in some substantial way. Where Eunomius goes astray is in his belief that he can name—and thus know—the divine *ousia* itself. This Gregory

[18] *Contra Eunomium* II.298.

emphatically denies, arguing that what we *can* know—and thus name—is the diversity of God's providential activities (*ἐνεργείας*). 'It is clear', he concludes, 'that the Divinity is given names with various connotations in accordance with the variety of his activities (*τὸ ποικίλον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν*)'.[19] In this discussion of the divine names we encounter a clear distinction between God's unknowable *ousia* and his knowable *energeiai*, the latter being here identified with divine providence.

The question, of course, is what exactly *are* these *energeiai*? Are they some sort of divine communications *ad extra*—'energies' in the Palamite sense—or merely 'operations' in a more Thomistic sense?[20] The answer is that they are both. Gregory alludes to this when he says that God reveals himself to us 'both by the miracles which are revealed in the works (*ποιοῦντες*) done by him, and from the titles (*ὀνομάτων*) by which the various aspects of divine power (*δυνάμεως*) are perceived'.[21] The reference to miracles suggests a temporal *operatio*, a divine intervention within the created order, something that God *does*.[22] On the other hand, the mention of divine powers—linked to the *energeiai*[23] by their association with the divine names—suggests something timeless pertaining to God himself, something that God *is*. This accords with Gregory's understanding of the *energeiai* as divine attributes. Just as we can describe the outward characteristics of a person without knowing their inward nature, says Gregory, so 'all the words found in holy scripture to indicate God's glory (*δοξολογίαν θείαν*) describe *something of the manifestations around God* (*τῶν*

[19] *Contra Eunomium* II.304. See also II.353: 'In a similar way, he says, the Lord also is by himself whatever he is in his nature, and when he is simultaneously named in accordance with his various activities (*ἐνεργειῶν*) he does not possess a single title covering them all, but is accorded the name in accordance with each idea (*ἔννοιαν*) which arises in us from those activities (*ἐνεργείας*)'.

[20] See Bradshaw *Aristotle East and West,* 165. Concerning the limitations of the Latin rendering of *ἐνέργεια* as *operatio* see, 153–154. Regarding the debate between Orthodox and non-Orthodox commentators over the validity of the essence/energies distinction see Yannaras, Christos, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies and Its Importance." www.academia.edu. Also, Lossky, Vladimir, *The Vision of God*., (SVS, 1983), 11–24.

[21] *Contra Eunomium* II.102.

[22] It is worth noting that the term here is *ποιοῦντες*. A careful and in-depth philological study would perhaps shed light on whether Gregory employs this term rather than *ἐνεργείας* in relation to temporal works or whether he uses them interchangeably as synonyms for the divine activity.

[23] For the Neoplatonic assimilation of *dynamis* to *energeia* in relation to first principles, see Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 25–36.

περὶ τὸν θεὸν τι δηλουμένων)[24]….His being itself (*αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν*), however, scripture leaves uninvestigated as beyond the reach of mind, and inexpressible in word'.[25] In this passage, Gregory expands the scope of the divine names from works, powers, and energies to include the divine attributes 'around God' (*περὶ τὸν θεὸν*),[26] which he identifies with the divine glory. God's glory—to which there are numerous Scriptural attestations—is not merely some 'operation', something that God *does*, but something that God in some sense *is*. [27]

Perhaps the most well-known statement regarding the essence/energies distinction is to be found in Basil's Epistle 234:

> We say that we know the greatness of God, His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His providence over us, and the justness of His judgement, but not His very essence (*οὐσία*)…But God, he [i.e. Eunomius] says, is simple, and whatever attributes of Him you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence. The absurdities involved in this sophism are innumerable. When all these high attributes have been enumerated, are they all names of one essence? And is there the same mutual force in His awfulness and His loving-kindness, His justice and His creative power, His providence and His foreknowledge, His bestowal of rewards and punishments, His majesty and His providence? In mentioning any of these, do we declare His essence?.... The *energeiai* are

[24] I have modified the translation slightly to bring out the literal sense of this passage. For other references to the 'things around God' see, *Contra Eunomium* II.89, 582; III.5.59.

[25] *Contra Eunomium* II. 104–105. Emphasis added.

[26] Gregory of Nyssa frequently refers to the energies as the 'things around the divine nature (*τὰ περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν*)'. See *Contra Eunomium* II.89, 582; III.5.59. For *περὶ* with accusative as indicative of theological doctrine, see Krivochéine, Basile, «Simplicité de la nature divine et les distinctions en Dieu selon S Grégoire de Nysse» *Studia Patristica* (Berlin, 1985), 88, n.62. Also Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West,* 167.

[27] See Gregory Nazianzus, *Orations* 28.3 (PG 36 29A–B): 'What is this that has happened to me, O friends and initiates and fellow lovers of the truth? I was running up to lay hold on God, and thus I went up into the mount, and drew aside the curtain of the cloud, and entered away from matter and material things, and as far as I could I withdrew within myself. And then when I looked up I scarcely saw the back parts of God, although I was sheltered by the rock, the Word made flesh for us. And when I looked a little closer I saw, *not the first and unmingled nature (φύσιν), known to itself* – to the Trinity, I mean; not that which abides within the first veil and is hidden by the Cherubim, *but only that nature which at last even reaches to us* (*εἰς ἡμᾶς φθάνουσα*). And that is, so far as I can tell, the majesty, or as holy David calls it, *the glory which is manifested among the creatures*, which it has produced and governs. For these [i.e., majesty and glory] are the back parts of God'. Cited in Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 168. Emphasis added.

> various, and the essence simple, but we say that we know our God from His *energeiai*, but do not undertake to approach near His essence. His *energeiai* come down to us, But His essence remains beyond our reach.[28]

As with the two Gregorys, Basil distinguishes between God's unknowable *ousia* and his knowable *energeiai*—the latter, once again, ranging in scope from works, powers, attributes, providence, judgment, and majesty (i.e. glory). Basil's distinction between God as remaining 'beyond our reach' and God as coming 'down to us' points once again to the *energeiai* as divine communications *ad extra*. As such, the energies really *are* God—albeit not his *ousia*. In all of these cases, a clear distinction is present between God as incommunicable and God as communicable—*both* are God, but according to different modes.

Basil's emphasis upon the absurdity of Eunomius' position reveals the implicit engagement with the philosophical problem of the One and the many. If God is truly simple, how can he insist that the various attributes of God give knowledge of his essence? How can the *ousia* be one if the essential attributes are many? As irreducible simplicity, how can God be the source of contraries, simultaneously wrathful and loving, the source of both rewards and punishments? In truth, what we are confronted with are the consequences of the Christian suppression of mean terms. In the absence of subordinate principles, God is at once ineffable simplicity, the One beyond thought and being, and at the same time the source of multiplicity. The antinomy of sameness and otherness is located within the Trinitarian Godhead itself.[29] In their struggle with Eunomius, the Cappadocians grapple with how to affirm *both* the divine simplicity *and* the diversity that proceeds from God. On the one hand, there is no place for the divine attributes within the divine *ousia*; on the other hand, there are no subordinate hypostases to contain them. And yet they must be affirmed—for Scripture and creation bear witness to the diversity of divine *energeiai* as both knowable and nameable.

[28] Basil, Epistle 234.1, (PG. 32 872C-873B). Cited in Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 166.
[29] See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 138.

Dionysius

If it is with the Cappadocians that we first encounter evidence of a profoundly altered metaphysics, it is nonetheless true that this represents a somewhat oblique engagement with the ontological problem of the One and the many. The Cappadocians, as we have seen, are primarily concerned with the epistemological problem of divine knowledge and its Trinitarian implications. It is with Dionysius that we first encounter a direct engagement with the philosophical problem of mediation. What the Cappadocians accomplished in the realm of epistemology is taken up by Dionysius and applied to the realm of ontology, resulting in a profound transformation of mediation.

Perhaps the most explicit example of this is found in a powerful passage in the *Divine Names* where Dionysius takes direct aim at the metaphysics of Proclus with its proliferation of mediating principles:

> I do not say that the Good (*τἀγαθόν*) is one thing, Being (*τὸ ὄν*) another, Life (*ζωὴν*) and Wisdom (*σοφίαν*) yet others, nor that there are multiple causes (*αἴτια*) and different Godheads (*θεότητας*), superior and inferior, and all producing different effects, but that all these good processions (*ἀγαθὰς προόδους*) and divine names (*θεωνυμίας*) celebrated by us are of the one God (*ἑνὸς θεοῦ*) and that the first name tells of the universal Providence of the one God (*παντελοῦς τοῦ ἑνὸς θεοῦ προνοίας*), while the other names reveal providences more general or specific.[30]

Dionysius explicitly rejects Proclus' mediating terms: there is no descending hierarchy of hypostases such that the One produces Being, which produces Life, which produces Intellect (Wisdom), which produces Soul, and so on. Nor are there multiple principles or divinities responsible for specific entities so that Being is the cause of existence, Life is the cause of vital existence, and Wisdom is the cause of vital intelligent existence. Instead, the entire scheme is radically leveled and attributed in its entirety to the One God. What were multiple subordinate divinities in Proclus are now varying measures of a single

[30] *DN*.5, 816D. All Citations of Dionysius are my own translations in consultation with Luibheid, Colm, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (Paulist Press, 1987), and De Andia, Ysabel, *Les Noms Divins*, (Sources Chrétiennes, 2016).

universal providence, the manifold processions of a unitary Good. This change marks a radical new approach to the problem of the One and the many. Rather than try to resolve the tension through the postulation of intermediaries, Dionysius, following the lead of his Cappadocian teachers, locates the source of multiplicity (and hence otherness) within the First Principle itself.[31]

Perl makes the interesting point that this transformation is not merely a response to theological concerns but is in fact the ultimate solution to the philosophical problem of sameness and otherness.[32] For no matter how many intermediaries are posited between the 'imparticipable' One and the many participants, the fundamental problem of the One and the many remains. Whence comes that necessary otherness, however subtly it is rendered? How is it possible for simplicity to be the source of diversity? *That* it must be so is clear—for multiplicity itself depends upon unity, without which it would dissolve into an abyss of infinite divisibility. Yet, *how* it is so remains a mystery. As Perl succinctly puts it, 'the world can be understood only as the effect of the One, but the One, it seems, cannot cause the world'.[33] In Perl's view, Dionysius to his great credit chooses to face the problem head-on. Instead of multiplying intermediaries, which serve merely to obscure, rather than resolve, the antinomy (and which lead inevitably to subordinationism and polytheism), Dionysius fearlessly proclaims that the One God is the sole, *immediate* source of the many. Even more radically than Plotinus, then, Dionysius proclaims that God is 'all things in all things, and nothing in any'.[34]

Once again, however, the question arises as to the nature of these manifold processions of the One God. For, though Dionysius rejects their status as hypostases, he nonetheless affirms them as the multiple expressions of divine providence. An important clue in the above passage is Dionysius' identification of God's providential processions with the divine names—an identification we first encountered in Gregory of Nyssa. Indeed, the *Divine Names* could itself be understood as a kind of commentary on Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of divine *onomata.* To

[31] See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*.138.
[32] See Perl, *Methexis*., 58–60.
[33] Perl, *Methexis*, 36.
[34] *DN*. VII.3, 872A 15.

cite a few examples, Dionysius says that 'all that the sacred hymnologies of the theologians (i.e. the scripture writers) say regarding the divine names (*θεωνυμίας*) refer, in revealing praises, to the beneficent processions (*ἀγαθουργοὺς προόδους*) of the Thearchy'.[35] Like Gregory, Dionysius calls these processions 'powers'"(*δυνάμεις*): 'whenever we name (*ὀνομάσαιμεν*) the supraessential Hiddenness God, or Life, or Essence, or Light, or Logos, we indicate nothing other than the essence-making (*οὐσιοποιοὺς*), life-begetting (*ζωογόνους*), and wisdom-bestowing (*σοφοδώρους*) powers (*δυνάμεις*) which proceed to us (*εἰς ἡμᾶς*) from Him'.[36] Finally, like the Cappadocians, Dionysius identifies the powers and providences of God with the *energeiai* when he speaks of the 'providential processions and energies (*προνοητικαῖς προόδοις καὶ ἐνεργείας*)' whereby God creates, sustains, and encompasses the whole of creation.[37]

All of this indicates that Dionysius subscribes to a similar distinction as the Cappadocians between God's hidden *ousia* and his manifest *energeiai*, though Dionysius formulates it in ontological terms as a distinction between the One God and his multiple manifestations. The reference to the divine *dynameis* coming down 'to us' (*εἰς ἡμᾶς*) echoes the expressions of Gregory Nazianzus and Basil concerning the immanent aspects of God. The inexpressible One is beyond naming yet reveals himself to us in the divine names by which Scripture hymns the 'beneficent processions' (*ἀγαθουργοὺς προόδους*), the *energeiai* of God *ad extra*. While Dionysius adopts the Neoplatonic language of procession (*πρόοδος*), his meaning is fundamentally different from that of Plotinus and Proclus. For him, the *energeic* processions are not lower effects of the supreme Cause, but *the self-disclosure of the Cause itself*.[38] For Dionysius, as with the Cappadocians, the energies do not immediately coalesce into hypostases but remain iridescent and dynamic—they are the providential *proödoi*, the 'being-making'

[35] *DN*. I.4, 589D. Note here the neologism '*agatho-ourgos*' with its *energeic* connotations (*erga-energeia*).

[36] *DN*. II.7, 645A-B. Also, *DN*. I.8, 597B; *DN* II.5, 644A.

[37] *DN*. IX.9, 916C. Also, 916D.

[38] See *DN* IV.14, 712C: 'He alone is the Good and the Beautiful Himself on account of Himself, *and as a manifestation of Himself through Himself* (*καὶ ὥσπερ ἔκφανσιν ὄντα ἑαυτοῦ δι ἑαυτοῦ*)'. In a sense, one can also say that everything which proceeds from the Neoplatonic One is a self-disclosure of the One. My point here is that the *causal* understanding of procession is crucially modified by Dionysius. The providential processions are not lower 'effects' of the One, but *God himself* according to another mode.

(*οὐσιοποιοὺς*), 'life-begetting' (*ζωογόνους*), and 'wisdom-bestowing' (*σοφοδώρους*) *dynameis* that constitute the world.[39]

Further evidence of Dionysius' transformation of Neoplatonic mediation may be found in his reworking of Proclus' threefold schematic of unparticipated/participated/participating. In a passage that reiterates his rejection of the pagan proliferation of principles, Dionysius responds to a query as to how the One God can be addressed by multiple names such as Being-Itself, Life-Itself, or Power-Itself. His answer is both expected and enigmatic. None of these names refer to additional deities or demiurges, says Dionysius, but 'are derived from beings and *especially the primary beings* (*τῶν πρώτως ὄντων*)', and analogously attributed to God as the Cause who transcends beings *including the primary beings* (*τὰ πρώτως ὄντα*)."[40]

Given his uncompromising rejection of subordinate existences, what are we to make of this peculiar reference to 'primary beings'? Dionysius promptly gives us the answer: the primary beings refer to the 'providential powers (*προνοητικὰς δυνάμεις*) which come forth from the unparticipated God (*ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου*)', according to which beings are participants (*μετέχοντα*) in the gifts of existence, life, and so on.[41] The so-called 'primary beings' (or primary realities) are evidently a stand-in for Proclus' participated terms mediating between the unparticipated *archē* and the manifold participants. And yet, given the suppression of mean terms, these *onta* are not hypostasized realities but dynamic communications of God *ad extra*—the 'being-making' (*οὐσιοποιοὺς*), 'life-begetting' (*ζωογόνους*), and 'wisdom-bestowing' (*σοφοδώρους*) *dynameis*.[42] That Dionysius refers to them in ontic terms underscores the realism of the providential powers; though not separate hypostases, they *are* substantial expressions of God, the self-disclosure of the One as many.

The paradoxical character of the powers, processions, or energies of God is further illustrated when Dionysius says of the divine differentiation that 'it is according to these gifts (*δωρεαὶ*) that the things which are imparticipably participated (*τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα*) are

[39] See *DN*. II.7, 645A–B.
[40] *DN* XI.6, 953C–D.
[41] *DN* XI.6, 956A.
[42] *DN*. II.7, 645A–B. Also, *DN*. I.8, 597B; *DN* II.5, 644A.

hymned through the participations (*τῶν μετεχόντων*) and those who participate (*τῶν μετοχῶν*)'.[43] Once again, the deity is named (or 'hymned') according to both the primary beings (the participated terms) and the secondary beings (the participants). That the primary beings are themselves 'imparticipably participated' represents another revealing oddity. According to the Procline scheme, there is no reason for the middle terms to be described in this way—they are simply participated, while only the first term in the triad is said to be unparticipated. According to Dionysius, however, not only is the transcendent Godhead said to be imparticipable,[44] but even the participated processions are in some sense imparticipable. This points once again to the suppression of mean terms. Insofar as the communications of God *ad extra* simply *are* God, they too are unparticipated; insofar as they represent God in his knowable, immanent aspect, they are participated. The paradoxical nature of all of this stems from the rejection of mediating hypostases such that the antinomy of sameness and otherness is confronted head on. God is at once simple and manifold, transcendent and immanent, unknowable and knowable.

Dionysius' transformation of the Procline doctrine of participation has important implications for his doctrine of creation *ex deo*. Participation is simply another way of talking about the derivation of beings from God. Whereas creation *ex deo* approaches the issue from the perspective of the cause, participation approaches it from the perspective of the effect. Whether one speaks of God constituting the world by means of his providential processions or the world being constituted by its participation in these same processions, one is talking about the same thing—the derivation of the many from the One. In speaking of the 'movements' of the unmoved God (*κινήσεις θεοῦ τοῦ ἀκινήτου*), Dionysius says that we should understand 'the undeviating procession of the energies (*πρόοδον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν*) and the genesis of all things from Him (*ἐξ αὐτοῦ*)'.[45] The procession of the *energeiai* coincides with the generation of beings. Creation *ex deo*, then, does not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the being-making *dynameis* or *energeic* processions by which God constitutes the world.

[43] *DN* II.5, 644A-B.
[44] See *DN* II.5, 644B; *DN* XI.6, 956A; *DN* XII.4, 972A.
[45] *DN* IX.9, 916D.

Insofar as these processions *are* God, the world is indeed created *from* God—for, in the absence of subordinate principles all creative energies must be predicated of God alone. And yet, insofar as these energies are distinct from the essence, the world is not created from God—not, at any rate, in any kind of unqualified *essential* sense.

In conclusion, Dionysius' transformation of mediation does not 'resolve' the ancient antinomy of the One and the many any more than do the mediating terms of Plotinus and Proclus. On the contrary, it radicalizes it such that beings both *are* and *are not* derived directly from God. The problem with the pagan position, from a Christian point of view, is that the proliferation of intermediaries means that the dividing line between the One and the many is never entirely clear. Indeed, the whole thrust of the 'great chain of being' is precisely to establish this continuity. While both Plotinus and Proclus insist upon a fundamental distinction between the One as uncaused, and all subsequent principles as caused, the seamless bridge constructed between the One and the many—especially as one finds it in the later Neoplatonism of Proclus—renders the distinction between God and world ambiguous. For the pagans this may well be a laudable achievement. From a Christian perspective however, which places a much higher premium upon the *otherness* of God in relation to the world, the pagan emphasis upon *sameness* can seem dangerously pantheistic.[46] Paradoxically, by drawing a distinction between God's unknowable *ousia* and his *energeic* processions, Dionysius renders the world at once more immediately related to God and more clearly distinguished from him. On one side of the great divide dwells the invisible and unnameable Creator who *made darkness his hiding place*; on the other side is visible contingent creation. What mediates between them are God's own providential processions that traverse the chasm without bridging it—that is, '*energeically*' rather than essentially or ontically.

[46] Ultimately, both pagans and Christians are struggling to articulate the antinomy of sameness and otherness with respect to the God/world relation. If the pagan emphasis upon sameness tends towards monism, the Christian emphasis upon otherness carries an inherent risk of dualism.

Being and Cosmic Hierarchy in Pseudo-Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*

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Dionysius' ordering of the processions being, life, and wisdom in *De Divinis Nominibus* book 5 seems to conflict with the structure of his cosmology. He argues that the procession being extends further than life and wisdom, while intellects are closer to God than things that have only life or being. His reply in 5.3 to the objection that if being is first among processions, then mere beings rather than intellects should be first in the cosmic hierarchy paradoxically reinforces the problem insofar as it implies that the cause of intellects, namely wisdom, must be most complete among processions. I will first spell out the apparent conflict between the orderings of the processions and the cosmic hierarchy, and then offer a solution by drawing a parallel between Dionysius' conception of love and the procession being. I will show that, by the nature of love, as illustrated by the image of the circle whose beginning and end is God, all beings depend in their essence on other beings, and therefore neither intellects nor wisdom are simply complete, thus defusing the apparent contradiction between the processions and the hierarchy.

Introduction

In *De Divinis Nominibus* 1.1-3, Pseudo-Dionysius (whom I will henceforth refer to simply as 'Dionysius') argues that the procession being is prior to life and wisdom. This priority seems contrary to Dionysius' ranking of natures in his cosmic hierarchy, according to which angelic intellects, not inanimate beings, hold the highest place. The two rankings seem to be arbitrarily inverted, and therefore contradictory. His reasoning in response to the question why intellects are the highest in the hierarchy despite the priority of being among the processions raises a further problem he does not explicitly address: if intellects are

first in the hierarchy, why is wisdom not first among processions? I will first lay out this problem in detail, and then attempt to resolve it. As an attempt to shed light on the nature of being, I will turn to Dionysius' account of love. I will argue that for Dionysius being is parallel to the circle of ecstatic love (*ἔρως*) whose beginning and end is God, and which suffuses the whole cosmic hierarchy, and furthermore that, since to be is to love the beautiful and good, to be is to be dependent on other beings as well as on God.[1] Intellects along with all other beings, as only parts of this whole circle, are in their essence dependent on others, on God first of all, but also on beings lower in the hierarchy. Once we see this, we no longer have reason to think that their cause, wisdom, is simply, without qualification, complete. The parallel between being and love in Dionysius' thought undermines the apparent contradiction.[2]

The Problem

I will begin with a brief sketch of Dionysius' account of the processions in *De Divinis Nominibus* 5. In 5.1, Dionysius compares the relative universality of the processions goodness, being, life, and wisdom. Goodness, he says, 'stretches out' (*ἐκτείνεται*)[3] to all things that are and also all things that are not; being 'stretches out' to all things that are; life to all things that live; and wisdom to all things that have any form of cognition, whether sensation, discursive reason, or intellect. Dionysius tells us that the name 'good' reveals the whole of God's providence, and the rest of the names reveal more whole or more partial processions or providences (5.2). The processions goodness, being, life, and wisdom are as it were a series of concentric circles around each other, with being the outermost and wisdom the innermost. Goodness encompasses all things

[1] Dionysius' preferred term for love is *ἔρως*, which as John Rist showed several decades ago ('A Note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius', *Vigiliae Christianae* 20, no. 4 (December 1966), 235-243), Dionysius understands not to be contrary to the Christian notion of *ἀγάπη*.

[2] One possible objection to my approach here that I want to address before I continue is that I am equivocating insofar as I am trying to understand the procession being (*τὸ ὄν*) through his account of the being in created things (*τὸ εἶναι*). For Dionysius, there is clearly a distinction between being as the procession and the being in created things: the procession is beyond created things. However, by Dionysius' reasoning, we know the cause through the effect, so that we can call God 'being' by considering the nature of the being in creation (see *De Divinis Nominibus* 11.6). We do not thereby limit God to created being, but gain some insight into God's nature, to the extent that it is accessible to us.

[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

that are and are not. Being encompasses all things that are, including living things and cognitive things. Life encompasses living things and cognitive things, and wisdom encompasses only cognitive things. The key distinction between the processions is their respective universality: they are all more or less universal. The principle of order among the processions is universality: the more universal processions are prior to the less universal, a prioritization reflected in the composition of the *De Divinis Nominibus* itself, in which Dionysius treats goodness first (book 4), then being (book 5), followed by life (book 6), and finally wisdom (book 7).

Dionysius structures his cosmic hierarchy according to a different principle of order. He views the whole created cosmos, material and non-material, as a hierarchy of natures made up of angelic intellects, rational beings (humans), sensing beings (non-human animals), things that live but do not sense (plants), and inanimate things. Although he applies the term 'hierarchy' primarily to the angelic and ecclesial hierarchies in his *De Coelesti Hierarchia* and *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, hierarchy in a broader sense is implicit throughout the *De Divinis Nominibus*.[4] In this hierarchy, intellects are most like God and are therefore the best among created things, inanimate things are least like God and are therefore least good, and all other beings are somewhere between these two extremes. Furthermore, the natures in the cosmic hierarchy are what they are by sharing in some or all of the processions. So for example, a stone is a being and shares in the procession being, but as an inanimate thing it does not share in the processions life or wisdom; a tree shares in being and life, but not wisdom; a human shares in all three processions. The principle of order is therefore a kind of completion or fullness of nature.

Dionysius raises an objection to this metaphysical scheme arising from a juxtaposition of the two orderings. While on the one hand among the processions he prioritizes the most universal procession of being over the less universal of life and wisdom, in the hierarchy he makes angelic intellects first and closest to God even though angelic intellects are exemplars of the least universal procession, namely wisdom. The question as Dionysius states it is, given that the more universal procession

[4] Eric Perl makes this observation in his *Theophany* (SUNY Press, 2007), 65.

is prior to and extends or 'stretches' beyond (*ὑπερεχτεινομένης*) the less universal, why do those things that participate in the less universal, more particular processions extend beyond those things that do not? We should be careful here not to misread the question. Dionysius gives the names of the processions in a genitive absolute with a circumstantial participle, thus taking the order among processions he has outlined for granted, and raises the question specifically about the hierarchy rather than the processions.

> Ἀνθ' ὅτου, τοῦ ὄντος τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τῆς ζωῆς τὴν σοφίαν ὑπερεχτεινομένης, τῶν ὄντων μὲν τὰ ζῶντα, τῶν δὲ ὅσα ζῇ τὰ αἰσθητικὰ, καὶ τούτων τὰ λογικὰ, καὶ τῶν λογικῶν οἱ νόες ὑπερέχουσι, καὶ περὶ Θεόν εἰσι καὶ μᾶλλον αὐτῷ πλησιάζουσι;

If being stretches beyond life and life extends beyond wisdom, why do living things extend beyond things that are, and things with sensation beyond things that only live, and rational beings beyond these, and intellects extend beyond rational beings, and are around God and are nearer to him?

The question as he expresses it is, given that the more universal processions are prior to the less universal, why do intellects extend beyond living things, and living things beyond inanimate beings?[5] In other words, he asks *if being is first among processions, why are intellects first in the divine hierarchy?*—not, *if intellects are first in the hierarchy, why is being first among processions?* The distinction may seem trivial, since the two questions are simply the reverse of each other, and both are equally worth asking, but Dionysius' reasoning becomes clearer if we keep in mind that he is arguing that intellects are highest even though being is first, rather than that being is first even though intellects are highest. (I will argue in the next section that he does not ask the alternative question because his notion of ecstatic love prevents it from arising.)

The problem is that the ordering of the hierarchy seems to contradict that of the processions. Why do things with wisdom, such as human

[5] Jones (*The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, trans John Jones [Marquette University Press, 1999], 164) reverses the terms of the question as it is found in the Greek. Perl does as well (*Theophany*, 69).

beings and angels, excel plants, which have life but not wisdom, and why do plants excel inanimate things, which have being but not life, if being is the first of the processions? The inversion of the two orders is awkward. Intellects, we might think, should not excel beyond inanimate things if being excels beyond wisdom, since inanimate beings participate in the highest of the processions. Dionysius responds to the objection by claiming that it would constitute a valid objection only if it were the case that beings with intellect did not also have life and being. But in fact, he says, intellects *are* more fully than other beings—they have being to a greater extent than living or inanimate things. They also live more fully than things that have only life but not wisdom, and they think and know more fully than those that have cognition only in the form of sensation or reason. This is Dionysius' stated reason for why those natures with wisdom excel those without wisdom, and in general why things that participate in the less universal processions excel those that participate only in the more universal.

Dionysius' argument here depends on his claim in 5.2 that the processions goodness, being, life, and wisdom are not substantially separate from each other: '[The argument (*ὁ λόγος*)] does not say that the good is one thing, and being another, and life or wisdom another' (5.2). Dionysius' response to the objection against his apparent inversion of the rankings of the processions and the hierarchy suggests that the objection is based on the assumption that being, life, and wisdom are separate substances standing apart from each other. If that were the case, then ranking their value would require putting wisdom in the highest place among the processions, since wisdom is the highest form of unity with God. Angelic intellects are 'around God', while inanimate things are not, so the procession that makes them intellects, i.e. wisdom, would be the highest. Dionysius denies this simplistic way of thinking. His reasoning is that angelic intellects must have being if they are to have wisdom, since what is wise also is; likewise, living things without cognition must also be in order to be alive. All things share in being before they share in any other procession (*De Divinis Nominibus* 5.5). Therefore, we cannot say that inanimate beings extend beyond intellects even though being is prior to wisdom, because intellects share in being and wisdom, while inanimate things only share in being; in general, the higher entities have what the lower have and more. The higher a nature

is in the cosmic hierarchy, the greater gifts it has, and the better and closer to God it is (*De Divinis Nominibus* 5.3). In an apparent rejection of Proclus' self-subsisting henads, Dionysius draws all the processions back to one cause, namely God, instead of to distinct divinities (5.2). Although there are four different names and four processions of God, such that goodness, being, life, and wisdom can be distinguished in some way, they are also somehow fundamentally one, rather than four externally related substances.

Unfortunately, Dionysius' solution to the objection he raises leads to the same problem, but from the direction of the hierarchy. Although Dionysius' intention here is to show why intellects are first in the hierarchy given the priority of being over other processions, it is also natural to ask why the processions are ordered according to universality given that the natures are ordered according to completeness. Though he does not raise this question explicitly, it is raised by his argument that intellects excel inanimate things and all other natures in the cosmic hierarchy as well because they have what other beings do and more. This argument gives us reason to think that wisdom ought to be first among processions (or at least prior to being), a claim that Dionysius denies. In reasoning from effects to their causes, if we attribute to one nature a higher status than another, should we not attribute a corresponding priority to their respective causes? The cause of a higher nature should be higher than the cause of a lower nature. The cause of intellects is wisdom, so, the universality of being notwithstanding, wisdom, it seems, should all the more be the first among processions. If we fall back on the substantial unity of being and wisdom, and reply that being and wisdom are not really at odds with each other in their causal role in relation to intellects, the question is still why Dionysius prioritizes the one aspect of God's unified processive activity in its manifestation as being over its manifestation as wisdom. Given that Dionysius distinguishes the processions in some fashion while nonetheless denying their substantial separation from each other, the issue is the same. Dionysius' prioritization of being over the value of wisdom seems mistaken by his own reasoning. And even if we allow one kind of priority to the universality of being, why does that priority take precedence over the completion that Dionysius ascribes to intellects?

Eric Perl addresses the issue of how the processions and the hierarchy relate to each other in his *Theophany*. According to Perl, the significance of Dionysius' claim that being, life, and wisdom are not separate substances is that all things are 'modes' of being or manifestations of God's presence in them.[6] All things are the same content, namely God, but manifested in different and analogous ways.[7] For Dionysius, being is prior to life and wisdom because 'the more universal contain the less universal as their specifications'.[8] Perl claims that the 'processions are the modes in which God is constitutively present in the various ranks of beings'.[9] On Perl's view, life is simply being in the way appropriate to living things, whether in the form of plant life, animal life, or intellectual life. Likewise, wisdom is being in the way appropriate to things with sensation, reason, or intellect. Therefore, argues Perl, being's priority to the other processions is its pre-containment of life, wisdom, and every being in the hierarchy.

It is certainly true that for Dionysius being contains all beings of any sort, even the other processions. For Dionysius, being is not empty of content, although it cannot be limited to any particular being. Being extends to all the things that are (*εἰς πάντα τὰ ὄντα*) but is also beyond all the things that are (*ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄντα*), and so transcends being as their cause. Inyx this way, being contains all things (5.1). Whatever any being has is within being itself. Nonetheless, the question remains why wisdom is not prior. If angelic intellects are the fullest mode of God's creative activity and are the most complete, wisdom has as good a claim to be the highest procession for the same reason being does, i.e. because of its completeness. No more content is found in the lower levels of the hierarchy than is already present in intellects, so why is their cause as intellects the first procession?[10]

[6] *Theophany*, 65, 70.
[7] *Theophany*, 72.
[8] *Theophany*, 70.
[9] *Theophany*, 65, 72.
[10] I think a problem with Perl's approach is that he reverses the objection Dionysius raises in 5.3, as if the question were why being is beyond life and wisdom, whereas (as I pointed out above) Dionysius asks why intellects are highest. Perl translates Dionysius: 'Yet someone might say, "Wherefore is Being set above Life and Wisdom, when living things are above beings, and sensitive things which live above these, and rational things above these, and the intellects are above the rational things and are more around God and closer to him?"' The question put this way makes takes the hierarchical order for granted and then asks about the order of the processions. But Dionysius' question is the reverse, and his immediate goal in *De Divinis Nominibus* 5.3 is to show why intellects are first, not why being is first (*Theophany*, 69).

Solution

To resolve the apparent contradiction between the two orderings, I propose we think of being in relation to God's creative love as understood by Dionysius. Being and love play parallel roles in his thought. For Dionysius, love or *ἔρως* plays a constitutive role for the nature of every being moving in a circular motion beginning from God, going through all things, and returning to God. Dionysius presents being, too, as having a circular structure. To be is to love the good and beautiful as a point on this circle. The upshot is that Dionysius' notion of love undermines the motivation for thinking that wisdom is superior to being. This motivation was the assumption that intellects are simply complete. In fact, for Dionysius intellects by themselves are only parts of the whole circle insofar as they are dependent on God and other beings. Seen in this light, we have no reason to suppose that wisdom must be more complete than being.

In Dionysius' metaphysics, love (in the words of Hierotheus) is a unifying power (*ἑνωτικήν τινα καὶ συγκρατικὴν ἐννοήσωμεν*, *De Divinis Nominibus* 4.15), aimed at the good ('*ἔρως* is of the good' (4.10) and conferring being on both lover and beloved. To be is to love the beautiful and good: 'there is no being that does not participate in the beautiful and good' (4.7.704b); 'in desiring the beautiful and good, all things do and will whatever they do and will' (*πάντα τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἐφιέμενα, ποιεῖ καὶ βούλεται πάντα ὅσα ποιεῖ καὶ βούλεται*, 4.10.708a). This is a comprehensive claim, including every created being and any dimension of its being, reaching to the very essence and natural function of each being. As Dionysius says in 4.4 (700b), all things in the cosmic hierarchy desire the good according to their nature, whether through knowledge, sensation, a 'natural motion', or (in the case of inanimate beings) simply by being suited to participate only in being. No being is entirely outside the scope of love (even the demons exercise a distorted form of love, see 4.34). Dionysius' ontology is based on his account of God as the final cause of all beings as beauty itself and goodness itself. In 4.7 he argues that the beautiful and the good are identical: because both the beautiful and the good are causes in the same way, as productive, final, and paradigmatic cause, they are identical. As the source of all goodness, beauty, and being, the beautiful and good itself is God, who therefore acts as productive, final, and paradigmatic cause.

We can see how God acts as each of these causes through love. As the beautiful and good itself, God is the final cause of all beings, which love him insofar as he is beautiful and good. God acts as productive cause as well as final cause, making them what they are and sustaining them in being. Moreover, final and productive cause are conjoined: the beautiful itself (*κάλλος*) 'calls' (*καλοῦν*) all beings to itself (4.7), and in doing so preserves every being 'from this beauty is the being for all things' (*ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ τούτου πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσι τὸ εἶναι*, 4.7.704a). Furthermore, God is the paradigm cause of the nature of each being (4.7). These three forms of causation are therefore intertwined.

Dionysius accounts for the ontological power of love in terms of 'ecstasy', and as I will now argue, the concept of ecstatic love makes every being incomplete when taken by itself, independently of others. For love to be ecstatic means that to love is to be outside oneself and to 'belong to' the beloved (4.13.712a) so that the lover is somehow in the beloved. For Dionysius, even God's creative activity is his love directed toward beings. He accounts for God's creation as a consequence of God's being 'charmed' by the goodness in beings: 'the very cause of all beings, by the good and beautiful love of all things comes to be outside itself through an excess of erotic goodness, by its providences toward all beings, and is as it were charmed by goodness and by *ἀγάπησις* and by *ἔρως*, and from being removed beyond all beings, is set down to what is in all beings' (4.13). God's going-out-of-himself is ecstasy (*ἔκστασις*, literally 'standing out of'). That God's love is ecstatic is a strange claim insofar as it seems to imply that there are beings prior to God's love for them, and that upon seeing them, God is somehow deceived by them and consequently confers being on them, but Dionysius should not be taken literally. The point is that God's love is a creative act: all beings are caused by God's motion outward from his essence, to somehow be in beings, yet without losing his transcendence. As Dionysius is quick to add, God comes to be in beings without wandering outward from himself (*ἀνεκφοίτητον ἑαυτοῦ*).

Dionysius' presentation of God's creative act through love in effect introduces an element of otherness into the concept of being. Since all goodness and beauty are from the beautiful and good, there can be no being that is beautiful or good apart from God as the source of the being's beauty and goodness. Each being therefore always participates

in God's beauty and goodness as long as it is, while at the same time the being is other than God such that God can love it as an other. Love here involves a paradoxical combination of same and other: the created being has all its goodness, beauty, and being from God, and to that extent has some form of sameness with God, and yet God transcends the created being, which is therefore radically other than God. For Dionysius, love continues to be a relation involving difference even while it unifies. From the primary object of love, i.e. the beautiful and good, says Dionysius, come 'all unities and distinctions, samenesses and differences, likenesses and unlikenesses' (4.7.704b). Dionysius is careful to pair opposites here. In general, all communions of opposites are from the beautiful and the good. For a communion of opposites to remain a communion instead of a simple unity, those opposites must retain their distinct natures. Therefore, the beautiful and good unites beings through love without erasing the distinctions between what it unites. There would be no unity of things that are different from each other if the difference were undone. Rather, love simultaneously magnifies differences insofar as it gives and preserves a thing's being by orienting it toward the good.

As an example of ecstatic love, Dionysius offers Paul's words, 'I live no longer, but Christ lives in me' (4.13). This is a vivid illustration of how the lover's being is dependent on the being of the beloved. As a lover of Christ, Paul's being is replaced by Christ's. In fact, Christ gives Paul being ('life', *ζωή*, suggesting not just a way of living as *βίος* might, but substance or essence) as the object of Paul's love. Speaking in general terms at the beginning of 4.13, Dionysius says 'the ecstatic divine love does not allow lovers to belong to themselves, but to those they love' (*ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐκστατικὸς ὁ θεῖος ἔρως, οὐκ ἐῶν ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τοὺς ἐραστὰς, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐρωμένων*). I take this claim to be a partial account of what it means for love to be ecstatic: the lover is not a self-contained unit, but 'belongs to' another, or rather others. This 'belonging to' entails ontological dependence, certainly for Paul, but by extension for all created beings. Here Dionysius has already applied love to the entire hierarchy, relating beings at all levels to each other at 4.10.708a, where he claims that inferiors love superiors, superiors love inferiors, and equals love equals. Again referring to the entire hierarchy in 4.13.712a,

he offers Paul's love for Christ as a paradigm of the ecstatic love that holds throughout the cosmos.

For Dionysius, therefore, every being is entirely dependent on God as the beloved. All intelligent beings have their being by desiring (ἐφιέμεναι, 4.1.696a) the good, i.e., God. More surprisingly, angelic intellects are ontologically dependent not only on God but on each other and even those toward whom they exercise providence. For Dionysius, the ecstatic dimension of love is not restricted to God's love for creatures, or for a creature's love for God, but includes the love between created beings.[11] In each case of genuine love, the lover belongs to the beloved. Dionysius' description of ecstatic love as 'divine' therefore cannot mean that God is always one of the terms in the relation in such a way that would exclude ecstatic love from holding between creatures. As a natural consequence of Dionysius' claim that God is somehow present in all things even while he is transcendent ('both all things in all things and nothing in anything' (*καὶ ἐν πᾶσι πάντα ἐστὶ, καὶ ἐν οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν*, 7.3), God is in a sense always the object of love. But just because God is present to the creature, every creature is at least in principle an object of the love of other beings. God of course exhibits this divine *ἔρως* above all others, but the ecstatic love Dionysius describes in 4.13 as 'divine' is so not because it is only God's love toward creatures. It is divine in the sense that it is the true ἔρως Dionysius distinguishes from its false image, its 'falling away' (*ἔκπτωσις*), in *De Divinis Nominibus* 4.12. Furthermore, ecstatic love is not one species of love among many. Dionysius' point is that all love is inherently ecstatic, a belonging of the lover to the beloved, in such a way that the lover's very essence is somehow received from the beloved.[12]

[11] As Dmitrios Vasilikas argues (*Eros in Neoplatonism and its Reception in Christian Philosophy* [Bloomsbury Academic, 2021], 142 ff.), for Dionysius the movement of ecstatic *ἔρως* can go in any direction, whether toward higher or lower, or toward beings of the same ontological status as the lover.

[12] Regarding the question of the nature of *ἔρως* in Dionysius and its relation to Christian theology, see also Rist, 'A Note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius', 235–243; Cornelia J. De Vogel, 'Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God: Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite and the Author of the Fourth Gospel', *Vigiliae Christianae* 35, no. 1 (March 1981), 70–71; Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Liturgical Press, 2013), 63 ff.; Vasilakis, *Eros in Neoplatonism and its Reception in Christian Philosophy*, 143 ff.; Paul Rorem, 'Empathy and Evaluation in Medieval Church History and Pastoral Ministry: A Lutheran Reading of Pseudo-Dionysius', *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (1998), 111–115.

Dionysius spells out the cooperative nature of creation in book 3 of the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*: 'For each of those who have been called into the Hierarchy find their perfection in becoming a fellow-worker with God, and in shewing the Divine energy dwelling in itself, manifested as far as possible to others'.[13] A being in the hierarchy is made complete, in other words receives its full being, by cooperating in God's creative activity, which as we have seen is his love. Although my aim here is not to decide the question how Dionysius' view of love fits into the Greek philosophical and Christian traditions as they had developed by his time, it is worth observing that there is nothing merely selfish or egoistic about love in Dionysius' view, contrary to Anders Nygren's interpretation.[14] The ecstatic nature of love by which the lover belongs to the beloved, thus losing an entirely independent identity, precludes this possibility.

Love for Dionysius displays a circular form, a circle whose beginning and end is God.[15] It is a single power moving 'to the last among beings and, subsequently, back again from this, through all, and into the good. It revolves out of itself, through itself, and upon itself; always and in the same way reverting into itself'[16] (4.17). In this use of the circle-image, love begins from God in the act of creation, moving downward to creatures, and returns to him in the creature's love for God. Love therefore relates beings toward each other at the same time that it relates them to God. The image of the circle harmonizes love for God and love for creatures as reflections of God. Here God is the beginning and end as a point on the circle. Dionysius uses the image of the circle in another way when he describes the ontological dependence of every creature on God in 5.6. This use of the image is especially illustrative of the coincidence between love for God and love for the creature. All the lines and points of the circle are contained in (*συνυφεστήκασι*) the one center point (821a). Here God is not a point on the circle but is the center point by which every point on the circle has its being. As each point on the circle is defined in terms of this center, so every creature

[13] T*he Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. John Parker (Skeffington and Son, 1894), 22.

[14] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 576–593.

[15] See Vasilakis, *Eros in Neoplatonism and its Reception in Christian Philosophy*, 153–155.

[16] Jones, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, 148.

has its essence in its relation to God. Precisely by its essence, given in terms of its relation to the center point, each point on the circle comes to be a point on the line that constitutes the circle. The point on the circle is related first to the center, but at the same time to every other point on the circle. The relations the points or lines on the circle bear to the center determine their relations to each other: 'insofar as they are nearer to the center, they are unified with it and each other' (821a). In an analogous way every created being gets its essence by its relation to and love for God but is also at the same time put into its essential place in a complex whole in relation to every other being. Although the context here is the procession of being from God to the creature, I suggest it captures the nature of love as a cosmic phenomenon relating the creature to God as well. What this means is that there is no conflict between genuine love for God and for creatures. Rather, a genuine love for God as the good and beautiful puts the creature into a relationship of genuine love of the appropriate sort for other creatures.

We can now see how the procession being and the divine love that suffuse the cosmos work in a parallel fashion, and all created beings are dependent in their essence on other beings as well as God through love. Even angelic intellects exercise love in their providential love for lower beings, and therefore are ontologically dependent on other created beings. We have no reason to suppose that Dionysius' view implies the absurdity that the higher natures are as dependent on the lower natures as the lower are on the higher, e.g., that angels are as dependent on humans as humans are on angels. (And of course, God's love for created beings does not make God dependent on them, even though God loves ecstatically, mysteriously going out of himself while remaining in himself, since God is transcendent love itself.) Nonetheless, higher beings depend on the lower even while exercising providence toward them. The providential activity of an angelic intellect is an instance of ecstatic love, and so the angelic intellect too receives its being in some way by providentially loving others, as well as their love for each other and God. This follows from Dionysius' claim in his discussion of Paul's love for Christ that the lover has its being in the beloved.

To sum up, love, like being, is not any particular being, but runs through the totality of beings, including them all within its scope and conveying being on them. Moreover, to be is to love God and

beings insofar as they are reflections of God. Being itself is parallel to the circular motion of love moving through all beings. This way of understanding being gives us insight, I think, into the question of how the procession being is prior to wisdom. In comparison with being, the other processions are only partial. Being is prior because it is the totality of dependence of created beings on each other and on God, whereas wisdom, which contains only some beings, is only a part of this totality. Angelic intellects reflect the partiality of wisdom. If to be is to be dependent on other beings through ecstatic *ἔρως*, then intellects are not self-standing beings independent of all others. It is their nature as beings to love others whether those others are superior, inferior, or equal in nature to themselves. Because angelic intellects by nature love those beings that are lower than themselves (including at least humans) they are not complete when considered in isolation from other beings, since to be an intellect is to exercise providence toward lower natures and therefore not to be simply complete. Paradoxically, wisdom considered by itself does not capture the essential relatedness to other, and even lower, beings that is essential to all beings, including angelic intellects. But it was the apparent ontological completeness of the intellects that gave us reason to think that their cause—wisdom—must be complete in comparison with the cause of the other natures. We therefore are not compelled to suppose that their cause is complete without qualification. We can now see the hierarchy and the processions as aligned, instead of being inverted: as intellects depend on other beings because of their essential relationality in the form of *ἔρως*, so too wisdom is somehow dependent on other beings and being as a whole. Furthermore, given the close parallel between being and love, we can now see why Dionysius does not explicitly raise the question why being is first given the superiority of angelic intellects to all other beings. Being and ecstatic love are so closely associated in his thought that he sees no need to.

As in God's Eye It Is
How Thomas Aquinas and Dionysius Resolve the Greatest Difficulty

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In this paper, I compare Dionysius's and Aquinas's strategies of solving the problem of the One and the Many. That is, I examine how they reconcile the simplicity of the Divine Essence with the multiplicity of the Divine Ideas. I claim that they posit a perfect conceptual overlap between the 'contents' of certain Exemplar Ideas and the creatures fashioned in their likeness. My argument proceeds in two steps. First, I analyze the analogous significations of the Divine Names and how these senses facilitate Dionysius's and Thomas's metaphysical reductions of created esse to Ipsum Esse. Second, I develop the implications of these accounts of exemplar causality by contrasting them with a form of Platonism. Such Platonism reifies the Divine Names, turning them into separate hypostases and exemplar causes, which creatures only imperfectly participate. For Thomas and Dionysius, by contrast, creatures perfectly resemble God's Ideas. Given this perfect resemblance, I conclude that, in some sense, one can know the 'contents' of God's creative intentions simply by coming to know creatures. However, I conclude by adding several, important caveats to our knowledge of the Divine Exemplars.

"'The greatest difficulty,' Parmenides said, 'is the following.'"[1] So begins Plato's most challenging critique of exemplarism in *Parmenides*. The elderly philosopher asks Socrates how knowledge of the Ideas is possible if individuals only partly resemble them. For Socrates is a man rather than the fullness of 'what it is to be man'. The latter signifies or 'holds back' more perfections than those captured by this or that man. Given these reserve perfections, how could acquaintance with particulars ever

[1] Plato, *Opera: Volume II: Parmenides, Philebus, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades I and II, Hipparchus, Amatores*, ed. J. Burnet, 2nd edition (Oxonii: Clarendon Press, 1922) 133b–c.

yield knowledge of their Ideas? At best, one might have true beliefs (*ἀληθεῖς δόξαι*) about Ideas, not demonstrative knowledge.

According to Cornelio Fabro, this aporia was resolved by Aquinas. Unlike Plotinus and Proclus, who justified knowledge of Ideas by positing elaborate hierarchies of emanation and participation, Aquinas overcame Parmenides's aporia by subsuming created *esse* into its virtual mode of being in the One.[2] Thomas's strategy, inspired by Dionysius, is one of 'metaphysical reduction', a leading back of finite *esse* to its source in *Ipsum esse subsistens*.[3]

In what follows, I examine this reduction and its consequences for our understanding of the Divine Ideas. My main contention is that it entails a perfect conceptual overlap between the 'contents' of certain Exemplar Ideas and the creatures fashioned in their likenesses.

My argument proceeds in two steps. First, I analyze the analogous significations of the Divine Names and how these senses facilitate Dionysius's and Thomas's metaphysical reductions of created *esse* to God. I then show how this reduction contextualizes their account of the Divine Exemplars. Both consider Exemplars to be God's creative anticipations of finite substances as limited participants in *per se esse*, his first pure participation or 'gift' to creatures. Second, I develop the implications of this account of exemplar causality by contrasting it with a form of Platonism, one that adheres to what R. J. Henle called the via *abstractionis*.[4] Such Platonism reifies the Divine Names into separate hypostases and exemplar causes, which creatures only imperfectly participate. For Thomas and Dionysius, creatures perfectly resemble God's exemplars, his intensions to give them a limited share in *per se esse*. Given this perfect resemblance, I conclude that, in some sense, one can know the 'contents' or *rationes* of God's creative intentions simply by knowing creatures. In my conclusion, I place several important qualifications on our knowledge of the Divine Exemplars.

[2] Cornelio Fabro, 'Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Thomism: Convergencies and Divergencies', *The New Scholasticism* 44, no. 1 (1970), 80. 'It is only the Thomistic correction, that is the promotion of the *Esse* from the *primum metaphysicum* and from the Principle of all reality that the aporias of the Platonic One are surpassed'.

[3] Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalite Selon S. Thomas D'Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1961), 242. 'Denys, en théologie chrétien, a tout unifié en Dieu, qui est ainsi créateur immédiat de toutes choses: saint Thomas attribue cette *réduction métaphysique* même à Aristote et au *de Causis*'.

[4] R. J. Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the Plato and Platonici Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas*, (New York: Springer Publishing, 2012), 411.

I: Per ipsum esse fecit subsistere omnia quaecumque sunt:[5]

The Divine Names are a crucial part of Thomas's and Dionysius's reduction of created esse to its virtual mode of being in God. These names signify certain created perfections as well as their pre-eminent mode of being in their Cause. Their dual significance thus shows how created perfections can be meaningfully predicated of and led back to God. Hence, it is necessary to investigate Dionysian terms like *per se esse* and *per se vitam*.

However, as Thomas notes, Dionysius's language is often obscure; he frequently 'employs the style and mode of speaking' of the Platonists,[6] who posited separate substances like *homo per se* or 'man in himself'. They did so, according to Aquinas, because they observed that terms like 'humanity' contained perfections over and above the limitations found in individuals. From this juxtaposition, they concluded that individuals only partly shared in the Forms, and that the latter were 'more real' (*ὄντως ὄν*) than the former.[7] Or better, one could say that particulars are less than fully real, their separated essences existing in the world of Ideas.

Indeed, the Platonists concluded that not only were there Forms of natural kinds, but *a fortiori* Forms of forms. Such Forms were meant to account for the principles of unity, being, intelligence, and eternity shared by all intelligibles. Some of these principles, as in Plotinian and Procline theology, were thought to exist independently of the One, being repugnant to its absolute simplicity.[8] For instance, Plotinus posited a separate hypostasis, Intellect, which eternally contemplated its own Ideas.[9] As all intellection is necessarily *of* something, even Intellect had a definite nature. For it too had an intentional object, namely the

[5] Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* (hereafter *In div. nom.*), ed. C. Pera, P. Caramello, C. Mazzantini (Rome: Marietti, 1950), V, lect. 1, p. 236.

[6] *In div. nom., prooemium*, p. 1. 'Plerumque utitur stilo et modo loquendi quo utebantur platonici, qui apud modernos est inconsuetus'. (All translations from Greek and Latin are my own).

[7] *In div. nom., prooemium*, p. 2. 'Dicebant, ergo, quod hic homo singularis sensibilis non est hoc ipsum quod est homo, sed dicitur homo participatione illius hominis separati. Unde in hoc homine sensibili invenitur aliquid quod non pertinet ad speciem humanitatis, sicut materia individualis et alia huiusmodi. Sed in homine separato nihil est nisi quod ad speciem humanitatis pertinet'.

[8] Proclus, *The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd edition (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), props. 21–23.

[9] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Llyod P. Gerson et alii (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 539–40.

manifold of intelligible Being within Itself. Being and Intellect, in short, are difficult to reconcile with absolute simplicity.

Dionysius, too, uses terms like *ipsum per se esse* (*αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἶναι*) to refer to the Divine.[10] Is he thus positing immaterial, self-subsisting entities apart from God? One of Dionysius's contemporaries raised this question and requested clarification. Pre-empting such a misinterpretation, Dionysius responded:

> What in general, though, you ask, do we mean by 'being itself' or 'life itself' or all those which exist absolutely and primordially and which we regard as having been the first to subsist from out of God? We say that this is not oblique but that it has a simple and direct explanation. **For we do not say that Being itself, the Cause of the being for all beings, is some divine or angelic being—for only Being itself beyond being [i.e. God] is source, being, and cause of being for all beings.** To speak summarily, we do not say that beings and substances are sources and creators of beings. Now some who are negligent teach that these are gods and creators of beings, but, to speak truly and properly, neither these persons nor their fathers have known such [gods], for they do not exist.[11] (Emphasis added).

It was perhaps this and similar passages in the *Divine Names* that led Aquinas to the startling claim that 'Dionysius almost everywhere follows Aristotle'.[12] For Dionysius, like Aristotle, denied the existence of separate substances corresponding to objects of thought. Moreover, he

[10] Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I. ed. B. R. Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), V. 5, p. 183. (Hereafter *De Divinis Nominibus*.)

[11] *De Divinis Nominibus*, XI. 6, p. 222. Τί δὲ ὅλως, φῄς, τὸ αὐτοεῖναι λέγομεν ἢ τὴν αὐτοζωὴν ἢ ὅσα ἀπολύτως καὶ ἀρχηγικῶς εἶναι καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ πρώτως ὑφεστηκέναι τιθέμεθα; Τοῦτο δέ, φαμέν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγκύλον, ἀλλ' εὐθὺ καὶ ἁπλῆν τὴν διασάφησιν ἔχον. Οὐ γὰρ οὐσίαν τινὰ θείαν ἢ ἀγγελικὴν εἶναί φαμεν τὸ αὐτοεῖναι τοῦ εἶναι τὰ ὄντα πάντα αἰτίαν, μόνον γὰρ τοῦ εἶναι πάντα τὰ ὄντα καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τὸ ὑπερούσιον ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία καὶ αἴτιον, οὐδὲ ζωογόνον ἄλλην θεότητα παρὰ τὴν ὑπέρθεον πάντων, ὅσα ζῇ, καὶ τῆς αὐτοζωῆς αἰτίαν ζωὴν οὔτε, συνελόντα εἰπεῖν, ἀρχικὰς τῶν ὄντων καὶ δημιουργικὰς οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστάσεις, ἅς τινες καὶ θεοὺς τῶν ὄντων καὶ δημιουργοὺς αὐτοσχε διάσαντες ἀπεστομάτισαν, οὕς, ἀληθῶς καὶ κυρίως εἰπεῖν, οὔτε αὐτοὶ «ᾔδεισαν», ἅτε δὴ οὐκ ὄντας, οὔτε «οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

[12] Aquinas, Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 14 q. 1 a. 2 co, cited in Hankey, 'The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the Liber de Causis & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus', *Dionysius* 34 (2016), n. 70.

denied that separate substances apart from God were responsible for giving *esse to things*.

Given that these names do not refer to separate gods, what do they signify? Dionysius admits that they are said in two ways. First, one can predicate the divine names 'principally' (*ἀρχικῶς*), 'divinely' (*θεικῶς*), and 'causally' (*αἰτιατικῶς*). Dionysius offers little clarification as to what this sense entails other than that these names signify God as 'Cause beyond cause and Source beyond source'.[13]

However, his use of the prefix ὑπερ (e.g. *ὑπεράρχιον καὶ ὑπερούσιον*; lit. beyond-principle and beyond-substance) suggests that these names signify perfections in the Divine *esse* by way of preeminence. If God is 'Cause beyond cause and Source beyond source', then he is not one source or cause of being among others. Usually, sources and causes are of definite beings and definite themselves, i.e. humanity is a definite principle or cause in *this* man. God, however, does not have a definite nature but an infinite one. Hence, one cannot say univocally that he is a cause or source. Indeed, one might say he is *not* a source or cause. But such denials may lead one to think that God, not being a cause, is somehow impotent. Therefore, one must say that God is a cause in a pre-eminent sense. One predicates causality of God by removing any limitations co-signified by the word 'cause'. In this sense, then, the Divine Names signify certain perfections that belong to God in a pre-eminent way.

Dionysius attributes ontological primacy to this sense of terms like *per se esse* and *per se sapientiam*. For their referent is God, whom they signify pre-eminently. Dionysius thus seems committed to the analogicity of the Divine Names. For they are said in many ways, but always in reference to a single nature, in this case the Divine *esse*.[14] Hence, any further inquiry into their signification requires a brief account of analogy.

In general, analogous names constitute and refer to what Doolan calls 'analogous communities',[15] groups of beings hierarchically ordered

[13] *De Divinis Nominibus*, XI. 6, p. 222. Ἀλλ' αὐτοεῖναι καὶ αὐτοζωὴν καὶ αὐτοθεότητά φαμεν ἀρχικῶς μὲν καὶ θεϊκῶς καὶ αἰτιατικῶς τὴν μίαν πάντων ὑπεράρχιον καὶ ὑπερούσιον ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν.

[14] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1003a33–1003b4.

[15] For more on technical terms like 'analogous community', 'prime analogate', etc. see Gregory T. Doolan, 'Aquinas on Substance as a Metaphysical Genus', in *The Science of Being as Being*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan, Metaphysical Investigations (Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 99–128.

by relations of priority and posteriority. Whatever is signified by the primary sense of an analogous name represents that community's 'prime analogate'. It is primary or prime insofar as it enters into the accounts of its analogs. These have their name and intelligibility on account of the prime analogate. Adapting Aristotle's example from *Metaphysics* Γ, one might say of a man, a diet, a sport, and a certain complexion that they are healthy.[16] Aside from the man, the others are healthy in secondary senses. They are 'healthy' because they cause, sustain, or signify health in the body. Health in the man, then, is the prime analogate from which the other senses derive their predicates and meaning *qua* healthy.

Health in the man, moreover, is prior both ontologically and in account. For absent health in the man, diets, sports, and complexions could not cause, preserve, or signify in the relevant respects. It is prior in account since it enters into the definition of its analogs. Sports are activities that promote health, medicine the art that produces health, etc.

This last observation creates an aporia insofar as it implies that God is ontologically or notionally posterior to his creation. For neither the 'causal' sense of health nor its referent, medicine, were prior to health in the man. Health is said of and exists 'in' medicine on account of health in the man, not *vice-versa*. But if this relation between cause and effect holds for medicine and health, would it not also apply to God and his creatures? Is God somehow secondary in account or, per *impossibile*, in being?

Such an understanding would be backwards, at least for Thomas, since it conflates the priority of our understanding with priority in the order of being. As he puts it in the *Summa Theologiae*, sometimes that which is signified by a name (*res significata*) differs from the being from which the name's sense was originally taken (*impositio nominis*).[17]

[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1003a33–1003b3. Τὸ δὲ ὂν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἕν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐχ ὁμωνύμως ἀλλ' ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ὑγιεινὸν ἅπαν πρὸς ὑγίειαν, τὸ μὲν τῷ φυλάττειν τὸ δὲ τῷ ποιεῖν τὸ δὲ τῷ σημεῖον εἶναι τῆς ὑγιείας τὸ δ' ὅτι δεκτικὸν αὐτῆς, καὶ τὸ ἰατρικὸν πρὸς ἰατρικήν γὰρ τῷ ἔχειν ἰατρικὴν λέγεται ἰατρικὸν τὸ δὲ τῷ εὐφυὲς εἶναι πρὸς αὐτὴν τὸ δὲ τῷ ἔργον εἶναι τῆς ἰατρικῆς.

[17] Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 4: *Summa Theologiae, I[a] q. 1–49 cum commentariis Caietani* (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1888), q. 13, a. 6, co, p. 150. 'Cum enim dicitur Deus es bonus, vel sapiens, non solum significatur quod ipse sit causa sapientiae vel bonitatis, sed quod haec in eo eminentius praeexistunt. Unde, secundum hoc, dicendum est quod, quantum ad rem significatam per nomen, per prius dicuntur de Deo quam de creaturis: quia a Deo huiusmodi perfectiones in creaturas manant. Sed quantum ad impositionem nominis, per prius a nobis imponuntur

When the *res significata* exceeds the power of that being from which one derived the *impositio*, one must make a distinction between priority in being and the understanding. As Doolan observes:

> Sometimes what is first in reality is not what is first to us. If we consider again the example of the analogous term "healthy," Thomas explains that because of medicine's healing **power**, its "healthiness" is in fact naturally prior to the health of the animal, for a cause is always prior to its effect. Nevertheless, because we know **this power** through its effect, we name it from the effect. In this way, something is taken as prior according to the order of our understanding that is not prior according to the order of reality. (Emphasis mine).[18]

That is, when considered with respect to power (actuality or *δύναμις*), medicine is prior to its effects. For it has an ability to generate a state in the man that he could not bring about on his own. However, considered with respect to the natures from which we impose meanings on terms, health in the man is prior, since, strictly speaking, health is a quality not of an art but of living things.

Similarly, considered with respect to power, God is prior to any of his effects. For he gives *esse* to things that could never have it apart from his act of creating them. Moreover, his power is such that it depends on nothing other than itself in order to be. Therefore, with respect to power, God's *esse* is primary. Yet, with respect to the natures from which we impose significations on names, *per se esse*, *vitam*, and *sapientiam* are drawn from and thus apply primarily to God's created participations. Although said of God super-eminently, for us these names signify the participations or effects from which they were originally abstracted.

Dionysius thus affirms that we can use God's names 'in a participable way' (*μεθεκτῶς*). He writes:

creaturis, quas prius cognoscimus. Unde et modum significandi habent qui competit creaturis ut supra dictum est'.

[18] Gregory T. Doolan, 'Aquinas on Substance as a Metaphysical Genus', in *The Science of Being as Being*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan, Metaphysical Investigations (Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 126.

> When said in a participable way (*μεθεκτῶς*), **we mean the providential powers** (*δυνάμεις*) that have been given out of the (a) unparticipated [or 'unparticipatable'] (*ἀμέθεκτος*) God, [that is] (b) **substantification itself, vivification itself, and deification itself** (*τὴν αὐτοουσίωσιν, αὐτοζώωσιν, αὐτοθέωσιν*). All things participate these in a manner fitting to themselves by which they are called (c) beings (*τὰ ὄντα*), living things (*ζῶντα*), and divine (*ἔνθεα*) and [said to] exist (*καὶ ἔστι*).[19]

This 'participable' sense thus signifies God's effects or 'powers' (*δυνάμεις*). Elsewhere, Dionysius refers to these as God's 'gifts' (*δωρεαί*),[20] or 'processions' (*προόδοι*) into creatures.[21]

Apparently relying on the Procline triad of the (a) the unparticipated or 'unparticipatable' (God or the One), (b) the participation (substantification itself), and (c) the created participant (the concrete thing), Dionysius specifies that names taken in this second, participable sense refer to (b) God's participations, gifts, or processions into creatures.

What, then, are these participations? Dionysius says little more than what was already cited above. Elaborating further, Aquinas suggests that they are the absolute natures of pure perfections, i.e. those perfections whose *rationes* do not include a necessary relation to matter. Deploying Avicenna's 'threefold consideration of a nature',[22] Thomas notes that we can conceive of a nature insofar as it is (a) in a particular thing (*in particulari*), (b) in the mind as a universal (*in universali*), or (c) absolutely (*secundum se*) in such a way that we prescind from considerations of

[19] *De Divinis Nominibus*, XI. 6, p. 222. μεθεκτῶς δὲ τὰς ἐκδιδομένας ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου προνοητικὰς δυνάμεις τὴν αὐτοουσίωσιν, αὐτοζώωσιν, αὐτοθέωσιν, ὧν τὰ ὄντα οἰκείως ἑαυτοῖς μετέχοντα καὶ ὄντα καὶ ζῶντα καὶ ἔνθεα καὶ ἔστι.

[20] *De Divinis Nominibus*, II. 3, p. 125.

[21] De Divinis Nominibus, II. 3, p. 126.

[22] Gregory T. Doolan, 'Aquinas on Esse Subsistens and the Third Mode of Participation', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 82, no. 4 (2018): 624–27; nn. 44–49. Cf. *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 1, a. 1. *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 25/1 (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1996), 51–53. Cited in Doolan, 'Third Mode', 624; n. 44. 'Dicendum, quod, secundum Avicennam in sua metaphysica, triplex est alicuius naturae consideratio. Una, prout consideratur secundum esse quod habet in singularibus; sicut natura lapidis in hoc lapide et in illo lapide. Alia vero est consideratio alicuius naturae secundum esse suum intelligibile; sicut natura lapidis consideratur prout est in intellectu. Tertia vero est consideratio naturae absoluta, prout abstrahit ab utroque esse; secundum quam considerationem consideratur natura lapidis, vel cuiuscumque alterius, quantum ad ea tantum quae per se competunt tali naturae'.

particularity or universality (*prout abstrahunt et ab universalitate et a particularitate*). This last mode is what Dionysius, according to Thomas, means by the per se names of God said in a participable way (*sicut signatur cum dicitur: per se vita*).[23]

Admittedly, one might think Thomas's clarification of Dionysius by means of Avicenna represents a case of the *obscurum per obscurius*. Yet, these Procline and Avicennian divisions are mutually reinforcing, and, indeed, illumine one another. Consider the following analogy.[24] According to Aristotle, the sun emits white light, which actualizes a transparent body (i.e. air or water).[25] Such actualization, in turn, enables determinate colors like green to actualize water or air in determinate ways (i.e. greenly). These determinations of the transparent are received in the eye, thereby constituting discrete acts of vision.

Corresponding to Proclus's triad, this image presents us with three terms: the (1) unparticipated (i.e. the sun : God), (2) the created participation (i.e. white light : *per se esse*), and (3) the individual participants (i.e. the green grass: *id quod habet esse*). At the second and third levels, one can distinguish three 'locations' of light or green. For instance, green may either be (a) in the grass (*in particulari*), (b) in the eye as the 'form of green' (one might say '*in oculis*').[26] Stretching the analogy a bit, if the eye could reflect on its own contents, it could prescind from green's particular mode of being in the grass as well as its more detached mode in the eye and thus consider it (c) absolutely.

[23] *In Div. Nom.*, XI, lect. 4. 'Participationes autem ipsae tripliciter considerari possunt: uno modo secundum se, prout abstrahunt et ab universalitate et a particularitate, sicut signatur cum dicitur: per se vita; alio modo considerantur in universali, sicut dicitur vita totalis vel universalis; tertio modo in particulari, secundum quod vita dicitur huius vel illius rei'.

[24] See Doolan, 'Aquinas on Esse Subsistens and the Third Mode of Participation', 633–636. For Thomas's use of this Platonic paradigm when explaining the relation between God and creatures, see STh I, q. 104, a. 1 (Leon. ed., 5:464): 'Sic autem se habet omnis creatura ad Deum, sicut aer ad solem illuminantem. Sicut enim sol est lucens per suam naturam, aer autem fit luminosus participando lumen a sole, non tamen participando naturam solis; ita solus Deus est ens per essentiam suam, quia eius essentia est suum esse; omnis autem creatura est ens participative, non quod sua essentia sit eius esse'. Cited in Doolan, 'Aquinas on Esse Subsistens and the Third Mode of Participation', n. 68. See also Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. W. D. Ross, Bilingual edition (Oxonii : New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[25] For more on Aristotle's and Aquinas's accounts of light see Aristotle, De Anima, 418a26–419b2. For Aquinas's color theory of white light as the form of visibility and exemplar form of colors, see Therese Scarpelli Cory, 'Rethinking Abstractionism: Aquinas's Intellectual Light and Some Arabic Sources', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53, (2015): 607–46.

[26] Aristotle, *De Anima* II.7, 431b29–432a1. οὐ γὰρ [ἡ πόα] ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος. 'It is not the [grass] that is in the soul, but rather its form'.

Yet, despite its pedigree and flexibility, even this analogy fails to capture all the relevant relations. First, being material and not an abstract quiddity, green must either be in the thing or in the eye. Only the mind can consider abstract natures universally in the sense required by (b) or in the absolute sense implied by (c). Second, while the sun is the cause of a single graduated perfection—light—God is the source of *all* perfections in *all* their gradations.[27] Third, while the sun's actualization of colors presupposes the existence of bodies, which for Aristotle and Aquinas were colored *per se*, God's 'light' gives things their *esse* and thus the ability to receive any further perfection.

Still, the analogy manages to capture the general relation of Proclus's triad to Avicenna's threefold *consideratio*. One could apply Proclus's triad (the unparticipated being, the participated form or participation, and the participant) to three hierarchically related entities, i.e. the (1) unparticipated sun, (2) its participation or procession in white light, and (3) the participating grass that shares in light in a way befitting its nature.[28] On the other hand, it seems Avicenna's distinction is applicable to a definite nature at either the second or third level. One could say that while Proclus's triad divides a nature vertically by degrees of causal power, Avicenna's *consideratio* spreads it horizontally by identifying 'where' it may be at its given level.

Adding modern notions of white light as containing the wavelengths of all particular colors, one could use this analogy to account for the different significations that certain predicates obtain at each level

[27] Aquinas makes this very point in the *De Veritate*. It marks a dissimilarity between God's knowledge of his effects and what white light would know if it could know individual colors. Whereas God is the cause of all formal perfections and matter, white light is only the equivocal cause, exemplar, and measure of colors in material things, but not the matter in which these colors inhere. Hence, white light would not know its effects *in their material principles*. Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 22 1/2: *De Veritate,* qq. 1–7 (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1970), q. 2, a. 4, ad. 4, p. 58. 'Ad quartum dicendum, quod albedo superabundat a viridi colore quantum ad alterum eorum quod est de natura coloris, scilicet quantum ad lucem, quae est quasi formale in compositione coloris, et secundum hoc est mensura aliorum colorum; sed in coloribus invenitur aliquid aliud quod est quasi materiale in ipsis, scilicet terminatio diaphani, et secundum hoc albedo non est mensura colorum: et sic patet quod in specie albedinis non est totum id quod in aliis coloribus invenitur; et ideo per speciem albedinis non potest haberi propria cognitio de quolibet aliorum colorum; secus autem est de essentia divina. Et praeterea in essentia divina sunt res aliae sicut in causa; alii autem colores non sunt in albedine sicut in causa; et ideo non est simile'.

[28] This hierarchy is explicitly mentioned by Proclus. See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd edition (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), prop. 24, pp. 28-29.. πᾶν τὸ μετέχον τοῦ μετεχομένου καταδεέστερον, καὶ τὸ μετεχόμενον τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου.

of being.[29] For instance, one might predicate 'light' of beings at the participating, participated, and unparticipated levels of being. At the participating level, 'light' refers to the color green, which is, for the most part, said of material composites like grass. 'Green-light' is, as Aristotle would say, like "snub, a this in a that" (*τόδε ἐν τῷδε*). The account or *λόγος* of green includes a reference to particular matter.[30]

'Light', when said at the second level (i.e. of white light), is more peculiar. For white light is *not* directly visible but rather the form and cause of visibility for other things (*ratio visibilitatis visibilium*).[31] Moreover, it is not connected to air or water as green is to grass. These media, when illumined, do not have a particular color but rather all colors.

At the third level, when said of the sun, 'light' is inadequate as a predicate. It does not capture the fact that the sun does not need a medium nor an external source for its light. Rather the sun is light on account of itself. It is, one might say, *ipsum lumen per se subsistens*.

By extension, the analogy explains why certain perfections, when said of God, are either metaphorical or analogous. Furthermore, the third level of the comparison suggests that even analogous perfections

[29] Cory, "Rethinking Abstractionism," 622. Embodied understanding is possible only because the agent intellect and the phantasm are complementary active principles, each contributing what the other lacks for generating the intelligible species. The agent intellect is the sheer form of intelligibility, not determined to this or that intelligible such as horseness or catness (just as physical light is the sheer indeterminate *form of visibility*) (Emphasis added). Cory's discussion of light as the form of visibility in Aquinas is interesting for two reasons. First, it suggests that, while the notion of light as somehow containing all wavelengths is modern, it is not too anachronistic to apply it to the ancients and medievals. For if light is the form of visibility *qua* actualizer of the transparent, in which determinate colors participate, then, colors are defective instances of light's pre-eminent power. They are thus lesser kinds of light. See Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 22 3/1: *De Veritate*, qq. 21–29 (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1973), q. 22 a. 14 s.c. 2, p. 647. Praeterea, sicut lux est *ratio visibilitatis colori*, ita finis est ratio appetibilitatis his quae sunt ad finem. Sed eodem actu visus videt colorem et lucem (Emphasis added). Second, Cory's discussion suggests that Aquinas's account of colors and light may be modern in another respect. She says that the potentially intelligible phantasm and the agent intellect are 'complementary active principles, each contributing what the other lacks for generating the intelligible species'. *Mutatis mutandis*, I would suggest that, if white light is the form of visibility for colors qua actualizers of the transparent, then the potentially visible body (i.e. the green surface) and white light are likewise complementary active principles constitutive of vision. For both white light and the green grass each have necessary components of vision that the other lacks, white light is able to actualize the transparent *simpliciter* and the green grass is a determinate body and thus the *per se* object of sight. One does not see white light simply, but only the green thing in the presence of white light.

[30] Aristotle, *De Anima* III.4, 429b14.

[31] Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 22 2/1: *De Veritate*, qq. 8–12 (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1970), a. 8 ad.10, p. 325.

like life, wisdom, and being, which are truly predicated of God, are inadequate insofar as they co-signify some limitation like 'inherence in' or 'dependence on' another.

Beginning with the level of predicamental participants,[32] the level of composite substances and the nine accidents mentioned in the *Categories*, it is clear that names drawn from things with matter in their accounts are metaphorical when said of God. As the sun is not green, neither is God a lion, except insofar as he is powerful. In this case, though, one is using 'lion' to signify 'power'. When one calls God a lion, one does not mean that he is 'a roaring animal' but that he has power or, even better, that he is his Power. The proposition 'God is a lion', therefore, is metaphorical. Names of participants like 'green' and 'lion' break along the same lines. Neither is able to literally signify unparticipated being on account of determinate matter in their *rationes*.

One might expect that predicates drawn from God's participations like *esse*, power, or wisdom more adequately signify his nature. After all, Dionysius said that names like *per se esse* can signify *both* God *and* creatures, albeit in different respects. What is more, names drawn from God's participations are pure or 'neutrally immaterial'.[33] As white light is devoid of a solid body such as grass or stone in its account, so too are esse and wisdom separable from the material conditions of animality in man.

Yet, even these predications co-signify a degree of inherence and dependency. When we say that something 'exists', 'is alive', or 'is wise', we mean that these perfections exist *in* some substance. Moreover, such inherence implies that the substance or quiddity is *other* than the perfections themselves. It is thus dependent insofar as its substance needs to receive these perfections from another. As white light exists in some transparent body on account of the sun, so too do *esse*, life, and wisdom inhere in a medium other than themselves on account of God.

For these reasons, were one to attribute *esse* to God, one would need to qualify even this predicate. As 'light', when said of the sun, does not signify the fact that the sun's light 'inheres' in itself, so too '*esse*'

[32] For more on the distinctions between predicamental and transcendental participation, see Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalite Selon S. Thomas D'Aquin*, 381–409.

[33] John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, First Paperback Edition (Washington, D.C: Catholic Univ of Amer Press, 2000), 47.

does not signify God's mode of subsistence. His *esse* does not inhere or depend on another. To be sure, *ipsum esse* differs from 'lion' insofar as it does not have matter in its account and thus truly signifies God. Yet even *ipsum esse* does not capture the fact the God is *ipsum esse per se subsistens*.

The relation between Proclus's triad and Avicenna's *consideratio* in place, we may attempt to give an answer to the original question. What are the two senses of *per se* language according to Dionysius and the perfections they signify? Starting with the first, these names signify God's divine *esse* as the cause and source of his pure perfections in creatures. With respect to the second, *per se* names signify the nature of a participation considered absolutely. Following the analogy, they do not signify 'green' but rather 'white light'. Furthermore, they signify 'white light' absolutely, as neither in a medium nor in an eye.

In this latter sense, *per se esse* is the absolute concept of actus essendi. It signifies that perfection in a composite whereby its essence is actual rather than potential. *Esse* taken absolutely signifies that actuality by which all actual essences are in act, that perfection by which all the perfections of substances have the additional perfection of being *in rerum natura*. It signifies this perfection of perfections absolutely, prescinding from its mode of being either in a composite substance or in the mind. In a word *per se esse* signifies 'the actuality of all [finite] acts and the perfection of all [finite] perfections'.[34]

Taken together, these two senses enable Thomas and Dionysius to reduce all created perfections to the First Cause. For *per se esse* is God's first name, and all other names are ultimately reducible to it as participants. Insofar as any Divine Name *is* or signifies anything, it must first participate *per se esse*. For this reduction to work, one must assume (1) the doctrine of divine simplicity, and (2) the principle that, in equivocal causes, the effect pre-exists virtually in its cause, as green 'pre-exists' in white light or the sun. These points having been granted, it is possible to show that all perfections pre-exist in God's simple, infinite *esse*.

For Thomas and Dionysius, the most important element in this reduction is the divine name of *esse*. As we saw, this name signifies

[34] Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de potentia*, ed. P. M. Pression (Rome: Marietti Edition, 1965), p. 192. Cited in Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, n. 34.

the pure perfection of *esse* considered absolutely. Every particular substance, in order to be and receive any further perfection, must have some share in *per se esse*. As Dionysius says:

> Being (*τὸ εἶναι*) has been projected before all of God's other participations, and '*per se esse*' is older than 'the being of life itself,' 'the being of wisdom itself,' or 'the being of divine similitude itself.' And in relation to all the other [*per se* perfections] of which participants have some share, beings (*τὰ ὄντα*) will first participate *ipsum esse*.[35]

Commenting on this passage, Thomas clarifies that *esse* is prior to life and wisdom in two respects. First, *esse* is prior to *vita* or *sapientia* in the order of understanding (*prius…intelligitur*). For if a thing has any perfection whatsoever, it must first participate *esse*.[36] Second, this conceptual priority entails an ontological one, namely Proclus's elevation of a participation over its participants.[37] All other absolute participations like *per se vitam* or *per se sapientiam* stand to *per se esse* as participants. They *must* participate *esse* in order to be. *Esse* thus stands to them as act to potency (*comparatur ad ea ut actus eorum*).

From this priority, Dionysius concludes that all things whatsoever have their *esse* from God. He writes:

> The super-substantial Goodness itself, throwing out its first gift of being itself, is hymned through this eldest and primary participation. From and in God's super-substantial Goodness exist (1) being itself, (2) the principles of beings, (3) all finite beings, and (4) all things whatsoever sustained by being. Moreover,

[35] *De Divinis Nominibus*, V, 5, p. 183. καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων αὐτοῦ μετοχῶν τὸ εἶναι προβέβληται, καὶ ἔστιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ τὸ εἶναι πρεσβύτερον τοῦ αὐτοζωὴν εἶναι καὶ αὐτοσοφίαν εἶναι καὶ αὐτοομοιότητα θείαν εἶναι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ὅσων τὰ ὄντα μετ ἔχοντα, πρὸ πάντων αὐτῶν τοῦ εἶναι μετέχει.

[36] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 1, p. 236. 'Primo quidem, per hoc quod *quaecumque* participant aliis participationibus, primo particant ipso *esse*: prius enim intelligitur aliquod ens quam unum, vivens, vel sapiens'.

[37] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 1, p. 236. 'Secundo, quod ipsum esse comparatur ad vitam et alia huiusmodi sicut participatum ad participans: nam etiam ipsa vita est ens quoddam et sic esse, prius et simplicius est quam vita et alia huiusmodi et comparatur ad ea ut actus eorum'.

> [all of these are in God] absolutely (*ἀσχέτως*), comprehensively (*συνειλημμένως*), and unitarily (*ἑνιαίως*).[38]

Clarifying Dionysius's fourfold distinction, Thomas says that God causes the *esse* (1) of 'to be itself' (*per se esse*), the first absolute participation, (2) of all the principles of existing things, and (3) of all existent things, both (3a) of substances as well as (3b) of accidents, and (4) of imperfect beings such as motion and being in potency.[39]

Given the principle that beings pre-exist virtually in their cause, which, in this case, is the infinite, simple *esse* of God, it follows that the entire manifold of created *esse* pre-exists within God. From the noblest absolute participation like *per se sapientiam* to the most tenuous accident or inconsequential of motions, all of finite being exists simply in the Divine *esse*. All the perfections enjoyed by substances in addition to these substances themselves pre-exist in God insofar as any of them have even the smallest share in *esse*. Absolutely everything insofar as it *is* is reducible to God as the giver of *esse* or 'substantifier' (*ὑποστατής*).[40]

In this section, we have elaborated the steps of Thomas's and Dionysius's metaphysical reduction, their leading back of all created *esse* to God. This reduction centered on the analysis of the Divine Name of *per se esse*. This name is analogous insofar as it has two senses. First, it signifies God as the pre-eminent and super-essential Cause of *esse* in creatures. Second, it signifies God's gift of *per se esse* considered absolutely, that act by which the actualities of created essences come to be.

Taking these senses in reverse order, one can 'lead back' all created *esse* to God. Insofar as a creature enjoys any perfection or actuality whatsoever, it will first participate *per se esse*. Whether it enjoys the perfections of life or wisdom, of its own essence, of any accident, or of motion, all of these will have some definite share in *per se esse*. Thus,

[38] *De Divinis Nominibus*, V, 6, p. 184. Πρώτην οὖν τὴν τοῦ αὐτὸ εἶναι δωρεὰν ἡ αὐτοϋπεραγαθότης προβαλλομένη τῇ πρεσβυτέρᾳ πρώτῃ τῶν μετοχῶν ὑμνεῖται. Καὶ ἔστιν ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι καὶ αἱ τῶν ὄντων ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ τὰ ὁπωσοῦν τῷ εἶναι διακρατούμενα καὶ τοῦτο ἀσχέτως καὶ συνειλημμένως καὶ ἑνιαίως.

[39] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 1, p. 236–237. Dicit ergo primo quod non solum *ex ipsa* Dei bonitate, sed etiam *in ipsa* est (1) ipsum per se esse, quod est Dei participatio et (2) omnia *principia existentium et* (3) *omnia existentia*, (3_a) tam substantiae quam (3_b) accidentia et (4) omnia *quocumque modo* continentur sub esse, sicut entia imperfecta, ut ens in potentia et motus et alia huiusmodi.

[40] *De Divinis Nominibus*, XI, 6, p. 221.

one can reduce any perfection in the predicamental order, the order of finite substances and accidents, to its limited share in the actuality of all acts. Substances and accidents are unique 'contractions' or delimitations of unlimited *actus essendi* on account of their particular quiddities.

Having referred predicamental perfections back to their participation in *per se esse*, one can then reduce *per se esse* back to God. As we saw, the second, participable sense of the Divine Names depends on the first, causal sense. *Per se esse* not only signifies the actuality of all acts; it signifies their pre-eminent mode of being and self-subsistence within the Divine *Esse*. For God is the super-substantial Cause and Source of *esse* for creatures. He is the one who gives them their share in the absolute participation of *per se esse*. Hence Thomas says, '*per ipsum esse fecit subsistere omnia quaecumque sunt*' (through per se esse, God has made to subsist all things whatsoever that exist).[41]

This reduction of all predicamental perfections to their participation in *per se esse* and then to their infinite mode of being in God grounds both kinds of Divine Exemplarism, that of the Divine *esse* and of God's Exemplar Ideas. For all things, insofar as they are, have been given a share in *ipsum esse*, God's first gift to creatures. *Ipsum esse* is a created likeness of God's infinite *esse* by which he makes substances come to be in act. Therefore, insofar as creatures contract *ipsum esse* through their essence principle, they enjoy a share in a likeness of God's self-subsisting *esse*. In other words, creatures' own *actūs essendi* constitute their share in a likeness of God's *esse*. His Divine *esse* is thus an exemplar for all created *actus essendi*.

However, God also knows from all eternity the ways in which creatures' essences will contract a share in *ipsum esse*. He knows the ways created essences will come to be insofar as they participate their own *actus essendi*. Such knowledge, to which we now turn, constitutes the exemplarity of God's Exemplar Ideas. These Ideas are his eternal anticipations of the ways in which created essences will receive a share in his first participation and likeness.

[41] See note 5 above.

II: Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is

Having made this reduction of created *esse* to *per se esse* and God's infinite *esse*, Dionysius introduces the Divine Ideas or παραδείγματα. As all visible beings rely on the sun in unique ways befitting their natures (i.e. as either visible, growing, perceiving, or thinking), *a fortiori* all beings depend on God for their *esse* in whatever way they have it. As the sun 'uniformly anticipates' the diversity and multitude of its effects, so too does God contain all of creation in a unified, simple way.[42] He knows the ways in which all things will receive a likeness of himself, come to be, and receive any further perfections. The paradigms, then, are the ways God eternally anticipates his creatures and their essences as unique participants in *per se esse*.

Dionysius thus reduces the multiplicity of the Platonic Ideas to the incomprehensible and unconfused unity of God's causal power. He defines the παραδείγματα as the 'being-producing λόγοι that uniformly pre-subsist in God'. He also calls them God's 'pre-definitions', and 'divine, good willings that are determinative and productive of beings'.[43]

Reminiscent of the Stranger's definition in the *Sophist* of being as nothing but power (*δύναμις*),[44] Dionysius conceives of the Ideas as God's powers to bestow *esse* in determinate ways. Far from idle talk or lifeless abstractions, the Ideas are the ultimate causes of things. They are the discrete ways that God can 'substantify,' 'will,' or 'predetermine' beings to have a share in *per se esse*, his first absolute participation. Recalling the analogy of the sun, one might imagine these Exemplars as akin to how the sun might know all of the ways things would have a share in white light and thus come to be colored.

Having explained the nature of an exemplar, Dionysius introduces and critiques a certain philosopher named Clement. Clement's position serves as a useful foil for Dionysius's own account. For Clement thinks that the paradigms refer to beings other than God. Dionysius writes:

[42] *De Divinis Nominibus*, V, 8, pp. 187–188.

[43] *De Divinis Nominibus*, V, 8, p. 188. Παραδείγματα δέ φαμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιοὺς καὶ ἑνιαίως προϋφεστῶτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμοὺς καλεῖ καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικὰ καὶ ποιητικά, καθ' οὓς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν.

[44] Plato, *Opera: Volume I: Euthyphro, Apologia Socratis, Crito, Phaedo, Cratylus, Sophista, Politicus, Theaetetus*, ed. E. A. Duke et al., 3rd edition (Oxonii : New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), 247–d–e.

> If the philosopher Clement deems it fit to have it said that paradigms refer to the most principal of beings, his account does not proceed by means of proper, perfect, and simple names. For it is necessary to remember, conceding that it has been put rightly, that theology says, 'I have not laid out [the firmament and the hosts of heaven] before you that you might trudge behind them,' but that, through the analogical cognition of these things, we may be led upwards to the Cause of all things, insofar as we are able to do so.[45]

Clement, in other words, has not grasped the significance of God's proper, perfect, and simple names. In one sense, they refer to and signify God causally or principally as the source of his pure processions. In a second sense, they signify these processions taken absolutely. Clement has, in effect, conflated the two. Doubtless impressed by their absolute and pure significance, Clement has reified the Divine Names and posited their referents as separate hypostases, 'the most principal among beings'. Consequently, he refers to things 'principally', 'divinely', and 'causally' that only ought to be spoken of in 'a participable way'.

Dionysius does not specify whether, for Clement, these are separate substances, such as Procline henads, or heavenly bodies. In either case, he implies that Clement's names are improper, imperfect, and multifarious. From the biblical perspective of Hosea, whom Dionysius cites, they are conceptual idols, Egyptian *simulacra* threatening God's people with renewed bondage.[46] While these names rightly signify God and his processions, Clement redirects their praises elsewhere. From a philosophical perspective, Clement's account impedes true analogical knowledge of the First Cause. For God created the hosts of heaven as well as his processions, not as ends of inquiry in themselves, but rather as manifestations and signs of Divine Wisdom.

Echoing Paul and the Prophets, Dionysius runs these critiques together. Clement's baroque ontology is the result of an impious

[45] *De Divinis Nominibus*, V, 9, p. 188. Εἰ δὲ ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀξιοῖ Κλήμης καὶ πρός τι παραδείγματα λέγεσθαι τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἀρχηγικώτερα, πρόεισι μὲν οὐ διὰ κυρίων καὶ παντελῶν καὶ ἁπλῶν ὀνομάτων ὁ λόγος αὐτῷ. Συγχωροῦντας δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ὀρθῶς λέγεσθαι τῆς θεολογίας μνημονευτέον φασκούσης ὅτι «Οὐ παρέδειξά σοι αὐτὰ τοῦ πορεύεσθαι ὀπίσω αὐτῶν», ἀλλ' ἵνα διὰ τῆς τούτων ἀναλογικῆς γνώσεως ἐπὶ τὴν πάντων αἰτίαν, ὡς οἷοί τέ ἐσμεν, ἀναχθῶμεν.

[46] *Septuaginta: A Readers Edition Hardcover*, eds. Gregory R. Lanier and William A. Ross (Peabody, Massachusetts: Tyndale House Publishers, 2018), Hosea 13:4.

doxology. Because he has not clarified the twofold sense of the Divine Names, he is unable to offer right praise. Because he is unable to give an account of God's δόξα, his Glory, apparent in the things that have been made, he cannot give an account of being *qua* being.

Commenting on Dionysius's critique, Aquinas draws two remarkable conclusions. First, he says that, 'properly speaking' (*proprie*), Exemplars are not principles of *exemplata*.[47] Second, creatures fulfill (*impleri*) the Divine Wisdom.[48] Pace Clement, creatures manifest rather than defect from their Divine Ideas. How does Thomas arrive at these conclusions? He begins by reminding us that 'an exemplar is that according to which something else comes to be—such that the exemplar is imitated' (*exemplar enim est secundum quod fit aliud ut sic exemplar imitetur*).[49]

From this definition, it follows that Clement's 'principal beings' are not simple, perfect, or proper exemplars. First, if they are exemplars like Platonic Forms, they will not be *simple*, since they will participate other Forms as the Form of Man participates Unity, Eternity, Life, etc., while serving as exemplars for others. It is difficult to see how such principles could account for unity in their *exemplata* unless they are one in species or form. Second, they are *imperfect* because they need (*indigeant*) other exemplars, a neediness unbefitting of first principles. Thomas puts these points thus: Clement's superior beings 'are not *perfect* exemplars, since even these stand in need of other exemplars. Nor are these *simple* exemplars, since they are at once exemplars and exemplata'.[50] Third and most important, Clement's superior beings are *improper* exemplars since they are somehow principles of particulars. Thomas writes:

> Things, however, are not made (non sunt factae) for this end, that they imitate certain superior beings (aliqua superiora entia), but for this one, that in them might be fulfilled that which the divine wisdom ordained. **Hence, whatever may be the principles**

[47] See note 53 below.
[48] See note 53 below.
[49] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 3, p. 250.
[50] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 3, p. 250. Non sunt *perfecta* exemplaria, cum et ipsa aliis exemplaribus indigeant. Non sunt etiam simplicia, quia sunt simul exemplaria et exemplata.

> **of things (e.g. paradigms like Clement's), these will not be, properly speaking, [the things'] exemplars.**[51] (Emphasis added)

That is, Clement's superior entities fail because somehow they enter into composition with things as their principles.

What does such composition entail and why does Thomas find it repugnant? These questions are difficult to answer, as neither Thomas nor Dionysius clarifies Clement's account of exemplar causality. Going beyond their *ipsissima verba*, it seems to me that Clement's exemplars could function in one of two ways. Either they are like Platonic Forms, external measures against which individual things necessarily fall short. They would thus be external beings that, in some sense, entered into composition with particulars as formal principles, the really real versions of their participants. Or they could affect internal formal principles in particulars by means of efficient causality. For instance, a stone takes on accidental forms of 'heat' and 'redness' when warmed by a fire.

For Dionysius and Thomas, neither option is compatible with the Divine *esse*. As the green grass does not directly receive the sun's effects as internal principles, creatures do not directly receive God's *esse* by means of efficient causality. For in this case, individuals would directly participate the Divine *esse*. Such a result would entail pantheism since everything shares in the Divine nature. Instead, as grass participates the sun indirectly through white light, the sun's first effect or participation, creatures participate God indirectly through the perfection signified absolutely by *per se esse*.

Neither do Exemplars measure particulars as Platonic Forms. For God's intention was not that creatures slavishly and imperfectly mimic 'certain superior entities' (*aliqua superior entia*). On the contrary, the Divine Will made things so that they might fulfill (*impleatur*) and manifest the Divine Wisdom.[52] Creatures fulfill rather than fall short of God's Ideas. Everything that *is*, insofar *as it is*, is exactly as God intended it to be.

[51] *In div. nom.*, cap. V, lect. 3, p. 250. 'Res autem non sunt factae ad hoc ut imitentur aliqua superiora entia, sed ad hoc quod in eis impleatur quod divina sapientia ordinavit; unde non sunt proprie rerum exemplaria, quaecumque rerum principalia'.

[52] See note 53 above

If creatures fulfill the Divine Wisdom, there must be precise agreement between the content of God's 'willings' and the things he has in fact willed into being. For the exemplars are *not* standards against which creatures fall short but rather anticipations of what they will realize. Every man, as Hopkins put it, 'acts in God's eye what in God's eye he *is*'.[53] One could go so far as to say that, for Thomas and Dionysius, one contemplates the very contents of the Divine Mind, not by imagining perfect exemplars of which things in this world are but shadows, but by attending to the things themselves. For ultimately it is not the formal abstractions of the mind, nor the works of human hands, but the works of the Divine Wisdom that are truly theophanous.

III: Conclusions and Qualifications

In a paper on Dionysius and Aquinas, anything positive said of God must always be taken away. Hence, Aquinas, appealing to Dionysius's authority, says in the *Summa Theologiae* that the soul 'does not know the Divine Ideas (*rationes*) because it does not know God's essence (*ipsum Deum*)'.[54] What is going on here? Thomas distinguishes two ways in which one thing is known in another. [55] One may know one thing in another by means of an equal power, as sight is adequate to see those

[53] Gerard Manly Hopkins, 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire by Gerard Manley Hopkins', (Poetry Foundation, November 25, 2021), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44389/as-kingfishers-catch-fire.

[54] Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 5: *Summa Theologiae*, I[a] q. 50–119 cum commentariis Caietani (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1889). Ia, q. 84, a. 5. Ergo anima non cognoscit omnia in rationibus aeternis.

[55] Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* Vol. 5: *Summa Theologiae*, I[a] q. 50–119 cum commentariis Caietani (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1889). Ia, q. 84, a. 5. co. 'Utrum anima intellectiva cognoscat res materiales in rationibus aeternis? Cum ergo quaeritur utrum anima humana in rationibus aeternis omnia cognoscat, dicendum est quod aliquid in aliquo dicitur cognosci dupliciter. Uno modo, sicut in obiecto cognito; sicut aliquis videt in speculo ea quorum imagines in speculo resultant. Et hoc modo anima, in statu praesentis vitae, non potest videre omnia in rationibus aeternis; sed sic in rationibus aeternis cognoscunt omnia beati, qui Deum vident et omnia in ipso. Alio modo dicitur aliquid cognosci in aliquo sicut in cognitionis principio; sicut si dicamus quod in sole videntur ea quae videntur per solem. Et sic necesse est dicere quod anima humana omnia cognoscat in rationibus aeternis, per quarum participationem omnia cognoscimus. Ipsum enim lumen intellectuale quod est in nobis, nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo luminis increati, in quo continentur rationes aeternae. Unde in Psalmo IV, dicitur, multi dicunt, quis ostendit nobis bona? Cui quaestioni Psalmista respondet, dicens, signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, domine. Quasi dicat, per ipsam sigillationem divini luminis in nobis, omnia nobis demonstrantur. Quia tamen praeter lumen intellectuale in nobis, exiguntur species intelligibiles a rebus acceptae, ad scientiam de rebus materialibus habendam; ideo non per solam participationem rationum aeternarum de rebus materialibus notitiam habemus, sicut Platonici posuerunt quod sola idearum participatio sufficit ad scientiam habendam'.

things that come to be in a mirror. Here a visible power is proportioned to a visible object. Or, one may know a thing in another insofar as the latter is a principle of knowledge. This entails an asymmetry between the knowing power and the intelligibility of the principle.

Thomas illustrates this difference by appealing, once again, to the analogy of the sun. Recalling the earlier use of this image, one might say that one does not know green as it pre-exists in the sun. Rather, one sees green in the grass by means of the sun's light. We know all things 'in the sun' (*in sole*) insofar as we see them 'through the sun' (*per sole*).

It is only in this sense that we know the *rationes* of the Divine Ideas. It is because they are the unparticipable principles of particulars that we can know their effects. However, the human mind, having but a mere participation of uncreated light, cannot look upon the Ideas directly. Since these are identical with the Divine *Esse*, to which no knowing power is adequate, no one apart from God and the blessed see them at the level of their own intelligibility.

The situation is not unlike the following. Suppose a dog and a man were to stare at one and the same thing, say, a triangle. In one way, they would be seeing the same thing. In another way, they would not, since, while the dog grasps the sensible properties of the image (its color, size, and smell), the man sees its intelligible features (i.e. scalene, one, and equal to 180 degrees). Likewise, the things God understands by means of his Ideas (the *quods* of his understanding) are identical in content to the things he has made and, thus, the things his creatures can understand. But the *quos* of their understanding differ dramatically. For God understands his Ideas by means of being one with them in his infinite *esse*.[56] Creatures, on the other hand, know them by means of abstraction, which is an incremental process dependent on sensibles.

Still, the relevant negations having been made, this account of the Ideas offers an answer to Parmenides's aporia from the start of this paper. Recall that Parmenides challenged Socrates to explain how one can know the Ideas if particulars are only their images and partial likenesses. Aquinas can respond by saying that the contents of the Exemplars are identical with the things God has made. There is no

[56] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, q. 14, a. 2, co, p. 168. Respondeo dicendum quod Deus se per seipsum intelligit.

daylight between Socrates and the Divine Idea of Socrates. He is not an imperfect image of the Divine Exemplar by which God created him.

However, as human beings do not have necessary knowledge of particulars but rather the universal natures signified by terms like 'man' or 'horse,' a critic might respond that finite knowers can never know the full perfections of these Exemplars. Yet, human beings can know even the content of these speculative *rationes* in the Divine Mind. For God does not create 'man' but Socrates. Socrates perfectly conforms to his Exemplar in the Divine Mind. This Exemplar, though, includes in it the way that God's *esse* is imitable 'humanly.' Even if Parmenides's objection stands to a certain extent, insofar as we will never know in this life all the ways that God could make men (i.e. the fullness of perfection in his Idea of Man), what we know in this life is not thereby rendered false. The εἶδος of 'man' abstracted from Socrates by the agent intellect does not differ in content from the Divine Idea of Man, which is just the way his *esse* is imitable in a human way. That is, human nature, the quiddity of man, *in this man* is neither contrary to nor defects from what the Divine Wisdom intended.

As St Paul says, 'from the foundation of the world, the invisible things of God, His eternal nature and power, are *clearly seen* (*καθορᾶται*), *in the things that have been made*'.[57] Not only do Paul's words provide confidence that there is no final gap between the truths of reason and faith, when interpreted with the help of Dionysius and Aquinas, they enable one to see the world itself as the fulfillment or manifestation of the Divine Wisdom. To reject the beauty of such a vision of being and human life, would be, as he says later on, to be truly without excuse.

[57] Kurt Aland and Erwin Nestle, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece Et Latine - Greek/Latin New Testament*, 3 (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983), Romans 1:20.

The divine 'processions' in Dionysius the Areopagite and the 'henads' in Proclus: as two expressions of the transition from the divine transcendence to the divine immanence

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In this article, bearing in mind the impressive relations between the Neoplatonist Proclus and the Christian Dionysius the Areopagite in all the theoretical philosophical branches, we focus on one of their central points in common, which is found in Proclus's theory of divine henads and Dionysius's theory of the divine 'processions'. Specifically, based on the third book of Proclus' treatise *Theologia Platonica* and Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus*, we attempt to investigate the way in which they interpret the transition from the metaphysics of transcendence to the metaphysics of immanence. In this path, the explanation of the concept of 'multitude' is important. Hence, based on their common acceptance that the supreme Principle does not remain in the transcendent state but also manifests productively, the major question that concerns us is what each of the two philosopher-theologians means by 'multitude' and, by extension, how they define the relationship of the One-Good with this 'multitude' in order to prove on an objective basis the way of manifestation and the products of Henology. The theoretical approach of the relevant texts of both leads us to the concept and function of the intermediate realities. Therefore, we discuss how we could explain and interpret these intermediate realities, under the explicit term that Dionysius supports monotheistic monism while Proclus adopts polytheistic monism.

Introduction

In the fifth century AD, genuine philosophical reflection, under the criterion that was formed mainly during the fourth century BC, is in a dialectical reciprocity with the treatment of theological and metaphysical issues, or in other words, rationality with religiosity respectively. So, it has undergone transformations internally and in terms of its expressions. It is about an era in which religious acts, secret ceremonies and theurgies are quite widespread, in order for man to express through them his inner selfhood, existential directions, and initiating penetration, though in a different way from the dominant spiritual currents, that is, Neoplatonism and Christianity. At this particular historical moment, man seeks spiritual redemption in the metaphysical world and attempts, within an atmosphere of social introversion, so to speak, to be united with the divine, without however ignoring the principles of rationality. Both Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite express these tendencies from their points of view and in this way they define and describe— if not form— the cultural spirit of the fifth century.[1] The reference of international research to these two thinkers is not accidental, since they both have a special place in the history of philosophy, despite the exhaustive theological foundations of their teaching. Proclus is one of the last great exponents of ancient Greek Philosophy while Dionysius is placed in the Christian world, which in that era had been already shown new performances, and his writings have such expressive directions, so that they have raised critical historical and systematic questions to scholars since the nineteenth century. However, the major question of the relevant investigation, which moves through the thorough study of their topics and the clarification of their terminology, details the commonalities and differences between these two thinkers. The answer to this question, in fact quite impressively, leads us also to investigate,

[1] For a highly systematic reading of the above atmosphere in relation to the Neoplatonic School and in fact under the historical-philosophical-theological contexts which shaped it during the previous centuries, see the emblematic, for its investigative and hermeneutical suggestions and not only for its systematic categorizations, study of Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968). Regarding Christianity, see Basil. N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition*, D. Calmas (ed.) (Rollinsford: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007), 65–107. For a synthetic reading of Neoplatonism-Christianity, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An investigation of the prehistory and evolution of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). This is a study which delineated with impressive precision the Neoplatonic and the Christian concepts, with the consequence that it is a permanent field of reference for the relevant research.

as far as possible, the limits of the specific content of the Neoplatonic and Christian theories during that crucial historical period for the development of spiritual life and, as it has been proven, for a further formation of research structures in a number of fields.[2]

We would note in the first place that the relations between the two thinkers are impressively extensive and cover almost all the theoretical philosophical branches, in a theological sense, which is also extended—under the strict principles set by both—to the fields of practice. Thus, we find common points between them in the disciplines of metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics. At this point, a critical clarification is necessary: focusing mostly on the theological direction without ignoring the philosophical support that they both have chosen regarding the ontological model that they adopt—which is in fact a worldview, in the broader sense of the term—, we would emphasize with no skepticism that they are monists. In other words, they shape their metaphysical and cosmological theories, relying on the basic principle that the One-Good is the source of all that exists. But, despite this common point, there is also a major difference between them, as the Neoplatonic philosopher-theologian embraces polytheism while the Christian embraces monotheism.[3] Both, however, accept Henology or, else, the radical theological Metaphysics as the foundation of all

[2] The relevant bibliography on the subject in question maintains its intensity from 1895 to the modern era. For instance, we refer to some of the most representative studies, which throughout time determined the research 'adventure'. See Henrik Koch, 'Proclus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen', *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438–54; Joseph Stiglmayr, 'Der Neoplatoniker Procklus alsVorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1985): 253–73; René Roques, *L'univers dionysien* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), which is perhaps the most accurate analytical presentation and interpretive detection of the hermeunetical elaboration of Dionysius the Areopagite'thought up to modern times. See also, Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1962). Endre von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), 228–42, 254–61, 262–89, 352–63. This is a highly original study on how the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* is updated by the Neoplatonic and Christian theological and philosophical approaches.

[3] Proclus' six-volume treatise *Theologia Platonica* is perhaps the most systematic work for monistic polytheism. It has been published by 'Les Belles Lettres' with extensive introductions and exhaustive comments by Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, whose contribution to relevant research is catalytic. For his part, Dionysius defends monistic monotheism in all of his treatises, under a particular perspective and theoretical approach. We refer in this regard to the highly thorough study of Bernhard Brons, *Gott und die Seienden: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von neuplatonischer Metaphysik und christlicher tradition bei Dionysius Areopagita* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976). This study has exhaustively utilized the texts of Dionysius and has placed them in highly specialized individual chapters with respect to their topics.

ontological processes, which has been systematically composed since the third century AD in Alexandria. In other words, they accept, apart from the transcendent side of the One-Good, its emanating manifestation or, else, its productive nature, for which they even argue, Dionysius to a greater extent, that it is manifested personally and intentionally. This position leads them to elaborate the concept of 'multitude' as an emanating development, which they do not approach as a neutral but as a chosen ontological act, with teleology holding clear responsibilities to an exhaustive degree.[4]

But what does each of the two philosopher-theologians mean when using the concept of 'multitude' and, by extension, how do they define the relationship of the One-Good with this 'multitude', in order to prove on an objective basis the manifestation of Henology and its products? A theoretical approach of the relevant texts leads us to the concept and function of intermediate realities. But how could we explain and interpret these intermediate realities and how could we prove their archetypal character on everything resulted as an image? It is a question that illuminates similarity and analogy between holistic models and individual products, with their context being established by each thinker in a special way: relational states that update Plato and to a certain extent Aristotle.[5] So, having in mind these approaches of Proclus and Dionysius, we can identify, despite the differences, one of their main points in common.

However, in order to specify the type and extent of the correlations between Proclus and Dionysius in terms of their theories of intermediates and their archetypal character, it is necessary to identify

[4] The terms One and Good are used by both philosopher-theologians indiscriminately and refer to the same reality, with the following semantic difference: the One captures the self-founding divine unity, whose energetic intentional and personal manifestation is reflected by the Good. At the same time, the Good defines the supreme Principle as productive and final cause, which functions under the terms of a multiplicative unity, which is present in the entire created world, despite the differences with which it appears and functions. For Proclus, we refer mainly to the second book of his treatise *Theologia Platonica* and for Dionysius mainly to his treatise *De divinis nominibus* (mostly from the fourth chapter onwards). Maximus the Confessor's and George Pachymeres' commentaries discuss how these concepts are utilized in the Christian tradition.

[5] On the concept of analogy in Plato, cr. *Respublica*, VI, 505a2–509b10. On Aristotle, see Pierre Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris: P.U.F., 1962), 202–6 and 400–3. Let us note that the analogy is both an ontological and epistemological method and is articulated both with ambiguities and with polysemy, that is, it describes the variety of possession of a state by realities of a different ontological level. In fact, both in Proclus and in Dionysius, the analogy is also defined in terms of the degree of participation in the gifts deriving from the One-Good.

the general framework of principles that they adopt in all of their texts. Thus, we will be able to provide, up to a certain point, answers to these questions with respect to what is the initial ontological texture (a priori beginning), what are the ad extra functions (productive plan), and what is the kind of range (eternal or not immanent presence) of the archetypal character of the intermediate realities in Proclus and Dionysus? At this point, however, some more questions can be raised: What is the meaning of the triadic processes and relationships in the works of the two thinkers? On which cognitive and methodological schemes do they base the foundation and operation of their theories? The first question refers to the structural articulation that they choose regarding the procedures and the second to the general principles with respect to their purpose that they adopt. We will attempt to answer these questions based mainly on what Proclus discusses in the third book, and mostly in chapters 1–6, of his treatise entitled *Theologia Platonica* and Dionysius in his treatise entitled *De divinis nominibus*, and especially in the fifth chapter, having as our purpose to discuss some of the commonalities and differences between Neoplatonism and Christianity.

The theory of the intermediate realities and a hermeneutical reading

When we refer to intermediates in Christianity and Neoplatonism, we mean the ontological realities and the divine powers that mediate for the accomplishment of certain functions and for the definition of specific processes. They intervene between the supreme ontological Principle and Cause, that is, the One-Good, and the multitude of the sensible beings, and since they are numerous under a particular ontological rationale, they contribute to the articulated rational organization and function of the produced world.

In the *Theologia Platonica*, Proclus connects, from a meta-interpretive point of view, his theories on intermediates-archetypes with the content of the ontological categories of the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. The intermediates in Proclus' system are divine realities—with each one corresponding to a category of the Platonic dialogue—that express with their presence and their function the pre-existing

exodus of the One-Good from itself and the gradual specialization of its emanating-productive function, through specific theogonic and substance-creating triadic processes, with the specialization of causality being dominant. But this is a specialization that captures emanation modes of the divine being in a separate state from natural reality, which will appear at a next level of ontological projections.

These procedures follow the principles of the triadic (and dialectical) forming in the structural integrities production scheme 'remaining-procession-reversion'. Proclus puts the intermediates in a hierarchy according to the ontological and evaluative priority of their essence, in the sense of course in which he understands it. This hierarchy also determines their archetypal nature-range. Thus, the divine intermediates are not only the archetypes of sensible entities, but they also function archetypically in the relationships between them. The hierarchically superior are the archetypes of the hierarchically inferior, with the principle of analogy—as defining or reflecting the mode in which a property appears in every divine being in particular— being pervasive at all levels. In their highest expression, these intermediates are the henads, which reveal the divine or the absolutely uniform multitude and are a priori (self-founding) integral plans. This means that the transcendence of the divine henads is ontologically of this kind so that to be manifested in a strictly specific way and not in another one.

It should be noted that, despite the fact that we are in a polytheistic frame and despite the fact that the henads are considered to be gods, they are actually the energy modes in which the One-Good appears due to the modes in which they manifest and as results they cause. Or, in other words, for the Neoplatonic thinker, this transcendent reality is the supreme divine essence that exceeds its per se status through its energy richness, the henads, but, since Proclus adopts polytheism, he calls them gods, for they specify the absolute God, who, in terms of his presence per se remains eternally unmanifested.[6]

[6] See *Theologia Platonica*, III, 14.1–9: «Πολλῷ ἄρα μειζόνως ἡ πηγὴ τῶν ὅλων ἀγαθῶν τὰς ἑαυτῇ κατὰ φύσιν ἡνωμένας ἀγαθότητας παράγει καὶ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐφίστησιν. Θεὸς οὖν εἷς καὶ θεοὶ πολλοί· καὶ ἑνὰς μία καὶ πολλαὶ πρὸ τῶν ὄντων ἑνάδες· καὶ ἀγαθότης μία καὶ πολλαὶ μετὰ τὴν μίαν ἀγαθότητες, δι' ἃς καὶ ὁ νοῦς <ἀγαθὸς> ὁ δημιουργικὸς καὶ πᾶς νοῦς θεῖός ἐστιν, εἴτ' οὖν νοερὸς εἴτ' οὖν νοητός· καὶ τὸ πρώτως ὑπερούσιον ἓν καὶ πολλὰ τὰ ὑπερούσια μετὰ τὸ ἕν». As it appears, in the perspective of an explicit monism, the 'multitude' as an ontological category that meets its privileged field in the natural universe also becomes a mode of existence and function of the metaphysical.

In Dionysius, the intermediates do not follow triadic productive processes in strict norms, but they simply possess or receive and transmit ontogenetic and anthropological functions. More specifically, in his writings there are two systems of intermediate, that of the hyper-essential 'processions' of the One-Good and that of the celestial angelic beings. The first is ontological, constitutes the productive and archetypal-paradigmatic condition of the second—but also of any other reality that will come into being—and expresses the quality and range of the ontological gifts that the One-Good provides to all beings with no exception. The second one is formed in a hierarchical mode, but under this condition: with respect to its internal structure and purpose is functional and is considered that it expresses the pre-existing transmission from being to being of the divine somehow orders received from the 'processions' of the One-Good. Focusing on the divine 'processions', we could also contend here that it is about the energies of the One-Good or, in other words, about the completely integral expression of its productive side. But since the Christian thinker adopts monotheism, the divine 'processions', although they are God's energies, are not considered particular gods, as in Proclus, but the productive divine way in which the entire created world is produced; either it is about the angelic entities or about the beings that fall under sensory experience. That is to say, according to this, the transcendence of these divine 'processions' is ontologically of the kind to be manifested in a particular way, not however in terms of necessity, which would anyway impose ontological determinations and limit the absoluteness of the divine. There is not a single internal necessity to which the divine would necessarily respond.[7]

The common point, so far, between the two thinkers in their theory of the intermediates is that, on the one hand, they attempt to explain and interpret the transition from the indivisible One-Good to the multitude of the existent and, on the other hand, they consider in this course—Proclus the henads and Dionysius the 'processions'—as divine

[7] This detail about divine intentionality is found in all the treatises of both thinkers as an application of their position that the supreme Principle has the quality of goodness. See for example, Jean Trouillard, 'Procession Néoplatonicienne et création judeochrétienne', *Néeoplatonisme* (Mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard) (Paris: Institut catholique, 1981), 1–30. Let us note that it becomes obvious from the texts that this personification of the Principle moves programmatically within the theological-mystical atmosphere that was prevalent at the first Byzantine period. And here it must be repeated that this is not a strictly philosophical metaphysics and cosmology.

powers or energies of this first Principle. In both cases the One-Good is manifested intentionally, since it is independent of any mechanistic process. It defines the plans with absolute freedom and realizes them, prescribing in a regulative way an analogous behavior for its products. However, we should note that we do not only face the choices of two thinkers, but also a more general historical and cultural period that opens a wide field of presence to the creative interiority of both God and man.[8] But in both theoretical models man undoubtedly is defined by God and shows from a particular perspective the modes of behavior that, when they will be realized, will generally lead the cosmic universe into completeness.

The triadic processes and relations in the two thinkers

Regarding the content and meaning of the triadic processes and relationships, we have to mention that there are clear differences between Proclus and Dionysius. In Proclus' system, the triadic developments include all the first of all ontological and subsequently functional processes and relationships in the level of the divine mode of being. More specifically, the One-Good provides the ontological hypostasis to the divine entities in a triadic way and these are produced, self-produced, and produced in a triadic way following the dialectic model 'remaining-procession-reversion', which appears in a particular way in each productive relationship. The triadic structure model of all that is produced allows us to identify among Proclus' beings the variety of their associations, as well as their ontological, functional, and evaluative gradation and specialization, which, according to his descriptions, could be characterized hierarchical as well, mainly with the criterion of the degree of possession of unity, that is, the basic and self-founding property of the supreme Principle.[9]

[8] See for instance, Pierre Bouancé, 'Théurgie et téléstique néoplatoniciennes', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 147 (1955): 189–209. André-Jean Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermés Trismégiste* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954). Lodewijk Herman Grondijs, 'Sur la terminologie dionysienne', *Bulletin de l'Association G. Budé* 3 (1959): 438–47. René Roques, 'Symbolisme et théologie negative chez le Pseudo-Denys', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaune G. Budé* 1 (1957): 97–112.

[9] On the schema 'remaining-procession-reversion' in Proclus, see Proclus, *Institutio theologica*, props. 25–38, 38.21–42.7. Eric Robertson Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 212–23. Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 78–106 and *La mystagogie de Proclos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 53–91. Werner Beierwaltes, *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), 118–63. S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 45–57.

In Dionysius' writings there is not an analogous triadic model of ontogenetic process coming through various divine levels. All that exists is produced once and as a whole—without this general manifestation excluding following special ones—by the 'processions' or powers of the One-Good. But under this condition: between the produced beings there are no ontological relationships but only functional ones. Specifically, the special position of the celestial angelic hierarchies is not defined according to the differences of their substance or their ontological priority, but exclusively by their degree of participation in the gifts of the 'processions' of the One-Good and by the analogous difference in their responsibilities and functions.

So, having in mind the functions, we do find triadic processes in the following order: a) the plans of their manifestation are developed within the divine 'processions'-energies ('remaining'), which refer with specialization to all the beings that will be produced (ontological 'procession'); b) this manifestation with respect to the rational resumable processes that it defines is received by the angelic orders and is spread over all the produced beings (functional 'procession'); c) through the active and conscious reception and application of this manifestation by the angels and the human beings, their 'reversion' to the divine takes place. So, attention is required to the fact that the functional processes do have an ontological source—that is to say, they are not idealistic schemata—but project modes of being as an applied response to its contents in many ways. The purely ontological belongs to the divine 'processions'-energies, which add creative qualities, which are assimilated by the created beings in terms of their reduction to being. On a second level the conscious approach to the divine gifts leads beings to 'reverse' to their source through epistemological, ethical and aesthetic activities. In this ontological and functional process there is no worldly mediation.

Finally, regarding the intratheistic relationships between the 'processions' of the One-Good, we cannot find any form of triadic process, since they do not relate with each other and they do not relate with any reality coming from outside to create all that exists.[10] On the

[10] In addition to the *De dinvinis nominibus*, Dionysius deals with these topics in his treatise *De coelesti hierarchia*. See the critical edition of René Roques, *Denys l'Aréopagite, La Hierarchie celeste* (Paris: Sources chrétiennes, 1970), with the introduction and comments reflecting a

contrary, we see this cooperation in Proclus, who gradually connects the henads ontogenetically and first of all in a triadic way with the true beings that derive from them and subsequently these transcendent beings one another, so that each of them appears each time, in order for the requirements for the formation of the produced natural world to develop. So, we see that there is that there is not only a difference in methodology but also in worldview.

The cognitive and methodological principles of the two thinkers

Quite important are the differences between Proclus and Dionysius regarding the cognitive-methodological principles on which the two thinkers found and develop their theories—with apophatism, however, being a given when it comes to divine transcendence.[11]

More specifically, Proclus attempts to build his worldview using a perfect conceptual framework, a solid sequence of associations and unchangeable methodological principles. These choices make him, in the historical course of Neoplatonism, the greatest systematic philosopher, the incomparable geometer of the ontological processes and their epistemological expression. Proclus also bases his work on scientific hypotheses, at least in the way in which he conceives them. He chooses a general scientific method and uses the same scientific invariants, which he adjusts in the special ontological cases that he discusses each time and which he approaches through a special worldview. In particular, he uses direct propositions or the principles and syllogistic models proved according to those propositions every time under the special content of the topic in question. Direct propositions are unprovable; that is, they are acceptable in a self-evident and with no mediations for their truth and accuracy. They exist by nature (a priori) and unconditionally in the human soul, they are not originally composite but become so in

sophisticated historic-grammatical and systematic approach of Christian angelology, which goes together with theophanies and teleology-eschatology. See also, S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 217–29.

[11] The apophatic theology of Proclus is found mainly in the second book of his treatise *Theologia Platonica,* while that of Dionysius in his treatise *De mystica theologia*, which also formed a tradition in both Eastern and Western Christianity. For Proclus, see for instance Christian Guérard, 'Le danger du néant et la negation selon Proclus', *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 97 (1985): 343–53 and for Dionysius, see Otto Semmelroth, 'Gottes überwesentliche Einheit. Zur Gotteslehre des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita', *Scholastik* 25 (1950): 209–34.

a next stage of the development of the human consciousness and they constitute the foundations for apodictic reasoning.[12] Proclus develops his metaphysical theories based strictly on these principles. Moreover, the science of principles is for him theology, which, in his view, is Platonic philosophy, to which he adds a mystical character, as he combines it with the theology of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and the Chaldean Words.[13] In this polyprismatic theoretical model, he contends that the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* stands at the top, which, epistemologically, he defines as the starting point for particular theoretical processes in his work, a detail which is found, more or less, in all the other Neoplatonist philosophers as well. This dialogue is generally characterized as the 'gospel' of the Neoplatonic School, so it can receive various explanations and interpretations that form a fascinating tradition.[14]

In Dionysius, the issue of the methodological principles is remarkably simplified, or at least this is what he attempts to show. The Christian thinker does not apply, at least regarding the precise announcement of his intentions, an explicitly founded scientific method; he does not originally rely on scientific data and the only source for the truth is for him the Logia—that is to say, the Christian texts through which God's words are given to human beings. So, Proclus' methodological principles and, to some degree, the epistemological premises of Plato's *Parmenides*

[12] See for instance, Proclus, *In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, 200.22–201.3: «Τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάσης διττῆς οὔσης καὶ τῆς μὲν περὶ τὰς ἀμέσους προτάσεις ἀσχολουμένης, τῆς δὲ περὶ τὰ ἐξ ἐκείνων δεικνύμενα καὶ ποριζόμενα καὶ ὅλως περὶ τὰ ἀκόλουθα ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐξελιττούσης τὴν ἑαυτῆς πραγματείαν», and ibid., 138.15–17: «Ταῦτ' ἐστὶ τὰ κατὰ πάντας ἀναπόδεικτα καλούμενα ἀξιώματα, καθόσον ὑπὸ πάντων οὕτως ἔχειν ἀξιοῦται, καὶ διαμφισβητεῖ καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα οὐδείς». *Theologia Platonica,* I, 110.24–25: «Καὶ γὰρ ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις (sc. ταῖς ἀρχαῖς) πρὸ παντὸς λόγου πιστεύομεν». It is obvious that by common concepts the philosopher does not mean those that have a conventional use nor that they constitute expressive ways of public opinion. It should be noted that in the commentary of the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I* he defines the common concepts as existing in the human mind with the theory of recollection, which—like his teacher Syrianus—he defends.

[13] See mostly the third chapter (12.11–17.7) of the first book of *Theologia Platonica*. See Henri Dominique Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990), 63–94. Let us note that two chapters of this study refer to points in common between Dionysius and Proclus (227–48). Luc Brisson, 'La place des Oracles Chaldaïques dans la *Théologie Platonicienne*', *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne* (Paris-Leuven: Les Belles Lettres- Leuven University Press, 2000), 109–62.

[14] Proclus has dedicated his treatises *In Parmenidem* and *Theologia Platonica* to show the key position in his view that *Parmenides* holds for the development of the History of Philosophy. See for instance, Carlos Steel, 'Le Parménide es-il le fondement de la Théologie Platonicienne?', *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, 373–98. The issue is also exhaustively discussed by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink in their introductions to the six books of the treatise *Theologia Platonica*.

are not so obvious or clearly theoretically defined in his treatises. It is characteristic that in the first chapter of *De divinis mominibus*, in which he states his investigative and interpretive principles for dealing with his subjects, he radically denies any autonomous apodictic process of human thought for expressing and even more giving meaning to anything that has to do with the transcendent God.[15] We could even argue that Dionysius in some cases keeps a conscious quasi anti-philosophical attitude, a choice that is due to his special approach to the term 'theology'. For the Areopagite, 'theology' is not Platonic philosophy but exclusively the word of God to man, regardless of the fact that the way in which it is expressed is secularized and can vary depending of the specific theoretical elaboration.[16] Finally, we have to mention that in Dionysius there is not a scientific perspective with structured reflections, since he does not precisely define as a goal to construct and present a perfect theological science, despite the fact that he completely accepts its inner justifications. Therefore, we cannot

[15] See *De divinis nominibus*, (*Corpus Dionysiacum, I, De divinis nominibus* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Greyter, 1990), 586a–587a: «Ἔστω δὲ καὶ τῶν ἡμῖν ὁ τῶν λογίων θεσμὸς, προσδιωρισμένος, τὸ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡμᾶς καταδήσασθαι τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ λεγομένων, οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας ἀνθρωπίνης λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει τῆς πνευματοκινήτου τῶν θεολόγων δυνάμεως… Καθόλου τοιγαροῦν οὐ τολμητέον εἰπεῖν, οὔτε μὴν ἐννοῆσαί τι περὶ τῆς ὑπερουσίου καὶ κρυφίας θεότητας, παρὰ τὰ θεωδῶς ἡμῖν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν λογίων ἐκπεφασμένα». Lambros Couloubaritsis, in his article 'Le sens de la notion "demonstration" chez le pseudo-Denys', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 75 (1982): 317–35, examines the way in which the dialectic and the apodictic method appear in the Dionysian work, emphasizing at the same time their dependence on the epistemological premises of the Scriptures. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 209–25. This is an issue that is encountered throughout the Dionysian tradition up to Gregory Palamas.

[16] See *De divinis nominibus*, 640b: «Εἰ μὲν γάρ ἐστί τις ὅλως ὁ τοῖς λογίοις ἀντανιστάμενος, πόρρω που πάντως ἔσται καὶ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίας, καὶ εἰ μὴ τῆς ἐκ τῶν λογίων αὐτῷ θεοσοφίας μέλει, πῶς ἂν ἡμῖν μελήσῃ τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν θεολογικὴν ἐπιστήμην αὐτοῦ χειραγωγίας; Εἰ δὲ εἰς τὴν τῶν λογίων ἀλήθειαν ἀποσκοπεῖ, τούτῳ καὶ ἡμεῖς κανόνι καὶ φωτὶ χρώμενοι πρὸς τὴν ἀπολογίαν, ὡς οἷοί τέ ἐσμεν, ἀκλινῶς βαδιούμεθα φάσκοντες, ὡς ἡ θεολογία τὰ μὲν ἡνωμένως παραδίδωσι, τὰ δὲ διακεκριμένως, καὶ οὔτε τὰ ἡνωμένα διαιρεῖν θεμιτὸν οὔτε τὰ διακεκριμένα συγχεῖν, ἀλλ' ἑπομένους αὐτῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας μαρμαρυγὰς ἀνανεύειν. Καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖθεν τὰς θείας ἐκφαντορίας παραλαβόντες ὥσπέρ τινα κανόνα κάλλιστον ἀληθείας τὰ ἐκεῖ κείμενα φρουρεῖν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπλήθυντα καὶ ἀμείωτα καὶ ἀπαράτρεπτα σπεύδομεν ἐν τῇ φρουρᾷ τῶν λογίων φρουρούμενοι καὶ πρὸς αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ φρουροῦντας αὐτὰ φρουρεῖσθαι δυναμούμενοι». Only under these conditions of theological science can we accept the position of Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, München: Beck, 1977), 97, that Dionysius is to a certain extent a systematic theologian. However, we must not omit that in the *Epistola* IX, P.G.3, 1104d–1108c he presents his virtues with regard to the evidential method, while in the *De coelesti hierarchia*, I, 1, 120b–121a, he shows that he possesses in depth the triune scheme 'remaining-procession-reversion'. For a systematic approach of the term 'theology' in the Dionysian corpus, in its wider relevance to the Christian teaching, see René Roques, *Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 61–240. Finally, let us note that in the present text of Dionysius we find an impressive combination between the expressive narrative mode and following of research normativity.

consider his work, in the first place, as a scientific production with the systematic requirements of organization and formal logic. In only two cases does Dionysius announce that he will deal with his subjects in a systematic way: first, when he presents the functional processes that define the type of the relationships between the beings of his angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies (in his treatises *The celestial hierarchy* and *The ecclesiastical hierarchy*),[17] and second, when he specifies the details on the question of the 'processions' of the One-Good.[18] However, in both cases he originally founds his evidence on the divine Words. However, his differences from Proclus do not raise their common rationale in the distinction between the transcendent One-Good and its energy projections, that is, the One-Being, which was one of the theoretical foundations of Neoplatonism, on the occasion, here as well, of Plato's *Parmenides*.[19]

[17] See *De coelesti hierarchia*, P.G.3, 328a–c, από όπου παραθέτουμε τα ακόλουθα: «Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἱεραρχεῖσθαί τινας ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων λέγομεν, εἶτα τῶν αὐτῶν ἱεραρχούσας, καὶ τὰς προτέρας αὖθις ἱεραρχούσας τῶν τελευταίων ἱεραρχεῖσθαι πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐκείνων· τῶν ἱεραρχουμένων, ὄντως ἀτοπία τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ συγχύσεως πολλῆς ἀνάμεστον». The «ἀτοπία» has both ontological and formalistic content and refers to deviations from what might be defined as theological realism in the ways in which it defines ontological monism. See Hermann Goltz, *Hiera Mesiteia: Zur Theorie der hierarchischen Sozietät im Corpus aeropagiticum* (Erlangen, 1974).

[18] See *De divinis nominibus*, 816a–825c, από όπου παραθέτουμε τα ακόλουθα: «Καὶ γοῦν αἱ ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων πᾶσαι τοῦ εἶναι μετέχουσαι καὶ εἰσὶ καὶ ἀρχαὶ εἰσὶ καὶ πρῶτον εἰσίν, ἔπειτα ἀρχαὶ εἰσίν. Καὶ εἰ βούλει τῶν ζώντων ὡς ζώντων ἀρχὴν φάναι τὴν αὐτοζωὴν καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ὡς ὁμοίων τὴν αὐτοομοιότητα καὶ τῶν ἡνωμένων ὡς ἡνωμένων τὴν αὐτοένωσιν καὶ τῶν τεταγμένων ὡς τεταγμένων τὴν αὐτόταξιν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὅσα τοῦδε ἢ τοῦδε ἢ ἀμφοτέρων ἢ πολλῶν μετέχοντα τόδε ἢ τόδε ἢ ἀμφότερα ἢ πολλά ἐστι, τὰς αὐτομετοχὰς εὑρήσεις τοῦ εἶναι πρῶτον αὐτὰς μετεχούσας καὶ τῷ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν οὔσας, ἔπειτα τοῦδε ἢ τοῦδε ἀρχὰς οὔσας καὶ τῷ μετέχειν τοῦ εἶναι καὶ οὔσας καὶ μετεχομένας. Εἰ δὲ ταῦτα τῇ μετοχῇ τοῦ εἶναι ἔστι, πολλῷ γε μᾶλλον τὰ αὐτῶν μετέχοντα» (820b–c). This passage is of capital importance regarding the distinction between ontological integrity and its manifestation as causality. The distinction in question states that metaphysical (or theological) realism precedes any projection of it that sets initial conditions for immanence. Let us clarify, however, that under the literal meaning of the term, the principle does not participate in being, but constitutes first its active state and, subsequently, its manifestation. Thus, what is produced does not participate in being directly, but only through the mediation of the principle, a detail which, too, poses deterrent antibodies to pantheism. Let us add that the prepositional pronoun «αὐτο-» refers to the presence of the divine energies as archetypes and brings to our memory, at least expressively, the Platonic tradition.

[19] See for instance, the first book of Proclus' commentary of Plato's *Parmenides*, where he discusses the One-Being as the theological-philosophical expression of the indefinite dyad, that is, of that unlimitedly manifested reality under the conditions set by the multiplying unity as self-referential and as self-expanding. In other words, he refers to the henads. For a highly historical and systematic view of the issue, see P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 255–344. This study is quite important for the way in which one should elaborate the issues we are working on regarding their broader foundation during the period from the late Hellenistic times to the early Christian ones. Its intertextuality is such, in fact, that we can argue that it also shows the spiritual history of an entire cultural period. In fact, P. Hadot places with impressive precision the inclusion of the Platonic *Parmenides* in the meta-interpretive schemes of the Neoplatonists and the Christians.

Special approaches to Proclus' theory on the divine henads

Focusing on Proclus' general ontological foundations, we could contend that his theory of the henads expresses the conclusions that he reached after the systematic critical reconstruction of the positions of the earlier Neoplatonic philosophers—with the exception of his teacher Syrianus—regarding the ontological question of the philosophical-theological interpretation of the content and the relationships between the first two hypotheses of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*. This question deals with the ontologically possible and logically acceptable relations of the One-Good of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* with the multitude of the produced divine beings of the second hypothesis, according to his own meta-interpretation. For the Neoplatonic philosopher, the solutions to the question are found exclusively in the principles of the theory of the henads, the origin of which he places in Syrianus.[20] More specifically, Proclus places the theory of the henads in the stage of the apophatic first hypothesis of *Parmenides*, in which he has developed in a seminal and energetic way, in the sense of a somehow transcendent synthesis, the forms of the productive manifestation of the One-Good. In this way, he contrives to transform, using realities that he places in the henological-metaphysical framework of his system, the apophatic-theological content of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* into the affirmative-philosophical content of the second hypothesis—without however these predicates of the two hypotheses being applied with only one meaning. In his view, the second hypothesis remains initially theological. With this transformation, the Neoplatonic thinker has the intention—which is dominant in every attempt he makes—to define the philosophical classical ontology through his theological metaphysics-henology, a goal which is connected, here as well, with the mystical-cult characteristics of his religiosity.[21]

His intention is specified by his insistence on elaborating in a strictly structured way the emanating-archetypal character of the henads in their relationship with the true beings. This elaboration gives him the opportunity to finally succeed in building the hierarchical system of

[20] See the introduction by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink to the third book of the treatise *Theologia Platonica* (XI–LII), where Proclus' relevant remarks are presented intertextually.

[21] See the introduction and comments of H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink in the sixth book of the treatise *Theologia Platonica*, which is the book of the religious and theological foundations. See J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclos*, 33–51 and 119–42.

the divine intermediate entities according to the norms of paces and structures, as inviolable requirements, defined by the state and position of the henads, which define the frame for the a priori plan and model for the development, function and meaning of the true beings. So, he presents the henads not only as the necessary intermediates between the One-Good and the true beings, but also as the self-founding and complete precise causes that intervene with the true beings that produce and compose the dialectical association of the 'one-multitude' in the form of the 'one being' of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, categorical schemata which he has exhaustively elaborated in his relevant commentary. And by this perspective regarding the functionality of his theory about the divine henads, with justified terms and with no contradictions with respect to the ontological relationships, Proclus finally aims to bring into communication the theological-metaphysical content of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* with the corresponding philosophical-ontological content of the second hypothesis, having in mind not to violate monism, which is not however inflexible but with multiplication projections.[22]

Focusing further on how the divine henads are presented, we would also contend that in Proclus they are not so much divine hypostases, as they are the divine productive powers or energies of the One-Good, while they also express the function of the supreme ontological principles: πέρας-ἄπειρον (limit-infinity). With this property, they constitute the participated side of it as the supreme Principle. In addition, as we have already mentioned, they function archetypically with regard to the true beings and follow a hierarchical—or maybe successive—order, which is completely associated with the hierarchical—or perhaps successive, as a descending state compared to that of the henads—order of the true beings, so as the, according to the new interpretation, relation one-multitude of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* to be articulated. In the hierarchical order of the intermediates-archetypes, the henads are placed at the beginning and define in completely strict ontological,

[22] The following concise passage constitutes a key parameter for the foundation of monism: «Ὁ δὲ πρώτιστος ἀριθμὸς (sc. αἱ ἑνάδες) καὶ τῷ ἑνὶ συμφυόμενος ἑνοειδὴς καὶ ἄρρητος καὶ ὑπερούσιος καὶ πάντῃ τῷ αἰτίῳ προσόμοιος» (*Theologia Platonica*, III, 12.21–23. See ibid., I, 31.16–18). Attention is also required to the fact that apophatism covers the henads.

exclusively energy, principles what follows as completely defined realities.[23]

With the term 'henad' being particularly frequent in his work, we identify intelligible, intellectual, supercosmic, intracosmic henads, as

[23] See for instance, the props. 125, 131, 140 and 150 of the *Institutio theologica*: «Πᾶς θεός, αφ' ἧς ἄν ἄρξηται τάξεως εκφαίνειν ἑαυτόν, πρόεισι δὲ διὰ πάντων τῶν δευτέρων, ἀεὶ μὲν πληθύνων τὰς ἑαυτὰς μεταδόσεις καὶ μερίζων φυλάττων δὲ τὴν ἰδιότητα τῆς οἰκείας ὑποστάσεως» (prop. 125, 110.29–112.13). "From that station wherein he first reveals himself every god proceeds through all the secondary orders, continually multiply and particularizing his bestowals, yet preserving the distinctive character of his proper nature" (E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology,* 111). «Πᾶς θεὸς ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ τῆς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας ἄρχεται» (prop. 131, 116.15). 'Every god begins his characteristic activity with himself' (117). «Πᾶσαι τῶν θεῶν αἱ δυνάμεις ἄνωθεν ἀρχόμεναι καὶ διὰ τῶν οἰκείων προϊοῦσαι μεσοτήτων μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων καθήκουσι καὶ τῶν περὶ γῆν τόπων» (prop. 140, 124.1–3). 'All the powers of the gods, taking their origin above and proceeding through the appropriate intermediaries, descend even to the last existents and the terrestrial regions' (125). «Πᾶν τὸ προϊὸν ἐν ταῖς θείαις τάξεσι πάσας ὑποδέχεσθαι τὰς τοῦ παράγοντος δυνάμεις οὐ πέφυκεν, οὐδὲ ὅλως τὰ δεύτερα πάσας τὰς τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' ἔχει τινὰς ἐκεῖνα τῶν καταδεεστέρων ἐξηρημένας δυνάμεις καὶ ἀπεριλήπτους τοῖς μετ' αὐτά» (prop. 150, 132.1–4). 'Any processive term in the divine orders is incapable of receiving all the potencies of its producer, as are secondary principles in general of receiving all the potencies of their priors; the prior principles possess certain powers which transcend their inferiors and are incomprehensible to subsequent grades of deity' (133). S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 155–7, referring to passages from *De divinis nominibus* (817c, 820b), argues that in their content the Christian God of Dionysius is presented both as the cause of 'procession' and as equal to their content, stressing that these two versions are mutually exclusive. According to the scholar, the God of the Areopagite writings goes beyond the 'processions' and coincides with them in terms of their productive-archetypal references. Then, pointing out the presence in the Areopagite work of the theory of 'unparticipated-participated-participating' and discussing the identity of God with his 'processions', he contends that Dionysius hints at a structural analogy between God and the scala naturae or a penetration of the levels of the produced reality in the divine nature itself. Since according to S. Gersh each level of creation is defined by the possession of a special predicate (as expressive of a 'procession'), God himself includes a similar hierarchy of terms. Next, S. Gersh argues that we should reject the distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. And this, because such a distinction does not exist in Athenian Neoplatonism, which is, in his opinion, the source of Dionysius. According to what we have examined, we believe that S. Gersh's views on God's causal relationship with his 'processions' and above all on expressing an intense skepticism about the distinction between divine essence and divine 'processions'-energies in the Areopagite texts requires a new approach of the topic. In both *De divinis nominibus* and *De mystica theologia* Dionysius clearly distinguishes the essence of the One from his energies and obviously absolutely from the products of their productive manifestation. Besides, we do not consider that the argument that this distinction is absent from Athenian Neoplatonism is sufficient, in which the above distinction is not absent, with the above-quoted passages of Proclus validating this position. Why should we not take into account that in the Christian tradition from the Cappadocian Fathers up to the fifth century the essence-energy distinction is indisputable? And it is beyond any doubt that Dionysius moves strictly in the line of his tradition and elaborates more thoroughly the essence-energy distinction, to emphasize, among other things, his explicit opposition to Neoplatonism. However, we should not overlook that Gersh, in the wider relevance of the above references, has carried out an examination of the issue in question with exhaustive historical and systematic approaches, both based on the texts of Neoplatonism and those of Eastern and Western Christianity. Our assessment is that what is included on pp. 152–190 offers multiple challenges for further research discussions, which must include the linguistic analysis of the relevant sources. Finally, on the analogy between God and the scala naturae, see the study of Vladimir Lossky, 'La notion des "Analogies" chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale Et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 5 (1930): 279–309.

well as henads with other predicates and names. In short, in each order of all that exists in a hierarchy, there is a leading henad, which, due to the results it causes, may internally be (self-) doubled. In addition, the term is attributed to the One-Good, the source of the henads, which is characterized as «ἑνάς ἑνάδων» (the henad of the henads).[24] In order to avoid the danger of removing the ontological principles of unity and continuity and, by extension, dualism, Proclus never ceases to highlight the henads as the uniform intermediates between the transcendent-unmixed One-Good and the produced entities. Multiplication does not replace unity but it specifies it and reveals the infinite richness of the supreme Principle. At this point, actually, Proclus, in order to further confirm all these, introduces the principle of similarity, which determines the operating conditions of the descending process of 'procession' and the corresponding ascending process of 'reversion'. In the context of a general extension, since each productive cause of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides* produces, according to 'procession', the multitude of its effects by similarity, the One-Good, as the original cause, must analogously, and of course to the highest degree, produce a multitude most akin to nature with its special nature, that is to say, uniform. This position is also in accordance with the principle of the metaphysical ontogenetic process that the production of the similar precedes the production of the dissimilar. So, the One-Good, according to the type of this emanating necessity, cannot directly produce anything

[24] See for instance *Theologia Platonica*, I, 3, 15.5–6. We believe that the passage 1047.24–1049.37 from his commentary in Plato's *Parmenides* is particularly enlightening for this term, from where we quote the following: «Ταὐτόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν ἑνάδα καὶ ἀρχὴν, εἴπερ ἡ ἀρχὴ πανταχοῦ τὸ ἑνικώτατον· ὥστε ὁ περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς παντὸς διαλεγόμενος περὶ ἀρχῶν ἂν ποιοῖτο τὸν λόγον, καὶ οὐδὲν ταύτῃ διενήνοχε περὶ ἀρχῶν λέγειν εἶναι τὴν πρόθεσιν ἢ περὶ τοῦ ἑνός… ὥστε ὅπως ἂν λαμβάνοις τὸ ἕν, οὐκ ἐκβαίνεις τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων ὑποστάσεων καὶ τῶν ἀρχικῶν ἑνάδων θεωρίαν». 'It is the same to say "henad" as to say "first principle", if in fact the first principle is in all cases the most unifactory element. So anyone who is talking about the One in any respect would then bi discoursing about first principles, and it would then make no difference whether one said that the thesis of the dialogue was about first principles or about the One… so that in whatever sense you took the One, you would not deviate from the contemplation of incorporeal substances and the ruling henads'. [G. Morrow (trans.) and J. Dillon (intr.-notes), *Proclus' commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, (Princeton-New Jersey: Princeton, 1987), 407]. It is also characteristic that Proclus, apart from the scattered use of the term 'henad' in his treatises, elaborates it in a particularly systematic way. We observe this elaboration mainly in props. 113 to 165 of the *Institutio theologica* and in the first six chapters of the third book of his *Theologia Platonica*, i.e. in two fundamental works of the Neoplatonic Metaphysics, without particularly important differences between them. We can argue that the above systematic elaborations work mutually complementarily and constitute a coherent and complete theory, of exactly the same texture as the realities to which it refers.

other than the henads, which Proclus presents as having a direct ontological affinity with it and similarity—but not identity, relying on how they manifest—of properties with its transcendent nature. And let us note—as it has already been shown—that in the literal sense the henads are not produced realities but direct emanations of the supreme Principle, with the strictly defined cause-effect relationship having no application here. In fact, if we approach the issue more openly and we do not accept hierarchies between the One-Good and the henads, we could contend that their relationship is reduced to the perspective of distinctions within one and the same reality, initially distinct and separated in relation to the true beings, that is, with respect to its manifestation in relation to its products.[25]

And regarding the prospect of ontological plenitude, we could point out the following: since every produced cannot reverse, according to the process of 'reversion', to its previous ontologically superior level without the mediation of an entity similar to its nature, but also ontologically superior to it, the true or first beings, which do not present direct similarity to the One-Good, must reverse to it through the mediation of entities similar to their nature. In this case, the mediating function is once again exercised by the henads, which are in a mutual relationship with the true beings in terms of inviolable priority, by being the henads their direct productive-archetypal causes as well as the object of their reductive reference according to the principle of similarity, actually in its leading function. The same necessity of mediation is generalized and found in every ontological and functional communication of the transcendent One-Good with the becoming of the natural world, as it is exhaustively presented in Proclus' commentary on the dialogue *Timaeus*.[26] Therefore, from every point of view, since they emanate directly from the One-Good, the henads belong in its transcendent level, while at the same time, by producing the true beings, they make

[25] We believe that the following passage is crucial for the question above: «ἕκαστος δὲ τῶν θεῶν ἑνάς ἐστι καὶ ὕπαρξις καὶ ἀγαθότης… ἕκαστος δὲ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθότης αὐτάρκειά ἐστιν ἢ οὕτως οὐ κατὰ μέθεξιν οὐδὲ κατ' ἔλλαμψιν οὐδὲ καθ' ὁμοιότητα τὸ αὔταρκες ἔχουσα καὶ τὸ παντελές, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι ὅ ἐστι…. αὐτοὶ δὲ οἱ θεοὶ δι' ἑαυτοὺς καὶ παρ' ἑαυτῶν αὐτάρκεις» (*Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.9–21). See the introduction (LII–LX) of H. D. Saffrey και L. G. Westerink in the third book of *Theologia Platonica.* On the concept of self-sufficiency in Proclus, see J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclos*, 187–206, where intertextuality is pervasive, leading to strict conceptual categorizations.

[26] See the relevant table of references in the above introductory note by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (XV–XVII).

possible the connection of henology with ontology (both as metaphysics and cosmology). Therefore, they play a necessary epistemological role for any theoretical elaboration undertaken, which due to these relationships has the content of synthetic judgments—in our view since the beginning.

In this frame of determinations, Proclus' theory of 'unparticipated-participated-participating' plays a key role.[27] More specifically, Proclus' relevant references prove that one of his main goals is to preserve ontologically undiminished and unmixed the transcendent nature of the One-Good, without this meaning that this 'unnegotiable' 'separated' will not make possible its communication with the true beings. Under these terms and conditions, the reason becomes clear why the existence of a participated side of the One-Good is necessary, in which the true beings will participate and by which they will receive their immediate and complete ontological constitution, under the relevant procedures that are defined each time. So, it is absolutely right to contend that the unparticipated-unmixed One-Good, in order to accomplish, without violating the terms mentioned before, communication with the true beings, develops itself by multiplying and manifests its emanating range through the participated henads. Otherwise, not only the content of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*, but also the stage of the transcendent synthesis of the first hypothesis, which prepares the emanations in the field of the original 'remaining', would become ontologically impossible and functionally inactive.

But the following needs attention: although the noticeable difference between the One-Good and the henads is defined by the fact that the former is unparticipated while the latter are participated, this very participation is descending-giving, since the model is monistic. The henads are not participated by realities that already exist, because such a version would automatically lead to dualism, which would appear first and foremost at the metaphysical level. In other words, participation is defined first and foremost as a transition of their properties or function in new terms and then as utilization by those hypostases that are formed

[27] On the above theory, see *Institutio theologica*, props. 23–24, 26.22–28.20. For applications of the theory, see for instance Proclus, *In Parmenidem*, 745.41–746.39; 761.20–765.27; 1069.23–1070.15.

precisely on the basis of this gift. Exactly this utilization turns their participation into initiative.

So, regarding their ontological texture, we would say once again that the henads are not distinguished from the One-Good as different realities, but they are identified with the participated-causal presence of it as the supreme Principle. Let us note that in one case Proclus contends that the One-Good produces 'Being' having as an intermediate the power that attains to set a relationship, which is represented by the henad to which the production has been somehow assigned. This henad helps the transition from the state of 'remaining', immobility, and unchangeability to the gradual development of the multitude, as 'procession' that will bring on the metaphysical surface 'Being' (which corresponds to the intellectual gods) and the multitude of the particular—metaphysical—'beings'. The procedures are similar, though with the intervention of 'Being', in the rest of the ontological categories, for instance in the case of 'Life' (which corresponds to the intelligible-intellectual gods), which appears in the individual metaphysical 'lives', and in the case of 'Intellect' (which corresponds to the intellectual gods) and appears in the individual metaphysical 'intellects'. It should be noted that these are supreme ontological monads, each of which develops its own multitude, the parts of which participate in it or, perhaps more correctly, utilize its emanations.[28]

Special approaches to Dionysius' theory on the divine 'processions'

In Dionysius' writings, there is no theory of henads. Here, the term 'henad', when it is used, refers to the divine unity and unifying property of the One-Good or triune God, as well as the unitary property of the angelic orders, and remains exclusively in these definitions. So, this term in none of its textual appearances expresses a specific divine reality that results from emanation. Dionysius, according to this conceptual limitation, expresses with the term 'henad' mainly the

[28] On the triad 'Being-Life-Intellect', see *Institutio theologica*, props. 101–103, 90.17–92.29. *Theologia Platonica*, IV, 10.21–13.18. The fact that the 'Being' corresponds to the intelligible gods, 'Life' to the intelligible-intellectual and 'Intellect' to the intellectual gods reveals a transition that can easily be characterized as a spiral. So, between the three terms there is a hierarchical gradation, but absolutely far from ontological divisions. The fourth, fifth and sixth books of the treatise *Theologia Platonica* confirm these in exhaustive detail.

manifestation of the unifying power of the divine unity—a function that is of course also present in Proclus' system— by which any differences, as further expressions of particularities, that exist in the space of the created world are transcended and lead to the states of mutual union and harmonious order. Do note here that we should not consider an ontological correspondence between Proclus' henads and Dionysius' angelic orders, except only in some cases in the external structural one. This relies on our previous discussion: Dionysius' orders, in contrast to the henads and the true beings of Proclus, are not ontologically autonomous and do not have productive capability, and certainly they are not divine realities. In other words, they lack any possibility for a self-constituted mode of existence. So, some common mediating functional properties between Dionysius' angelic orders and Proclus' henads do not mean ontological correspondences. Furthermore, these properties are possessed in a different way: the henads, which are found in the transcendent level of henology and constitute the requirements for the structure of ontology, possess their properties in a self-founding way and are related to what follows through them at the same time as they define it eternally. On the contrary, the angelic orders, as produced spiritual beings, receive the properties from the One-Good through the mediation of the productive-archetypal 'processions' and as intermediary entities pass them on exclusively as suggestions for modes of being, and exclusively under the terms of the created, to the following angelic and human orders. They just transmit values and behaviors in the sense of a whole of principles, which in the Christian context are characterized as soteriological.[29]

[29] See *De divinis nominibus*, 589d: «Τὴν θεαρχίαν ὁρῶμεν ἱερῶς ὑμνουμένην, ὡς μονάδα μὲν καὶ ἑνάδα, διὰ τὴν ἁπλότητα καὶ ἑνότητα τῆς ὑπερφυοῦς ἀμερίας, ἐξ ἧς, ὡς ἑνοποιοῦ δυνάμεως ἑνιζόμεθα, καὶ τῶν μεριστῶν ἡμῶν ἑτεροτήτων ὑπερκοσμίως συμπτυσσομένων, εἰς θεοειδῆ μονάδα, συναγόμεθα καὶ θεομίμητον ἕνωσιν». Let us also note here that we cannot be led in an objective way to define the similar ontological information between Proclus and Dionysius, if we claimed that there is a relevance between the henads of the former and the angelic orders of the latter. Josef Stiglmayr, *Des heiligen Dionysus Areopagita angebliche Schriften über Gottliche Namen*, II, 2 (München, 1933), 10) has argued that such a correspondence exists. For his part, I. P. Sheldon Williams (see 'Henads and Angels: Proclus and the Ps.-Dionysius', *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972), 65–71) accepts that Proclus and Dionysius reproduced with their own changes Syrianus' theory of the henads, also emphasizing that the Christian theologian applies the ontological texture of the henads to his angels. These views, in our opinion, are incorrect, because, as we point out in the main text in general, they overlook both the specific ontological subjects and the type of functional structure of the hierarchies of Proclus and Dionysius. Having common functional properties in these two realities, such as that of illumination and purification, does not mean that a community like this could lead to their ontological correspondences. Moreover,

The term that puts divine immanence in the process of realization in Dionysius' texts is that of 'procession', which actually is used with a broader meaning with respect to the ontological interventions than that of Proclus, who mostly uses it as an expression of a methodological process with ontological support. In particular, 'procession' in the Christian thinker appears to develop on two successive levels, each of which with a clearly defined meaning: that is to say, it is first understood as the per se manifestation of the essence of the One-Good without a direct or necessary objective result, and then as the productive relationship of this manifestation with the created reality that emerges. In other words, its developmental manifestation as energy does not automatically mean a specific productive result, for in this case the supreme Principle would lack of its freedom. Initially it is 'separated' from the produced universe, which is not yet an ontological fact. 'Procession' is also not just a technical term, which would express only the specific function of the creative projection of the One-Good. It is a term with real content and describes the—personal in every respect—manner and kind of the energetic manifestation of God's transcendent essence, before, through that manifestation, he proceeds to create the supersensible (that is to say, the angels) and the sensible orders of the natural world. Typical of this real meaning of the term 'procession' is that Dionysius also uses its plural form, without however mentioning numbers. So, the fact that he refers to 'processions', which he characterizes with specific ontological terms, such as 'Being', 'Life', 'Intellect', 'Power', to describe the variety,

they possess these properties in a different way, the former autonomously and the latter differently determined. H. D. Saffrey is also moving in the same research direction. The emblematic scholar is based on a passage of the *De divinis nominibus* [892d: «καὶ τὰς τοῦ παντὸς τάξεις καὶ εὐθυμοσύνας εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀγαθὸν διασώζει (sc. ἡ ἀπειροδύναμος τοῦ θεοῦ διάδοσις), καὶ τὰς ἀθανάτους τῶν ἀγγελικῶν ἑνάδων ζωῆς ἀλωβήτους διαφυλάττει»] and is led to the conclusion that the Christian theologian identifies the angels with the henads or at least places them on the same theoretical line, but without stating on which specific worldview data he bases his version (see *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* , 246–7). Apart from the rest of the arguments we have mentioned, we have to observe that the syntactic form of the Areopagite expression «ἀγγελικῶν ἑνάδων», invoked by H. D. Saffrey, cannot lead us to identify the angels with the henads. It should be noted, finally, that Maximus the Confessor (*Comments on the De divinis nominibus*, P.G.4, 360a) and George Pachymeres (*Paraphrasis on the De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 904a) in their interpretative notes on the Areopagite passage do not identify in the term 'henads' some specific divine entities. On the contrary, they consider it exclusively as a predicate attributed by Dionysius to the incorporeal and supersensible substances of the angels, who in the area of creation reflect further than the rest of the beings the divine unity, which also defines the greatest goal to be realized of the entire cosmic reality. However, we should note that E. von Ivanka in his texts referring to Dionysius the Areopagite in *Plato Christianus* is clearly more moderate with respect to the Neoplatonic influences that the Christian thinker has received

quality, and range of the creative function of the One-Good shows that there is no static monism. Its essence is manifested exclusively through these revelations—distinct with respect to its per se condition—which are constantly found in the state of the self-founding unity.[30]

In Dionysius' writings the theory of 'processions' relies on the particularly emphasized ontological distinction between the 'unions' and the 'distinctions' of the One-Good. More specifically, it relies on the distinction between its fixed permanence in its transcendent unmixed essence and its external manifestations, which do not affect this permanence. In fact, on an epistemological level, we could argue that the distinction between 'unions' and 'distinctions' leads to both ways of knowing God, the apophatic and the affirmative Theology, with the latter, as describable after specific predicates, having specific limits with respect to the human capacity. But Dionysius does not remain in a simple initial distinction between 'unions' and 'distinctions'. He proceeds to a second distinction within each concept. The result has the following general order: 1) Unions: a. unions and b. distinctions and 2) Distinctions: a. unions and b. distinctions. It is, however, a structure with individual specializations in Dionysius' texts. As for our particular research objective, we will focus on what Dionysius defines as 'unions', in the area of unions, the transcendent level of 'remaining' and, in the area of distinctions, the productive level of 'procession'.[31]

[30] See for instance, *De divinis nominibus*, II, 5, 644a–b: «αἱ οὐσιώσεις, αἱ ζωώσεις, αἱ σοφοποιήσεις, αἱ ἄλλαι δωρεαὶ τῆς πάντων αἰτίας ἀγαθότητος, καθ' ἃς ἐκ τῶν μετοχῶν καὶ τὼν μετεχόντων ὑμνεῖται τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα… Ὑπέρκειται δὲ καὶ τούτων ἡ τῆς παναιτίου θεότητος ἀμεθεξία τῷ μήτε ἐπαφὴν αὐτῆς μεῖναι μήτε ἄλλην τινά πρὸς τὰ μετέχοντα συμμιγῆ κοινωνίαν». This is a passage that can be placed in Proclus' theory of 'unparticipated-participated-participating', obviously without ignoring the worldview differences we point out between the two philosopher-theologians. With the exclusion of the «συμμιγοῦς» in fact, any possibility of pantheism is excluded. We should note that Dionysius, in contrast to his earlier and later tradition, does not particularly use the term 'energy' to characterize the divine 'processions'.

[31] See the second chapter of the *De divinis nominibus*. On the topic about the divine unions and distinctions in Christian thought, see Melchisedek Töröner, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). This study covers the subject both historically and systematically and constructs with due precision how the transition from divine transcendence to creation takes place. Of course, the starting point of the study is Maximus the Confessor, but all the topics that belong to this theory throughout Christianity are illuminated. See also, Gregory Palamas, «Ποσαχῶς ἡ θεία ἕνωσις καὶ διάκρισις», in P. Christou, G. Mantzaridis, N. Matsoukas, B. Pseutogas (eds.), *Ιρηγορίου του Παλαμά Συγγράμματα (Writings of Gregory Palamas)*, v. B΄ (Thesalloniki: Kiromanos, 1994). See Christos Terezis - Lydia Petridou, 'Ontological and gnoseological questions in Gregory Palamas according to the Christian theory on unions and distinctions', *Philotheos: International journal of philosophy and theology* 16 (2016): 85–98; Christos Terezis - Lydia Petridou, 'The theory on 'unions – distinctions' as a paradigm of Gr. Palamas' methodology', *ΣΧΟΛΗ: Ancient Philosophy and the Classical Tradition* 11/ 1 (2017): 117–32.

The distinction between the unions of the unions and the unions of the distinctions of the One-Good, between its 'remaining' and 'procession', corresponds to the distinction that exists between its transcendent and productive level. These distinctions inevitably follow the principle that the first term of each pair has ontological priority over the second—exclusively as a source and regardless of any temporal or causal succession. And this, because, according to the theological-monistic intentions of Dionysius, in his work what dominates is the projection of the unchangeability of the transcendent unity and simplicity of the One-Good, with production being an action of decision of the three divine Persons, which, even though it works in terms of eternity, it follows the transcendence mentioned above.[32] Therefore, this sequence does not define a hierarchy—since the divine intention exists in a self-founding way—but a non-chronological succession, for it refers to the emergence of a new reality that does not exist in a self-founding way.

So, in his insistence on setting a clear limit between the ontological levels, which are respectively expressed by the unions of unions and the unions of the distinctions of the One-Good, we find Dionysius' intention to distinguish the essence of the supreme Principle from its 'processions' really and not conceptually or nominalistically. In particular, Dionysius aims with this distinction not only to define the causal scheme of the starting point, the way and the content of the productive movement of the One-Good towards the multitude of beings, but also—and above all—to keep its essence ontologically undiminished and unmixed. So, he places the 'processions' between the super-essential One-Good and the beings under production, in this way avoiding pantheism, or a pyramidal and uniform development of the ontological system. Having in mind exactly this intention, we see in his texts that he characterizes the 'processions' as wills or distinctions or energies of the essence of the One-Good, each of which with its intermediate function also expresses the type of its externalization and productive movement towards everything that is subject under the creative prospect. In fact, by having a volitional character, that is, by expressing and not by constituting

[32] See *De divinis nominibus,* 640b–644b. See also, Otto Semmelroth, 'Gottes geeinte Vielheit. Zur Gotteslehre des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagite', *Scholastik* 25 (1950): 389-403. Piero Scazzoso, 'La teologia antinomica dello pseudo-Dionigi', *Aevum*, 49, 1/2 (1975): 1–35. In both articles, the Christian teaching on the divine is precisely delineated against national readings.

the essence of the One-Good, what Dionysius points out is that the 'processions' do not mix it with its productive results.

However, although the 'processions' are the productive powers of the One-Good and only these are participated by the produced beings, this does not indicate that they mix themselves with their products. Do note that the term mixture appears only in dualistic systems, where participation means two kinds of acts, the ascending and the descending, which require participating according to the ontological facts of the two contracting factors. With this position, Dionysius totally rejects any version of production as a direct manifestation of the essence of the One-Good, as an emanation of the divine being. Without actually ignoring the fact that Dionysius places the possibility and function of the productive and final cause exclusively to the completely hyper-being, we have to accept the 'processions' in order to understand how the states of 'separated' and 'unseparated' of the transcendent world are defined, a distinction that we also see in Plato.[33] Dionysius adds to this distinction a clear Christian meaning. So, the 'processions' being the volitional productive powers of the One-Good—which contribute, as a somehow divine multitude, to the ontological foundation of all that exists and constitute the terms and the way for the transition from the uniqueness and simplicity of the transcendent to the articulated in distinctions multitude and in the infinite in number variety of the produced beings—adds a strictly personal orientation to the terms of causality. In this way, it forms a world a becoming that is totally defined by teleology, which not only justifies but also gives meaning to the manifestation of the productive and paradigmatic cause. [34]

[33] For instance, we should note that Plato deals with the subject in question in the dialogues of *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and *Philebus*, with special perspectives in each topic. However, his main goal is to highlight the encounter of the metaphysical world with matter in dialectical terms, which he believes manifests itself through formative incarnations. But it needs to be pointed out that in no reference does he move away from dualism.

[34] For a highly systematic discussion of this topic with strict thematic categorizations, see B. Brons, *Gott und die Seienden*..., 175–210. In these pages we find an impressive intersubjectivity and intertextuality. In fact, special attention has been paid to the distinction between divine causality, which is not accompanied by its providence and that which operates under such an accompaniment. Also, the scholar, after pointing out certain difficulties regarding the precise understanding of the positions of Dionysius, introduces into the discussion the issues of apophatic and affirmative theology. In our opinion, however, in these pages one can find one of the most thorough approaches to Dionysius' theory of causality, and in fact with a very precise definition of the relevant concepts. Let us clarify that this teleological perspective is presented by Proclus in his related commentary to the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*. For his part, Dionysius has been clearly influenced by the theological School of Alexandria (headed by Athanasios the Great) and by the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory the Theologian).

To summarize: the 'processions' of the One-Good do not belong to the ontic created space and have not been produced out of nothing as new ontological realities, since, unlike the totality of the created world, they derive eternally from its transcendent essence and have an uncreated character. Even though we could characterize them as non-produced powers or energies of the essence of the One-Good, we should not ignore that they are distinguished from this essence. Furthermore, since they constitute its externalization without causing its ontological alteration, 'processions' belong to the area of Henology and constitute the productive-archetypal requirement of the content of Ontology. So, they are distinct in an indiscriminate way, while they are clearly distinct from their products. The fact that that the divine essence does not diffuse into the created world, since the 'processions' are the providential or volitional manifestations of the One-Good, indicates that between the two worlds there is also the ontological category of otherness, not in the sense that God is other than the world but that the world is other than God. However, nothing similar happens within the divine relationships: although the divine essence is ontologically prior to the divine powers or energies exclusively as their immediate source, it does not relate with them in terms of otherness. So, these divine states-projections do not introduce an ontological category into the divine essence, since they are placed in its productivity and in this way they are identified, not inflexibly, with it. And of course, the 'processions' or 'powers' or 'energies' of the One-Good should not be confused with Proclus' self-constituted, which are gods that have great ontological initiatives.[35] In other words, they utilize with their own

[35] On the concept of 'self-constituted' in Proclus, see *Institutio theologica*, props. 40–51, 42.8–50.6. See E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology,* 223–7. J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos*, 76–7. According to the Neoplatonic schoolmaster, the self-constituted are the divine entities that correspond to the categories of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*. It should be noted that the most systematic Christian refutation of the theory in question has been undertaken by Nicholas of Methone (?–1165) in his treatise *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* and the props. 40–51, 48.22–55.26 [Athanasios D. Angelou (ed.), *Nicholas of Methone: Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology: A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' Life and works* (Athens-Leiden: The Academy of Athens-E. J. Brill, 1984]. See Christos Terezis, 'Le libre arbitre chez Nicolas de Méthone', *Byzantion* LXVII (1997): 565–9, where some anthropological and ethical positions of Nicholas strictly consistent with the Byzantine teaching are examined and the following conclusions are drawn: a) Empirical beings are ranked among themselves according to the degree of their participation in the rational powers provided by God. b) The human conscience has the logical responsibility of the actions it chooses. c) Human freedom is the starting point of a personal dramatic adventure and constitutes the basis for the salvation or loss of the possibilities of life under their qualitative dimension.

ontological initiatives what is given to them by their causes, with the result that they also acquire autonomy of hypostatic function.

As a final remark, we could present the following relationship, which reflects divine successions not subject to time: the 'processions' constitute the natural manifestations of the One-Good without a necessary first productive result, and then they become the productive sources of beings. In this sense, they have a role in the emergence of a dynamocratic henological realism, without, however, being related to the One-Good under the terms of the pairs 'one-multitude', 'whole-parts' and 'genus-species'. So, by not being subject to a nominalist frame, they clearly are not the ontological determinations of the essence of the One-Good but exist in it in a self-founding way and, subsequently, they derive from it, in the sense of an unchangeable henological field, as its volitional manifestations. They describe not 'what the essence is'—this remains completely unutterable—but 'how it is manifested' through them that are scaled from the most general to the most partial, having as a criterion for this distinction only their immanent presence and their results, since in the field of Christian henology there is no hierarchy.

Conclusions

Based on what we have elaborated, we could first and foremost contend that, although both the thinkers support without negotiations the system of monism—that is, matter in both of them does not exist by itself, as for example happens in the Platonic dialogues, and especially *Timaeus*, but it is produced. We clearly face two different worldviews, each of which with a particular structural foundation. The fact that Proclus chooses to construct his theory of the intermediates in a polytheistic system with individual autonomies and self-actualizations, while Dionysius in a strictly monotheistic one, where autonomy is self-founding and self-actualization has no place, is the factor that reveals two systems that are, at least, in some structures—not negligible ontologically and theoretically—explicitly incompatible. This detail is quite important and highlights the major difference between them: for Proclus the henological multitude is inexhaustible in determinations and autonomies, with the hierarchical structure being pervasive in all

the fields of metaphysical evolution, while for Dionysius it is structured in terms of non-hierarchical presence from the beginning, which will establish hierarchies only with the development of the natural world. However, we can summarize some common points as follows:

i. The self-founding unity of the supreme Principle is preserved in both, despite the introduction of the concept of 'multitude' into the metaphysical or henological level, for Proclus with the henads and for Dionysius with the 'processions'. In a way, a dialectic synthesis between parmenidism and heraclitism is found in both of them. This is a composition that for the system of Proclus has been exhaustively highlighted by Alexandre Kojève in his great study *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne III La philosophie hellénistique les néo-platoniciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

ii. Both the henads and the 'processions' capture the inner ontological richness of the One-Good and are characterized for their unity, which, however, in Proclus becomes particularly complicated in terms of the specialization it will manifest.

iii. Both the henads and the 'processions' shape the conditions for the production of the natural world and each one takes a leading role in this process with the special ontological property that it receives from the One-Good.

iv. Both the henads and the 'processions' express the emanating-productive side of the One-Good and therefore they are the only ones that are participated regarding their immanently functioning properties by the produced beings, with participation referring first of all to the way in which a world not initially existing is created.

v. Both the henads and the 'processions' preserve their transcendence but are also considered, from a point onwards, to be the productive and final causes of the natural world. We need to mention as well that the natural world is considered to be the realization of beauty, which is also granted from above, which means that a discussion for an artistic-aesthetic approach of Ontology is possible but not of a neutral formation of it. Proclus discusses this view in his commentary on the Platonic dialogue

Timaeus, while Dionysius covers this in the fourth chapter of his treatise *De divinis nominibus*.

vi. Both the henads and the 'processions' receive names that describe how they are manifested, at a difference to the essence of the One-Good, which is not directly manifested and receives no predicate. It should be noted that we could discuss the ontological relevance of the One-Being of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* in a special way for each thinker. With the clarification that Being is not only a procession or an ontological category, but that reality which makes possible, functioning as mandatory, the manifestation of the rest. Under the permanent condition, of course, that Dionysius speaks of a direct creation of the natural world, while Proclus speaks of a world mediated by divine entities or by a multifactorial metaphysical world. From an open point of view, we could assume that both with the "processions" of Dionysius and with the henads of Proclus, the pair 'one-indefinite dyad' of Plato's unwritten teaching comes to the fore, with the two terms showing the dialectics between the one and the multitude before the natural universe was even constituted, and indeed completely far from any perspective of otherness between them.[36]

[36] For a quite thorough approach of the this teaching, see the really historically important monograph of Léon Robin, *La Théorie Platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'aprés Aristote* (Hildesheim: Edité par Olms, 1963). It is a study which penetrates the "marrow" of the Platonic Academy and the Aristotelian Lyceum and highlights the truly cosmogonic philosophical and scientific (and to some extent theological) upheavals which arose during the 4th century BC. and sealed the later developments, whose first exponents were the representatives of Middle Platonism and Plotinus. Proclus deals with this issue in terms of its foundations mainly in his commentary on the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, while in Dionysius we do not find a similar theoretical concentration.

The Birth of an Idea: How Bonaventure Reformulates Dionysian Procession as Eternal Wisdom Birthing the Divine Ideas on the Cross

Part I: Virtual Procession from the Sentences Commentary to the Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ[1]

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Bonaventure is among the most Dionysian thinkers of his age, heartily embracing the diffusivity of the Good, hierarchy as the worshipful participation in God's distribution of divine life, and the excessive nature of divine union beyond intellect. It is therefore curious that he neither employs nor even discusses Dionysius' creative *proodoi*—aside from one instance in the *De Mysterio Trinitatis*—despite an abundance of citations from the Dionysian Corpus, and especially the *Divine Names* across his career. Nevertheless, what Bonaventure read of these *proodoi* or *processus* (in Latin), and Dionysius' account of divine egress can be detected in his corpus. This two-part article will argue that Bonaventure's use of *rationes*, an equivalent for the Dionysian *logoi*, present the best avenue for assessing how the substance of Dionysian *proodoi* enters his thought. Furthermore, it will argue that by following Bonaventure's use of the *rationes* a development can be traced through a remarkable trajectory, from an early reticence to admit a divine egress in the *Sentences Commentary* through to a profound integration of that egress in Trinitarian life under the image of the rationes birth from eternal Wisdom on the cross.

[1] In the first place, I offer my thanks to my friends and colleagues who for the inspiration and suggestions for this article or solutions to its occasionally twisted prose: Susan Potters, Jordan Daniel Wood, Anne-Michelle Carpenter, Gene Schlesinger, Kevin Hughes, and Jared Goff.

Part I of this article will address Bonaventure's early use of the *rationes aeternae* from the *Sentences Commentary* to the more robust entry of the substance of Dionysius proodoi in *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, which develops into a virtual account of divine procession unto creatures in Bonaventure's articulation of 'causal knowing'.

Part II will follow the further development of the externalization of the *rationes* as part of Bonaventure's account of cosmic completion in the *De Reductione Artium*, which externalization is ultimately described as a birth on the cross in *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. I will argue that the combination of the *rationes*' role in causal knowing and externalization in the *Hexaemeron* locates a divine egress-without-departing in the Trinity itself in the shape of an eternal cross embracing the historical cross, whereby Bonaventure enfolds the Dionysius *proodoi* with Augustinian logocentrism within his own Franciscan spirituality and thereby anticipates the intratrinitarian speculations of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Sergei Bulgakov about an eternal cruciformity and even divine humanity by several centuries.

Jacques Guy Bougerol—a scholar of no small exposure to Bonaventure or his use of Dionysius—called the Seraphic Doctor 'one of the most Dionysian among the great masters of the thirteenth century'.[2] Bonaventure's distinctive Dionysianism is reflected in his own prioritization of God as Good and the resultant primacy of charity that culminates in a supranoetic union with God, in a superluminous darkness expressed and actualized in the God-glorifying and human-divinizing mercy of the cross. And this Dionysianism is also shown in the Bangroregite's assimilation and expansion of the triadic divisions that perform the Areopagite's hierarchies.[3] That Platonic inheritance is on

[2] Jacques Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', *Études Franciscaines* 18, no. Suppl. (1968): 34, 113.

[3] It must be noted that when Dionysius refers to a hierarchy, a term he coined, he means the God-glorifying and deifying participation and imitation of God's entrance into creation as Jesus' *philanthropia*. A hierarchy, per *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (*EH*) 5.1.1 (501A [*CD* 2, 104.11–15]), consists in initiators, initiates, and the *teletai*, the God-initiating acts of worship—sensible rites in the Church and an immaterial equivalent among the angels—by which the initiators initiate the instantiated. Divisions of persons are *diakosmeseis*; hierarchy is priestly action or disposition to that action. All citations from the *Corpus Dionysiacum* include the numbering from the Migne's *Patrologia Latina* 4 and the pagination and lines from the recent critical editions:

display in the Franciscan's committed, even relentless, use of the cycle of exitus and reditus,[4] the intelligible circle that describes the latter's whole metaphysics,[5] such that every iota and corner of creation is an expressed vestige of triune divinity manifesting and reducing spirits, and in them, all creatures, to God. Hence, even Bonaventure's famous exemplarism is indebted to the Areopagite.[6] In short, Dionysius' conceptual presence permeates Bonaventure's corpus, even preferentially in some cases,[7] not slavishly but by rumination, reframing, and repurposing that Greek mind in Latin Paris.[8] Perhaps most disctinctively, the Franciscan beheld an eternal cross borne amidst the sweep of the intelligible circle that itself echoed Dionysius' circular image of divine ecstasy. This article, in its two parts, proposes one avenue to explain how Bonaventure saw the cross in the circle, namely, by attending to the development in the Bonaventure's use and understanding of the divine ideas or *rationes*. Furhthermore, his development aroubd the *rationes* simultenously exhibits his maturing integration of Dionyius' legacy.

Yet there is a noteworthy absence in that Dionysian legacy. Despite being an avid reader of the *Divine Names*, Bonaventure avoids mentioning the *proodoi*, the divine processions unto creatures that lie at the heart of that influential work.[9] In the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (*CD*), the term *proodos* names every going-forth of divinity, both as creating

Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *Corpus Dionysiacum I: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Divinis Nominibus*, edited by Beate Regina Suchla. Patristicshe Texte und Studien 33, (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1990), abbreviated as *CD* 1, and Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *Corpus Dionysiacum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Coelesti Hierarchia, De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, De Mystica Theologia, Epistulae*, edited by Günter Heil and Adolf M. Ritter. Patristicshe Texte und Studien 67, (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), abbreviated as *CD* 2. Translations from the Greek text of *Corpus Dionysiacum*, as opposed the Latin versions, are based upon *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite (1897)*, translated by John Parker (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), https://ccel.org/ccel/dionysius/works/works.i.html, accessed May 6, 2023.

[4] Jacques Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', 114.

[5] *Hexaemeron* 1.17 (5, 332A–B). This statement was made at the end of his career but applies throughout. All citations from Bonaventure, except for the sermon *Omnium Artifex Docuit Me Sapientia*, are taken from the Quaracchi edition: Bonaventure, *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera omnia*, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902). All citation therefrom include not only book, chapter, and paragraph numbers, but also the volume, page number, and column.

[6] Jacques Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', 51.

[7] Bonaventure's identification of negative theology, or approaching God by *ablation* (aphaeresis) because it is the way of love in *De Triplici Via* 3.7 (8, 16B–17B) and the *Hexaemeron* 2.33 (5, 342B).

[8] Jacques Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', 113ff.

[9] Bougerol counts 142 citations from *DN* of 248 overall from the *CD* across Bonaventure's career, see 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', 38.

all things and also drawing us into union with God by the incarnation or *philanthropia* of Jesus.[10] *Proodos* refers to God's acts *ad extra*, to use Latin terms, the work of creation and the missions of the Son and Spirit. The terms, however, that would come to translate *proodos were processus* (in Hilduin, Saracen, and Grosseteste's versions of *Corpus Dionysiacum*) and *processio* (in Eriugena's).[11] Bonaventure used the translations of Eriugena and Saracen, and was thereby exposed to both translations of *proodos* in his works.[12] Furthermore, Bonaventure used the terms in those versions that functioned as translations of *proodos*, but *processio* would frequently, as was common, name the intratrinitarian processions, while *processus* was a broad term that naming any progress or going forth, including occasionally Trinitarian procession.[13] He did not, however, outside of sparing quotation, use those Latin terms in Dionysius' sense of *proodos*.

In *DN* 2.5, *proodos* names that common egress or progression (that is, not predicated of any single divine person) as a manifestation of the divine hiddeness and a divine self-multiplication of divine more-than-goodness that is a substantifying, life-giving, wise-making, distribution of itself, or as *DN* 2.6 and 11.2 state so clearly, imparts itself to all for participation without its own diminution of confusion or even contact.[14] For Dionysius, it is not, of course, a spatial progression, even if many of the things to which God so proceeds are spatial, but a granting to all a share in itself, so that it is not only prototypical and causal of all things, but even 'life of the living, and essence of beings',[15] not only as leading and sustaining things to being or their existence, but as the 'being itself' of things that are.[16] And it is so for all the divine names[17] that name the impartation and correlate participation of God as a self-existent being (as a transcendent more-than-source going forth

[10] *DN* 1.4 589D–592C (*CD* 1, 112.7–115.5).

[11] See Phillipe Chevalier, *Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, (Brüges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937), 23, for an example of these translation choices.

[12] Jacques Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', 39–40.

[13] For example, of the *processus* of the Word, see *I Sent* d. 12, a. unic., q. 4, pro 1 (1, 225A), and of the Spirit, d. 14, a. 1, q. 1, contra 3 (1, 245A).and *I Sent* d. 10, a. 2, q. 1 (I, 201A), and of the Son and Spirit I Sent d. 12, a. unic, q. 2 (I, 223A).

[14] *DN* 1.4 589D (*CD* 1, 112.6–10); *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.14–129.5); *DN* 2.6 644C–D (*CD* 1, 130.5–13); *DN* 11.2 952A (*CD* 1, 219.22–24).

[15] *DN* 1.3 589C (*CD* 1, 112.5–6).

[16] *DN* 5.4 817D (*CD* 1 n, 183.8–11).

[17] *DN* 1.4 589D (*CD* 1, 112.6–10).

as source) and self-existent essentializing (as an impartitive power going forth from God, and so immanent in the effect)—all without supposing some intermediate essence or agent,[18] and also of God as self-existent life and life-making, wise and wise-making and the like. All these names constitute the *proodoi*, the progression of the good to every kind and degree of that which is not God under all the aspects in which those beings, and even non-beings, participate God and have God as their ground. As noted, *processus* was not entirely absent from Bonaventure in this sense only in virtue of quotation rather than his own terminology.[19] Therefore, assessing Bonaventure's embrace or at least similarity to Dionysius on the topic of such a *proodos* in substance cannot rely on a direct linkage of *proodos* to *processus*, *processio* or their cognates, but only upon the conceptual comparisons supplemented with attention to Bonaventure's use of Dionsysius' citations.

Since the size of Bonaventure's corpus prohibits a thorough comparison of his thought to Dionysius' *proodos*, a more restricted—but proportionally more useful—endeavour is called for. And one lies at hand: a comparison of Bonaventure's treatment of the divine ideas to the processive purpose of Dionysius' divine *logoi* permits an examination of Bonaventure's conceptual proximity to the Areopagite's *proodos*. While the causal and creative impartations of divinity identified as the *proodoi* of the divine names (Good, Being, Life, etc.) in the eponymous work display an egressive continuity (i.e., that they are the same as the God whence they came) that simultaneously posits God's transcendence on the one hand and on the other, creatures' existence *and* access to a divine union exceeding being and knowing in its full breadth,[20] for Dionysius, God's *proodoi* also include in their number the more particular providences, the *logoi* that are the *paradigmata*, the paradigms, of individual creatures.[21] These, *logoi*, even in their particularity, share the same egressive continuity as the divine names, inasmuch as they are God going forth for each and every

[18] *DN* 5.2 816C-817A (*CD* 1, 181.16-21); *DN* 5.5 820A–C (*CD* 1, 183.12–184.16); *DN* 9.6 953C–956B (*CD* 1, 222.2–223.14).

[19] Quotations and discussions of Dionysius that include *processus* are found in *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, q. 6, a. 1, ad. 1 (5, 100A) and *De Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*, 2.1 (5, 462A).

[20] *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.14–129.5); *DN* 4.11 708D (*CD* 1, 156.15–19); *DN* 7.3 872A–B (*CD* 1, 198.12–20); *DN* 11.6 953B–956A (*CD* 1, 221.13–223.3).

[21] *DN* 5.2 816D-817A (*CD* 1, 181.18–21).

creature.[22] They offer a point of comparison because Bonaventure, too, locates the particularity of God's effects in distinct expressions from eternity analogous to the *logoi*:the divine ideas. Beginning with the *Sentences Commentary* onward, he posits *rationes aeternae* or *ideae* as the exemplary similitudes of all creatures (and all possible things) and specifies that they are identical with the divine essence. Usefully for this article, he deploys them across his career in a range of topics from to divine knowledge, and even glorification/eschatology, which in turn allows one to assess Bonaventure's adoption of the meaning of the Dionysian *proodos* in the view of the Fransican's wider theological vision.

Initially, Bonaventure's treatment of the *rationes* was drawn from his Augustinian framework—and would always be shaped by it—especially by Augustine's logocentrism, which located these *rationes* or ideas as eternally expressed in the Son.[23] However, Bonaventure increasingly cited Dionysius' texts to discuss Augustine's doctrine of *rationes*,

[22] David Bradshaw takes the position that the relationship between the divine *proodoi* and the *logoi* is not fully worked out by Dionysius and that the *logoi* are treated as different from the *proodoi*, so that it is not until Palamas' teaching on the divine energies that the *logoi* are identified as a more particular *procession* see David Bradshaw, 'The Divine Processions and Divine Energies' in *Philosophy of Religion: Analytic Researches* 4, no. 2 (2020): 59, 68–70. Bradshaw has good reason to say so, given that the clearest definitions of these *logoi* at *DN* 5.8 places them *in God* and does not count them among the longer lists of the divine names such as being, life, wisdom, greater, lesser, and the like. Their location *in God*, however, does not prevent them from being also God's method of procession to particulars any more than the causal divine processions as being, life, etc. are precluded from being in God. Indeed, God has more general and more particular providences (*DN* 5.2 [*CD* 1, 181.20–21]), the most particular of which attend to the individual existences in the world (see *DN* 5.7 821A–821C [*CD* 1, 185.12–25]), which are ordered and harmonized by the *logoi* (ibid.). It is for this reason that Dionysius uses the image lines radiating from the center of a circle as if from God to express the particularity of the processions more readily perceived in lesser creatures (*DN* 5.6 820C–821A [*CD* 1, 184.17ff]). These particularising *logoi* are referenced as causal (*ta aitia poietika*) along with the divine powers by way of a counterexample (*DN* 4.31 732B [*CD* 1, 176.9–11]), and their definition in *DN* 5.8 (824C [*CD* 1, 188.6–10]) as 'substance establishing' confirms that they are not only representation *ad intra*, but the methods by which God, the one true cause of all, causes particulars. Furthermore, it is in the Word, *ho Logos*, that all the causes of things were precontained, a nod to the *causal logoi* (*DN* 7.4 [*CD* 1, 872C 198.21–23]). Therefore, the *logoi* are implicitly processions, which was admittedly made much clearer by Palamas.

[23] Augustine's appropriation of the *rationes* to the Word and even their 'living in the word' is explained by Giovanni Catapano 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier' in *Theories of Divine Ideas: From the Church Fathers to the Early Franciscan* Master, edited by Tommaso Manzon and Irene Zavattero (Rome: Arcane, 2022), 19–21. Guardini also specifies that Bonaventure's doctrine of the divine ideas or *rationes* stand upon the '*augustinisch-anselmishen*' doctrine of the expression of the 'inner word', wherein God as generating the Son as *ars Patris* is a 'double speech', to God's own self and outward, Romano Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente in Der Theologie Bonaventuras*, Studia et Documenta Franciscana, III (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 41–42.

which although they had passed through a great number of minds and hands, retained several ambiguities, including:

1. How they did not violate divine simplicity.
2. How they were in the Word.
3. Whether both exemplary and efficient causality belonged the *rationes*.
4. Whether each individual thing had a *ratio* and how that *ratio* related to that thing when created.
5. Whether and what it would mean for souls to behold these *rationes*.
6. What relationship exists between their *rationes* and God's role in created cognition (illumination).[24]

While Bonaventure would initially address such ambiguities in the *Sentences Commentary* with occasional references to Dionysius, by the *Questiones disputatae de scientia Christi* (*DSC*), Bonaventure found in the Areopagite a support for clear answers about the *rationes*' eternal role in God and persistent importance for creation's existence and fulfillment. Bonaventure's use of Dionysius to clarify Augustine offers us a two-fold opportunity: to assess not only his conceptual similarity to but also his interpretation and integration of the Areopagite's account of divine causality through divine *logoi*.

There remains, however, a further reason for taking the *rationes* as a point of comparison to Dionyisius' *proodoi* beyond their analogous likeness to (and even translation of) the *paradigmata* or *logoi*: it is around these *rationes* that Bonaventure, in his *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, ultimately admits God's egress to creatures in the birth of the rationes *exemplares* from eternal Wisdom on the cross, which Bonaventure fuses with the image of divine ray that he also drew from Dionysius. Thus, the development of Bonaventure's use of the *rationes* does not only furnish a neat table of comparable points of doctrine, but a distinctive account of divine egress through the *rationes* that yokes eternal and intrinsic divine wisdom and the cross, one which does not only take

[24] Catapano, after his analysis of the *rationes* as divine ideas, developed a list of ambiguities to complement his doctrinal summary, see 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier', 30. Guardini, likewise, produced a list of Augustinian doctrines which Bonaventure drew upon as the basis of his account of the *rationes,* see Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente*, 75–76.

the cross as a remedy or complement to creation, but as constitutive of the fruition of creation and God's presence in the world. Outpacing Dionysius in daring, where that ancient secretive author perceived each thing and every relation between them as a manifestation of God, Bonaventure would come to see in every thing's redemption God's own birth inasmuch as the *rationes* born are essentially God. It is that birth, the final trajectory of the *rationes* in Bonaventure's thought, that has given a name to this article.

By attending to the chief appearances of the *rationes* in his corpus, I will show how Bonaventure's manner of discussing and employing the *rationes aeternae* undergoes that striking development across his career in three basic periods, periods that also provide illustrative examples of the maturation of Bonaventure's handling of Dionysius.

The first period belongs to Bonaventure's early thought in the *Sentences Commentary* and shows a general agreement with Dionysius about God's causality and effects in creation, yet a total reticence to ascribe the image of a creative or substantializing egress to God. In the *Sentences Commentary*, Dionysius' presence is noteworthy but hardly central in the questions on divine knowledge and divine causality, and he certainly does not rival Augustine's footprint, let alone authority on the *rationes*.

The second period, Bonaventure's period as a master in Paris, in which the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* and the *Reduction of the Arts to Theology* were written, sees the *rationes* figure centrally in his epistemology and wisdom mysticism, a tremendously creative period in Bonaventure's life where his theology came into its own with a fusion of doctrinal elaboration and symbolic structures that the disputation method and sheer girth of the *Sentences Commentary* precluded. It is in that middle period, as Tommaso Manzon observes, 'where Bonaventure's engagement with Dionysius reaches new levels of systematic relevance', a development noticed also by Joseph Ratzinger and Zachary Hayes.[25] During this magisterial period, Bonaventure's

[25] Tommaso Manzon, 'According to the Blessed Dionysius: the Areopagitic Character of Bonaventure's Exemplarism, with Particular Reference to the Quaestiones de Scientia Christi', in *Theories of Divine Ideas: From the Church Fathers to the Early Franciscan* Master, edited by Tommaso Manzon and Irene Zavattero (Rome: Arcane, 2022), 327, n. 14. Manzon draws upon Ratzinger's assessment that Bonaventure had beyond the reception of Dionysius from scholastic sources from his *The Theology of History According to St. Bonaventure*, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago, Ill.: Franciscan Herald

reworking and integration of his treatment of divine knowledge and creation privileges Dionysius as a source on par with, or even surpassing and interpreting,[26] Augustine, and results in a virtual—i.e., in all but name—account of creative procession through the intrinsic *rationes* in God. At the same time, Bonaventure also experimented with an externalization of the *rationes* in the incarnation, whereby their entrance in Christ contributed to the world's completion.

Third and finally, the period of Bonaventure's openly Franciscan theologizing, the period of his minister generalship from 1257 onward, but practically inaugurated with the *Itinerarium* in 1259, initially saw little direct discussion of the *rationes* until their pervasive reappearance in the *Hexaemeron*, wherein he situated them within his account of eternal providence and intratrinitarian communication, and presented their birth from eternal wisdom through the cross as the fulfillment of an eternal conception and gestation in time. That presentation in the *Hexaemeron* constitutes an account of divine egress in a manner not anticipated by Dionysius, but characteristic of Bonaventure's reconfiguration of the Areopagite's mystical and ecclesiastical theology through the experience of Francis' conformation to the cross. Furthermore, while Bonaventure had always differed from Dionysius by his Augustinian logocentrism, whereby the *rationes* were expressed by the Father in the eternal Word (whereas Dionysius merely located the *logoi* in the *Logos* without elaboration),[27] the development of Bonaventure's use of the *rationes* tracked an increasing importance of their trinitarian location. While the *rationes* initially supplied an account of divine knowledge, and later the divine ground of all knowledge in his theory of illumination, the *Hexaemeron* threads the *rationes* into God's self-consciousness, providence, and the implications of the Trinity itself, culminating in their identity as the form of God in the shape of cross

Press, 1971), 90. Zachary Hayes' own 'Introduction' to the English translation of the *DSC* saw a new emphasis when Bonaventure draws the question of Christ's knowledge in a mystical direction, see Zachary Hayes, 'Introduction' in *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, Works of St. Bonaventure 4 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publication, 1992), 42–43.

[26] Manzon, 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 327.

[27] *DN* 7.4 872C (*CD* 1, 198.21–199.3). The Word or *Logos* contains all causes, yet Dionysius does not set the *Logos*' expression in an explicitly Trinitarian context (cf. *DN* 2.4 640D–641C [*CD* 1, 126.3–128.8]) as the Word of the Father. This is not to say that Dionysius would at all deny this, but it was simply not part of his programme.

implicit in the Trinity and even drawing God outward—to birth, or the dilation of divine glory on the cross.[28]

The *rationes*' role has been well recognized in Bonaventure's account of divine knowledge and his well-known illumination theory, and especially in his fundamental exemplarism—so much so that Romano Guardini makes them the starting place for his overarching account of Bonaventure's pervasive exemplarism at the heart of his theology.[29] Indeed, studies of Bonaventure's *philosophy* have given significant

[28] Etienne Gilson's reading of the divine ideas as interior to divine self-identity and self-consciousness has identified half of this aspect, especially coming from *Hexaemeron*, although he does not develop its relation to glory and the cross, see Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, ed. F. J. Sheed, trans. Illtyd Trethowan (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1938), 141–43, 146–47.

[29] Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente*, 6–17. The *rationes*, discussed under the name of '*die Lehre von den Ideen*', appear throughout the first half of Guardini's systematic exposition of Bonaventure's doctrine, drawing across his corpus to do so, from the *Sentences Commentary* through to the *Hexaemeron*. Guardini's treatment of *die Ideen* immediately connects the *rationes*' role in divine knowledge with creative exemplarity (ibid. 10–11), their Trinitarian location (12), role in knowledge (12–13), the relationship of vestige/image/likeness and efficient/exemplary/final causality (14–16), and even the relationship between creative similitude and the doctrine of grace. (13, 16–17). For Guardini, all these aspects answer a fundamental question at the heart Bonaventure's thought: whether and how there is nexus or mediation of the eternal simplicity and mortal, contingent multiplicity (ibid., 6). The answer is of course: yes; all the above aspects of the *rationes* or *die Ideen* show that they constitute a middle or mediation between God and creation, and this role of the middle and center is accordingly at the heart of Bonaventure's theological and philosophical thought (ibid. 12), so much so that though that God is the middle, inasmuch as the *rationes* are God, essentially, even humanity in the image of God is a middle too (16) as microcosm (by all aspects of creation in human nature), and even in the human interior spiritual life where all things are held together (ibid.). In sum, Guardini grasps Bonaventure's spirit, with its centrality of the middle, through the *rationes*, and so places it at the head of his systematic elaboration of Bonaventure's doctrine. Furthermore, because Guardini looks across Bonaventure's career, he also addresses the manner in the which the doctrine of the ideas must include the '*Heilsplan*', predestination, whereby God cannot not love us (ibid. 44). On the other hand, because Guardini refers to Bonaventure's doctrine wholistically, he does not attend to the way Bonaventure's expression and particular doctrine shift between the *Sentences Commentary* and *Hexameron*. Nevertheless, he has an impressive ability capture succinctly the warp and woof of Seraphic Doctor's distinct style, as he does when he (I think quite correctly) aligns the Trinity, creation, and redemption as the nexus of Augustine's and Dionysius' *Grundideen*, in an account of the exemplary making and remaking of world, a not primarily ethical but ontological restoration that sees Christ in the middle of all precisely as the 'Verbum aeterna, ars aeterna, mundus archetypus, mundus intelligibilis, Inbegriff der Ideen, Urbild der wirkliche Dinge' who entering the world, the divine middle entering the creaturely middle to mediate either side (ibid. 48–9). If anything could be counted absent here, it would the Franciscan cast of Bonaventure' thought that sees the cross through that middle, which would counterbalance Guardini's understandable deprioritization of the ethical by recapturing it in the primacy of piety and charity expressed in Franciscan poverty, an expression not only of total dependence upon God but also unrestrained love for the other.

space to the *rationes*, from Etienne Gilson who prioritizes the role of expression,[30] Jean-Marie Bissen,[31]

[30] Gilson, recognizing the fundamental orientation of philosophy, in Bonaventure's mind, towards revelation and the authority of theology, finds that because the efficiency of beginning and the finality end are revealed, the true metaphysician can only lay claim to properly study God's exemplarity, which constitutes 'the very heart of metaphysics'. But to reach that point, one must begin with the Incarnate Word and rise to the triune exemplar. See Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 140–43. Set in relief to that theological dynamic, Gilson hones in on the unique character of divine knowledge as a self-reflection and self-identity that is at once the grasp of every otherness, in accord with what it is to be God's act, which holds at once in itself God's being and nature, possibilities, and God's will for those possibilities—all of which are gathered together and expressed in the Son (ibid, 142–44). Therein, the divine ideas, and so divine ideas *rationes* are cast as integral to God's self-fulfillment, wherein the sufficiency of eternal self-identity that 'dwelling in identity with Himself' gives rise to the other (ibid, 141, 144–6). The productivity of the inner word, the image for our inner life, provides for Gilson the principal logic of Bonaventure's expressive *ideas*, grounded in God's self-reflection. For Gilson, therefore, expression, with its reference to the generation of the Son, rather than exemplarism, is at the heart of Bonaventure's doctrine of ideas from the *Sentences Commentary*, to the *DSC*, to the *Hexaemeron* (ibid, 146–7, 160–61). For Gilson, ideas are exemplars, no modal difference exists between them of the sort Carl Vater posits (see below). Regarding the place of Dionysius, Gilson sees the Areopagite's claim that God knows without ideas, (cf. *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic. q. 1, contra 1 [1, 600B]) as summons for Bonaventure to defend the ideas as necessary to knowledge according to the assimilative character of knowledge (Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 149–50). Regarding the ideas causal character, Gilson affirms with without distinction, the ideas are causes precisely because they are not received from *ab extra*, with no distinction offered between the ideas of created and uncreated things, since that would be *precisely backward*, letting the creature determine the creator (ibid. 155–57). Yet in all, the precise language of *rationes* and its relation to *logoi* never enters the Gilson's discussion.

[31] Jean-Marie Bissen, *L'Exemplarisme divin selon Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: J. Vrin., 1929) is a book-length treatment of the exemplarism that, necessarily, considers divine ideas or *rationes*, which in its earlier chapters rehearses many of Bonaventure's arguments, especially from the *Sentences Commentary*, with a healthy dose of comparison to Aquinas. Bissen's assessment of Bonaventure's distinctiveness notes his reliance on Augustine through Alexander of Hales (ibid, 88). Where others stress Bonaventure's reliance on the Augustinian tradition, Bissen defends the centrality of Aristotle for Bonaventure's arguments, especially against Platonic separate ideas (ibid. 89–90). As Quinn (see below) will note, Bissen takes the *rationes* or divine ideas as principally 'idea-forms' rather than the 'voluntaristic approach' (ibid. 90–91). Of the passage from *Hexaemeron* 20.5 discussing the birth of the ideas, Bissen quotes it partially (omitting the description of birth in the passion) and opines that it is the perfect image of Truth's fecundity, whereby all inferior truths are conceived, borrowing Gilson's sense that Bonaventure's language of God's 'expression' convenes perfectly with the original sense of conception as generative (ibid, 93; Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 147). Finally, Bissen takes Bonaventure's exemplarism as an indication that Bonaventure departs the Augustinian primacy of the Good by establishing the principality of being (especially the divine name *ego sum qui sum*) and truth above the good, which he even attributes to the influence of Dionysius (ibid, 95)—a claim that does not contend with Bonaventure's own appeal to the primacy of the good as 'the most principle name' in *Itinerarium* 6, on the authority of Dionysius, no less.

John Quinn,[32] Zachary Hayes,[33] and most to recently Carl Vater, who contrasts the noetic and causal aspects.[34] The *rationes*, at least intended

[32] John F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy*, Studies and Texts Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 23 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973) attends to the role of the *rationes* as God's knowledge causing things and as knowing his own intention for each therein (ibid, 493). Quinn also observes that while the *rationes* are one in God's self knowledge, and so signify God, properly speaking, and connote *res* besides God, nonetheless, the *rationes* has a plurification in that it expresses many while remaining one, so that the multiplicity of *rationes* does not only describe the created knowers' lighting upon the divine ideas of distinct creatures (ibid, 495)—for God does know distinctly in simplicity. Quinn's account treats the *Sentences Commentary* without distinction, however, so that the emergence of *exemplaria* or *rationes exemplares* is overwritten by the earlier account of God as the *exemplar* (ibid. 497). Quinn, helpfully, also identifies the ultimate *theological* location of the *rationes*, explaining that philosophers cannot grasp the full truth of creatures apart from the trinitarian shape of their exemplar (ibid. 498–500). He also argues that Bonaventure's chief difference with Aquinas on the matter of the *rationes* lies in the Angelic Doctor's emphasizing the finality of the *rationes* over the Bonaventure's analogical exemplarity, whereby the creatures display their dependence upon the *rationes* as equally as 'principles of their *being* and as the immutable rules of their truth' (ibid., 507–9). Of course, Bonaventure does point to the approved finality of the *rationes* in *DSC* and much more their providential character in the *Hexaemeron*, nevertheless, Quinn's point is principally that Aquinas does not teach that creatures manifest their dependence upon the *rationes aeternae* in order to be seen in their truth, but rather, that creatures are available *in se* to be known according to God's will (ibid. 508).

[33] Hayes, in his introduction to his translation of the *Questiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi*, leads his discussion of the *rationes* by foregrounding that the expressive Word about which Bonaventure inquires is that which the western, Augustinian theological tradition identified as the Son as God's self-knowledge (Hayes, 'Introduction', 49) and this locus is where God's intrinsic knowledge of infinite possibilities can be located. Hayes points out that *DSC* q. 2 never uses the term *idea*, but only *similitude*, *ratio, species*, and *exemplar*, with *similitudo* and *ratio* carrying the force of *idea* (50–52). Hayes holds that the doctrine of the divine ideas was given fuller explanation in the *Sentences Commentary*, with causes as exemplary causes or models for God as the artist of creation, and the way all things have existed in God from eternity (ibid, 51, 53). Hayes does not address at all the introduction of the language of *notitia causans res* nor what, if any, difference is made by the inclusion of Dionysius texts to definition of the *rationes aeternae* in *DSC* q. 2. He does recognize Dionysius' contribution to *DSC* q. 3 as providing language fit to describe the virtual multiplication of ideas according to the many *ideata*, yet still this is not treated as amounting to a difference from *I Sent* d. 35 and 36 on the ideas in God. It is in *DSC* q. 7 that Hayes recognizes Bonaventure's development of the distinction between Christ's habitual and actual knowing with the distinction between comprehensive and ecstatic knowledge, which depends upon Dionysius, and which makes the *rationes* in their infinity a source of human beatitude as such and sees a resolution between God's exemplarity of finite creatures and of infinite possibilities, when the products of the former are satisfied in the latter (ibid, 64–67).

[34] Carl Vater in his dissertation 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325' (Catholic University of America, 2017) foregrounds his claim that Bonaventure taught an ordered distinction within the divine ideas, between ideas as principally God's means knowing before causing and the subset of which are also causal according to God's will, which he takes to be Bonaventure's sense of the term 'exemplar' (see esp. 111–14). Vater's distinction emerges from a recognition of the difference between *I Sent* and *DSC*, inasmuch as the treatment of divine knowledge in the latter also involves a more extensive consideration of divine causality, a change of expression that he does not regard as a development but differing routes to the same answer (ibid. 69, 86, 89, 98). He argues that the appearance of the Latin translation of Averroes commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* introduced an anxiety among Latin theologians that God does not know particulars, and locates Bonaventure's doctrine of the divine ideas, and so *rationes*, among the several scholastic responses to that significant concern (ibid. 56–57). Like Guardini and many others before him, Vater recognizes the centrality of exemplarism in Bonaventure, but he isolates ex-

by the catchall term 'divine idea', are indeed so central that any general treatment of Bonaventure's metaphysics must say a word about them.[35] To a lesser extent, the *rationes* have also served as an entry point for a discussion for Bonaventure's Dionysianism.[36]

emplarism as the proper field of metaphysics, turning to *Hexaemeron* to substantiate that claim (ibid. 58–59), but nevertheless points to the ideas' Trinitarian importance, reminding his reader of Bonaventure's borrowing from Augustine, that one who would deny the existence of ideas would, in fact, deny the Son (ibid. 60; *I Sent* d. 6, a. unic., q. 3 [1, 130A]). Despite turning first to the *Hexaemeron*, Vater considers the divine ideas or *rationes* as having been given a 'full picture' from *I Sent* and *DSC* (Vater, 61), and to an extent the *Breviloquium*, but aside from a few initial references, the *Hexaemeron* does not contribute to his argument. That full picture is centered on understanding, before all else, that the divine ideas explain God's causality as knowing that proceeds to a willing or causing, wherein a-causal ideas become properly causal exemplars, and it is against this background that the imitative and multiplicative character of the ideas or *rationes* is approached (ibid. 61, 69–70, 79). Vater's argument, as it sees little to no doctrinal development from *I Sent* to *DSC*, likewise does not attribute any change to the greater deference given to the Areopagite in the latter text, although he explains how the *DSC* displays Bonaventure's argumentative maturation (ibid., 89).

[35] For example, Efrem Bettoni sets the account of Bonaventure's divine ideas within a demonstration of his account of Neoplatonism, which draws multiplicity from unity, and begins with assimilation or God's similitude to all possibilities and actualities as a launching point for his account of Bonaventure's exemplarity, see Efrem Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, Notre Dame Pocket Library 4 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981), 47–50. Furthermore, Bettoni stresses that the *rationes* expression exclaim the necessary character of God's exemplarity in contradistinction from God's freedom to create (ibid., 59–61). As another example, Christopher Cullen's *Bonaventure* says that Bonaventure's exemplarism is not a part but the 'heart, and center' of his thought and that expressionism, by which Bonaventure seeks to resolve Plato and Aristotle's epistemologies, results in a 'semiotic metaphysics', see Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 71, 72–73, 76-77. A third example is in R. E. Houser and Timothy B. Noone's introduction to their translation of selected passages from *I Sent*, which frames the *rationes* as not only God's knowledge, but as the basis all knowledge, see R. E. Houser and Timothy B. Noone, 'Introduction' in *Commentary on the Sentences: Philosophy of God*, trans. R. E. Houser and T. B. Noone, Works of St. Bonaventure 16 (St. Bonavenure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2013), lviii–lix. They note that two questions arise around these rationes: their plurality and necessity. On the former, their plurality is 'determined, not by the mind of the divine knower, but by the differences in kind and in individuality of the things known', stressing less the diffusiveness of God's expression and more the proto-reality of the ideated (ibid, lx). Finally, House and Noone consider the relation of knowledge and causality in *I Sent* explaining that knowledge, and by implication, the *rationes* are necessary, yet they do not make what is known thereby necessary, so that God's foreknowledge can be called contingent according to the continency of its objects—but without any detriment to the necessity of such knowledge on God's part—and such foreknowledge is even denied being a cause at all *as foreknowledge* because it includes some things not caused, such as sin (ibid, lx–lxii). The *rationes*' role as causal or as primordial causes does not enter the discussion. What does loom large in Houser and Noone's view, is that the *rationes*, inasmuch as they are *secundum rem* intrinsic to God hold together yet draw their contingency and multiplicity from without. Of course, when divine power and will are taken into account, the simultaneous infinity and finitude, the necessity and contingency of divine knowledge follow from the divine essence, nevertheless, Noone and Houser approach the facets of the divine essence distinctly according to *I Sent*'s organization, so that causality is only properly considered under the topic of will. A discussion of causal knowing as it will appear in *DSC* q. 2 is, therefore, simply not on their agenda.

[36] Bougerol observed the borrowing from the Areopagite on this point by attention to the particular citations across Bonaventure's career, and concludes that Dionysius suffused Bonaventure's thought, appearing even without explicit citatation, at first doctrinally, and then

None of these studies,however, have focused on the *rationes*' implications for not only Triune life but even the cross's presence therein, that is, their place in the relationship between *Deus aeternus et Deus humanatus*, to use the *Hexaemeron's* terms. That facet, lately developed explicitly late in Bonaventure' career in the *Hexaemeron*—which most of the scholarly accounts of the *rationes aeternae* does not treat as a locus of development but only of restatement—exemplifies the nature of Bonaventure's theological development. His development is not that of a Copernican revolution from one center to another so much as the unfolding of his commitment to the centrality of Christ and Christ's cross that stood at the heart his own understanding Franciscanism: namely, that the cross is not only the vehicle of redemption, but the shape of deification, and more, the historical expression of the form of divinity. That Bonaventure's center is the revelation of the Triune God in the cross of Christ is not borne out from any single direct statement of his later works but rather the interface of his particular

after his magisterial period, particularly shaping his spirituality of *henosis* or deification, see *Bougerol*, 'Saint Bonaventue et le Pesudo-Denys', 113–14. While he recognizes the individual contributions of Dionsysius to Bonaventure's teaching of the *rationes*, Bougerol does not count them among the major Dionsyian facets whereby the Seraphic Doctor was furnished a 'spirit, method, and fundamental themes' (ibid., 114–22), except, perhaps, the sapiential character of contemplation introduced in *DSC* q. 7 (Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et le Pseudo-Denys', 52–53, 116; see also Quinn, *The Histoircal Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy,* 415). Although Bougerol does not count Bonaventure's exemplarism as a specifically Dionysius theme, he does regard the citation of *DN* 5.8 in *DSC* q. 2 and 3 as very important in course of Bonaventure's exemplarism and even goes so far to as suggest that his exemplarism is derived from Dionysius (Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et le Pseudo-Denys', 50-51). Regarding the sole appearance of *proodoi* in its sense of a common creative motion of God, found in *DMT* q. 6, a. 1, ad. 1 (5, 100A), Bougerol has nothing substantial to say, only rehearsing Bonaventure's explanation that wisdom can be called mobile because it is present to all things (Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et le Pseudo-Denys', 55–56). In the final regard, for Bougerol, Bonaventure's theology and spirituality join Augustine and Dionysius, along with Anselm, Bernard, and the Victorines—an expression of a monastic theology reanimated by Francis, which of course, brings the cross into sight, yet not in sight of the *rationes* (ibid., 122–23). Guardini, on the topic of the *Ideenlehre*, explains Dionysius' contribution as providing a solution for the God's knowledge of evil and the image of God's goodness as a distributive light, see Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente*, 77–78 and 81–82. Quinn, too, recognizes Dionysius' contribution of the image of light recalling creatures to God, as an approach to creatures that might know God (Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure Philosophy*, 504–6). More recently and very perceptively, Tommaso Manzon has argued that Bonaventure's theological sources are quite widely varied, contrary to earlier assessments that it was principally Augustinian, even if they circulated under Augustine's name, and further, that the theological weight of Dionysius on his corpus must be reassessed, too (*cf.* Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, 68). Manzon's entry point is an assessment of the doctrine of the divine ideas in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, which he uses to argue that Dionysius actually provides a framework for interpreting Augustine and thus indicates an increasing Dionysian commitment and conceptuality in progress of the Seraphic Doctor's career, see Manzon, 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 325–27, 331–32.

points of doctrinal development and spirituality with his numerological and architectural symbolism—symbolism addressed explicitly in the *Hexaemeron*. In it, Bonaventure's treatment of divine wisdom and the *rationes* intimate that the cross-form of divinity, the eternal coincidence of opposites form an intelligible cross that is the very *mundus archetypus*[37] appropriated to the Son and Word. That intelligible cross and *mundus archetypus* accounts for the whole sweep of God's freely willed providence including creation, knowledge, salvation, and deification, And therefore,this eternal archetype is not only the divine foreseeing of the incarnation but a causal likeness of the incarnation, and so even an eternal proto-humanity in its characteristically human joining of every difference—including humanity itself—in itself. In this way, in creation and redemption that comes to fruition on the cross is also the entailment of the "rational freedom" intrinsic to trinitarian act and life.[38] Where Dionysius attributes the *proodoi* substantiating and recalling every degree of created goodness to a common[39] divine *hyperbolē*, Bonaventure sets the world's creation, salvation, and glorification as an exteriorization of intratrinitarian communication through the *rationes*.

[37] The *mundus archetypus* will play a larger role in the second part of this article. While it figures briefly in Boanventure's *Sentences Commentary* and *DSC* it will return in the *Hexaemeron*. Manzon notes that it was treated in the Franciscan *Summa Halensis*, (Tom. II, 1, p. 1, inq. 1, tr. 2, q. 2) and so an idea current in Bonaventure's circle, but more importantly, developed around the convertability of *rationes aeternae*, *ideae*, and God as *exemplar* in such as way that suggested familiarity with the Dionysianism of the School of St. Victor, see Manzon, 'According to Blessed Dionysius', 330–31. Of course, as H. F. Dondaine demonstrated, Hales' intellectual community also had access to the content of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* under the identity of Pseudo-Maximus in the *Corpus Dionysiacum Parisiense*, a family of texts represented in its fullest form by *BnF Lat*. 17341 «Œuvres de s. Denis, double traduction et commentaires», see H. F. Dondaine, *Le Corpus Dionysien de l'Université de Paris Au XIII. Siècle* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1953), 13 and 88. *BnF Lat.* 17341 257ra included among its commentary on *DN* 5, an excerpt from *Periphyseon* 615D–617A that explains *DN* 5.8, but it was placed just a few folios ahead, which identified *causae primordiales*, *ideae*, *species, formae aeternae*, *rationes*, *principalia exempla*, *praedestinationes*, and *voluntates*. In short, the connections between all these terms were long established beginning with Eriugena's own integration of Augustine and Dionysius, and available through multiple routes in thirteenth-century Paris. See also Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente*, 44–45, where he briefly explains the relation of the *Ideenlehre* to the *mundus archetypus* as the *medium* and also identifies its place as freedom in God.

[38] *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 2 (1, 812A-B). Bonaventure early in his career establishes a principle from which he will not depart, that when God acts (or rather causes any effect) simply because he wills to do so, it is not nihilistically irrational, but according to that act's identity to God's own *ratio*, God's interior shape or proportionality, which is expressed in divine wisdom.

[39] *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.14–129.5) teaches the *proodos* and its *proodoi* is common to the whole of divinity, meaning that this *proodos* is not appropriated to a person.

Bonaventure's development beyond Dionysius' account of the *proodoi* by casting God's egress as a birth on the cross—inasmuch as it is the externalization of the intratrinitarian communication through the very *rationes* expressing the shape of the cross—even anticipates modern Trinitarian speculators. This includes Hans Urs von Balthasar's enfolding of God's eternal glory with kenosis, a cruciform glory, and Sergei Bulgakov's sophiology with its positing of an eternal humanity in God.[40] The exact likeness of either modern author's discourse did not, of course, flow from Bonaventure's pen, but when all the facets of the *rationes*, their source, form, and end, are triangulated, the similarities are as compelling as Bonaventure's own vision: that all things are found in God so that they might come to be in God, not according to any capriciousness in God, but according to who God is eternally.

Ultimately, assessing Bonaventure's approximation, appropriation, and adaptation of Dionysian *proodoi*, especially in their particularity, through the *rationes aeternae* discloses his increasing utilization of the Areopagite. His creative synthesizing that held that the goodness at the root of God's tri-personality (the Ricardian lover, beloved, and co-

[40] Hans Urs von Balthasar's wide-ranging theological work has argued that God's eternal glory revealed in Christ, or the *Gestalt* of Christ is itself cruciform in his multi-volume theological aesthetics, *Herrlichkeit,* published in English as seven-volume *The Glory of Lord*. Aidan Nichols summarizes that theology so: 'For the 'ground' appears in the 'gestalt', above all in the moment of the Cross is the love that the Trinity is', see Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 21. Likewise, that eternal glory is further described in the *Theo-Dramatik*, the five-volume *Theo-Drama* in English, which argues that glory has the form of an eternal sacrifice in the life of the Trinity whence the cross not only takes it form in the incarnation, but which also finds creation's role in the divine fruition, see Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar*, 70–78. Sergius Bulgakov proposes that the incarnation of Christ was is no way an act violence to either the human or divine nature because the divine person of the Son has, in a manner of speaking, always been human, not incarnate, but as the proto-image of humanity because of the Son's, the *Logos*' connection with *Sophia*, which holds in itself all creatures in potencies or ideas, including the providence of the incarnation, and which is therefore, the Son's 'eternal divine-humanity', while on the other hand, humanity is such that it has always awaited the incarnation to truly be itself, and so has always borne in itself a certain divinity in anticipation of the incarnation, see Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. B. Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 182–92. Like Balthasar, Bulgakov also identifies God's eternal glory with the internal form of *kenosis*, an intrinsic Trinitarian offering of worship that is disclosed in the mysteries of Christ's life, and for an overview of Balthasar and Bulgakov's similarities on these points, see also Katy Leamy 'A Comparison of the Kenotic Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Sergei Bulgakov' (PhD Dissertation, Marquette University, 2012). The perspectives of Balthasar and Bulgakov, which I argue Bonaventure anticipates in his own account of Wisdom, will also be useful in the second part to frame Bonaventure's unfolding the relationship of freedom and necessity in God's *liberal* and not *natural* act of creation, and his accounting of creation's relation to God's eternal fruition in the *Hexaemeron*, see especially Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 120–21; Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar*, 70–78; Leamy, 'A Comparison of the Kenotic Trinitarian Theology', 22.

beloved) is just the same extended when goodness, as Dionysius taught, goes forth to all, retaining its embeddedness in the person of the triune God. Moreover, insofar as that same extension of Trinitarian goodness is stretched out in the shape of the cross, Bonaventure transforms the Dionysian principle that even the lowest is precontained[41] by God and the most unlike images are the highest images of God,[42] into a revelation of the abyss of triune life where the source of divine humility is in God's glory.

Bonaventure's ultimate development of the *rationes* did not appear *de novo*, but as the integration of several doctrines elaborated over his career. Above I outlined three stages in this development, an earlier period in the *Sentences Commentary*, next the embrace of Dionysius and greater experimentation with the *rationes*, and a final development of the *rationes* in their cruciformity. This article will chart a course from the first to second moments in its first part in the present volume, and from the second to third moment in its second part in the next volume.

The first part will follow the early into the middle period, beginning with very brief preliminary considerations of the role of goodness in Dionysius' *proodoi* and in Bonaventure's early thought. Then it will examine Bonaventure's uses of the *rationes* to explain divine knowledge and causality to show his gradual embrace of the *shape*, but not terminology, of Dionysius' *proodos*. First, I will explain how the *rationes* and their synonyms his *Commentary on the First Book of the Sentences* (*I Sent*) are identified as the instances of divine cognition and as exemplary forms of things, and then how the use of *rationes* in the discussion of creation his *Commentary on the Second Book of the Sentences* (*II Sent*) identifies them more closely with efficient causality. Those uses of the *rationes* will serve as the backdrop against which Bonaventure's embrace of Dionysius and the doctrinal development of causal knowing that amounts to a virtual procession in *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* (*DSC*) will be more easily demonstrated. The first part will conclude with a consideration of how Bonaventure's two senses of *similitudo*, epistemically available likenesses (which the *rationes* are) and then likeness to God by grace,

[41] *DN* 4.3 697A (*CD* 1, 146.6–12); 4.8 708D (*CD* 1, 153.4–9); *DN* 7.2 869A–B (*CD* 1, 196.8–197.2); *DN* 13.3 980B (*CD* 1, 228.3–6); *Ep.* 9.5 1112B–D (*CD* 2, 204.8–205.7).

[42] *CH* 2.5 145A (*CD* 2, 15.19–21).

point towards an integration of these senses in the works that would follow, especially the *Hexaemeron*.

The second part will then follow the middle period's creativity into the final expression of the *rationes* in the *Hexaemeron*. It will begin by showing how Bonaventure's virtual procession paved the way for him to affirm the language of *processus* in the Dionysian sense to mean a creative egress and the providential coming of Christ. Then it will turn to *On The Reduction of the Arts to Theology* (*De Reductione*) as the beginning of the more creative uses of the *rationes*, where the *rationes* are understood to seek to belong to creation for the sake of creation of completion as a form of egress. The bulk of the second part will examine the elements of the more creative position to argue that Bonaventure's account of the birth of the *rationes* from divine wisdom is an account of the birth of God insofar as the eternal divine fruition is extended through the cross, which gathers all things into God by God's standing outside God so that all may stand within God. My arguement will begin with *Hexaemeron* 20, where the image of birth in the suffering in the flesh is introduced but will then proceed to examine the earlier sections of the *Hexaemeron* to explain that this birth from Wisdom names the externalization of a cruciformity that belongs to the divine Wisdom expressing that divine essence in the Trinity. I will demonstrate that the *Hexaemeron* argues, albeit diffusely, that God goes forth as both the agent and subject of providence expressed by the *rationes* because God is essentialy identical with that providence. Thereafter the second part will conclude with a brief review of Bonaventure's distinction from and appropriation of the Dionysian doctrine of the *proodoi* that reaffirms the Seraphic Doctor's knowledge of the doctrine, his apparent reticence to speak of it, and his ultimate embrace of it in a Franciscanized, cruciform mode that anticipated modern trinitarian speculators.

Preliminaries: Divine Goodness and Divine Egress

To effectively compare Bonaventure's account God's intrinsic causal act *ad extra*[43] through the *rationes aeternae* to Dionysius' divine *proodoi*

[43] As *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 3 (1, 812A) explains, the effect of God's will goes forth, but the act itself does not, in Bonavnture's understanding: 'Prout tamen dicit progressum effectus ab ipso. quamvis actus non egrediatur extra, tamen res egrediuntur, et ideo dicit respectum ad extra.'

in the *CD*, I will first lay out in this preliminary section a) the criteria for comparison from the Areopagite, b) Bonaventure's fundamental position that creation's *purpose* and the *manner* of God's will to create refer primarily, like Dionysius, to God's goodness, c) that Bonaventure always admitted an egress of *creation of* from God, and d) a preliminary comparison of the *logoi* and *rationes*. The first provides an instrument for analysis. The second establishes a background that sets any of Bonaventure's divergent positions or expressions within the view of a more fundamental agreement preventing overexaggerated differences from Dionysius. The third clarifies that it is the notion and language of a *divine* motion or externalization that is at issue and not motion from or out of God more broadly. The fourth highlights the narrower likenesses and differences between *rationes* and *logoi*, attending especially to Bonaventure's initial avoidance of *egressso* as to provide a point of reference for Bonaventure's development throughout this article, but especially in its final form as it will be explained in the second part.

To the first, the elements of Dionysius' conceptual constellation that belong to the common creative *proodoi* (setting aside the fullest meaning that includes Christ's *philanthropia* in and through the hierarchies[44]) which have been mentioned above, are as follows:

1. The divine super-goodness (sometimes just called goodness) is the source and principle of God's causal goodness which is the *proodos* itself and is the principle of all *proodoi* therein.[45]
2. Divine egress as *proodos* is an ecstasy of God from God entailed by the superabundance or overflow of that super-goodness.[46]

While Bonaventure will after two decades arrive at the birth of the ideas, he will never abandon the intrinsicity of the act of will, for in God's act of willing, his act of loving, he first loves himself, an act of self-reversion which is, of course, expressed in the Holy Spirit, who is called the *nexus* of the Father and Son, and to whom Bonaventure appropriated goodness and love.

[44] *DN* 2.6 644C–D (*CD* 1, 130.5–13).

[45] *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.14–129.3); DN 3.1 680B (CD 1, 138.1-4) ; DN 11.6 956A-B (CD 1, 223.4-7); Ep. 2.1 1069A (CD 2, 158.7-11). For an explanation of the superlative language of God as beyond source and beyond goodness, see John Jones, "Introduction" in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology [italicize], trans. and ed. John Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), 15-16.

[46] *DN* 4.10 (*CD* 1, 155.17–20) 708B; *DN* 1.4 593A (*CD* 1, 115.6–18); *DN* 4.13 712A (*CD* 1, 158.19); *DN* 4.13 712B (*CD* 1, 159.9–20); *DN* 5.8 824C (*CD* I, 188.6); *DN* 9.2 909C (*CD 1*, 208.8–17).

3. Divine egress is a multiplication and manifestation of the untity of the hidden God according to God's effects that are precontained in God as a knowledge beyond mind that knows as causing.[47]
4. Divine egress entails neither alteration nor diminution in God.[48]
5. The *proodoi* are the impartation of God to those effects upon whom they depend.[49]
6. The participation of God is necessary for those effects to actually be what they are in as much as they are, even in the case of non-beings which yet participate the good.[50]
7. There is a likeness or similitude between God and creatures such that every creature names God both according to its particularity and the genera to which it belongs (being, living, knowing, etc.).[51]
8. The divinization of the creature is the goal of the *proodos*.[52]
9. The *proodoi* do not entail a confusion of God and the creature.[53]

Stated succinctly and integrally, God's *proodos* (i.e. God's goodness) is a function of God's more-than-goodness; it is the divine egress or ecstasy as an impartation of God as cause to each creature in a manner according to its nature, which from the side of the creature is the participation constitutive of the creature.[54] It is, moreover, a doubly communicative more-than-goodness, communicating not only existence or reality to all things (ontologically) according to the nature of each, but also beckoning them to union with God (teleologically, both

[47] *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.16–17); *DN* 2.6 644C–D (*CD* 1, 130.5–13); *DN* 2.11 649B (*CD* 1, 135.14–136.1); *DN* 5.6 820C–821A (*CD* 1, 184.17ff).; *DN* 7.2 869A–B (*CD* 1, 196.8–197.2); *DN* 9.5 912D (*CD* 1, 210.6–11); *DN* 9.5 913B (*CD* 1, 211.10–13); *DN* 13.3 980B (*CD* 1, 228.3–6).

[48] *DN* 2.11 649B–C (*CD* 1, 136.1–5); *DN* 9.2 909C (*CD 1*, 208.8–17); *DN* 9.4 912B (*CD* 1, 209.11–14); *DN* 9.5 913B (*CD* 1, 211.10–13); *DN* 10.2 937B (*CD* 1, 215.8–13).

[49] *DN* 2.11 649B (*CD* 1, 135.14–136.1); *DN* 9.2 909C (*CD* 1, 208.8–17).

[50] *DN* 8.5 892C–D (*CD* 1, 202.6–14); *DN* 9.5 912D (*CD* 1, 210.6–11).; *DN* 11.6 953B–956B (*CD 1*, 221.13–223.14)

[51] *DN* 1.6 596A–C (*CD* 1, 118.2–119.9); *DN* 2.3 640B–C (*CD* 1, 125.13–18); *DN DN* 9.5 912D–913B (*CD* 1, 210.11–211.6).

[52] *DN* 2.11 949C–D (*CD* 1, 136.13–17); *DN* 8.5 892C–D (*CD* 1, 202.20–23); *DN* 9.5 912D (*CD* 1, 210.6–11).

[53] *DN* 2.5 644A–B (*CD* 1, 129.9–11); *DN* 2.11 649B–652A (*CD* 1, 136.1–137.7). While there is no confusion of God and the creature, Jones also notes that inasmuch as God there is both a unity (the proodoi) and differentiation in the divine manifestation, just as there is a divine unity (one more-thanessence) and differentiaion (the Trinity of persons) in the divine hiddenness, that differentiation of the divine difference is the multiplicity of caused creatures, the otherness which God causes as God. In short, their not being God is the manifestation of God in and as them, see Jones, 27-40.

[54] *DN* 4.4 697C–700A (*CD* 1, 147.4–148.8); *DN* 12.3 969C–972A (*CD* 1, 225.4–13).

noetically and erotically) beyond that nature, like the returning motion of a circle.[55] In a word or two, by his *proodos* God *speaks to* creatures by speaking to God *as creatures*. Granting that this constellation describes the general shape of the *proodoi*, or at least the facets elaborated principally in the *DN*, it offers a measure against which Bonaventure's doctrine of the *rationes* can be compared.

To the second point, near the end of *I Sent* and in the first distinction of the *II Sent*, Bonaventure establishes that God's goodness is the root of creation. Distinction 45 of *I Sent* teaches that God's creative act follows from God's goodness and not some other attribute (e.g. eternity or power), because goodness is both self-diffusive and the end of all things (*propter quod*), and thereby goodness is the *ratio* of willing as *liberal*.[56] He cites Dionysius to explain that the act of willing, especially the fundamental divine willing, is the turning of goodness upon itself (*reflectere*) that supplies simultaneously the source and end for creation.[57] Hence, quoting Dionysius, the divine goodness, which creates, is the divine *amor*, a 'certain eternal cycle, from the highest good (*optimus*), through highest good, and unto the highest good'.[58] That logic of the cycle, that will as goodness, is both the source and end and gives Bonaventure his answer when he asks in the *II Sent* whether creation is more principally for the glory and praise of God or the benefit of creatures: it is for the glory of God by glorifying creatures.[59] While God's glory does not depend on and is not increased by creatures, nevertheless, the communication and manifestation of God's glory cannot occur apart from creation.[60] Bonaventure stops short of saying that God was bound to manifest and communicate his glory, yet that communicativeness accords with the diffusiveness of God's goodness, and in turn implies creation, not because of a lack on God's part, but

[55] *DN* 4.4 700A–B (*CD* 1, 148.8–18); *DN* 4.7 701C–704A (*CD* 1, 151.5–17); *DN* 4.14 712C–713A (*CD*, 160.1–18); *DN* 9.9 916C–D (*CD* 1, 213.7–20).

[56] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1 (1, 804A–B) explains that humans cannot enunciate God's simple infinity but must approximate it under a multiplicity of modes congruent to our intellect, resulting in the human need to associate certain divine acts and attributes, and powers.

[57] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1 (1, 804A). The notion of good reflecting upon itself appears to have come from Thomas Gallus *Explanatio* on *DN* 4.14, who described the nature of divine love, see Evan King, 'Eriugenism in Berthold of Moosburg's Expositio Super Elementationem Theologicam Procli', in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 1, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 22 (Brill, 2019), 408–9.

[58] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1 (1, 804B–805A). See

[59] *II Sent* d. 1, p. 2, a. 2, q. 1, conc. and ad. 4 (2, 44B–45B).

[60] *II Sent* d. 1, p. 2, a. 2, q. 1, conc. and ad. 3 (2, 44B–45A).

entirely because goodness is, in itself, a diffusive source and end, and utterly *free*.[61] Indeed God has created freely but resolutely because God is good, and anything less than the benefit and beatitude and glory of the creature would not be to communicate in accord with God's own goodness. Therefore, God's goodness and glory *ad extra* is drawn from and for God's goodness and glory *ad intra*.[62] By God's will, which is goodness, and so ordered to Glory,[63] all things are caused to be, are caused individually and immediately.[64]

To the third point, Bonaventure identifies the creation of each and every thing as an *egress* in a double way, from God (*ex Deo*) and from not-being or nothing (*de nihilo*) to being. Creation's egress is to be understood as the creature coming into being, but specifically from God *as a vestige*, that marks it as an egress—that is marks an originating source of that vestigial likeness.[65] There is also an *exitus* from non-being, insofar as that movement indicates it is a change.[66] Bonaventure would, after the *Sentences Commentary,* occasionally speak of the creature's creation with *procedere*, the verbal form of *processus*.[67] Such egress is understood as a change, and thus is not applied to God as is not the one moved but the source of motion.

To the fourth point, the *rationes aeternae, exemplares*, *ideales*, or under any other appellation, stand in an explanatory role between the willing-goodness of God and the egress of creation. How they explain the relationship of these poles is the matter to which we must now turn, first by looking at them beside Dionysius' *logoi*, for both stand as exemplars in their relative systems. In the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, *DN* 4.10 and 5.8 identify the *paradigmata* or *logoi ouisiopoioi,* the divine exemplars and wills (*thelemata*) that are the more particular providences in the divine progression, as the manner by which God, unto whom all things can be predicated, goes forth to all things not only as Good, Being, Life, and the like, but even as intending every particular.[68] God goes forth to

[61] *II Sent* d. 1, p. 2, a. 2, q. 1, conc. and ad. 3 (2, 44B–45A). See also *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 3 (1, 812B).

[62] *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 2 (1, 812A).

[63] *II Sent* d. 1, p. 2, a. 2, q. 1, conc. (2, 44B).

[64] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 2, conc. (1, 806B–807A).

[65] *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 2 (1, 811B-812A); *II Sent* d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2 (2, 22B); *II Sent* d. 1, p. 2, dub. 2 (2, 36B).; *II Sent* d. 5, dub. 3 (2, 143A–B).

[66] *II Sent* d. 1, p. 1, dub. 4 (2, 38B); *II Sent* d. 2 p. 1, a. 2, q. 2 (2, 64B).

[67] For example, *Breviloquim* 2.8 (5, 223A); *Hexaemeron* 9.24 (5, 376A).

[68] *DN* 4.10 705B–D (*CD* 1, 154.7–22); *DN* 5.2 817A (*CD* 1, 181.20–21); *DN* 5.8 824C (*CD*

all things, thereby bringing to them to being according to the essence of each because God is already each by containing those things in his providence (*pronoia*).[69] These *logoi* describe the multiplicity of the divine procession to each any every creature, and while Dionysius does not speak of these *logoi* as self-existent in the manner of Being, Life, Wisdom, and the other divine names that identify the more general divine *proodoi*, the logic of the *DN*, that one and the same God that goes forth to each in each creature in accord with every way that it exists (as being, and/or living, and/or wise etc.)[70], nothing stands in the way of reading each exemplary *logoi* as a procession, since they specify distinct modes of God's being out of himself (*exō heautou*) by *ekstasis*, *ekbasis*, *hyperbolē*, and even *methē* (drunkenness, itself being '*phrenōn ekstasis*', that is, 'out of mind').[71] Indeed it because the *logoi*, like the more general *proodoi*, are precontained in the divine hiddenness that they are truly the egress of God.

In contrast to that Dionysian notion, Bonaventure, in his early career in Paris, and before fully employing Dionysius' writings on the topic does recognize these exemplars in God, but without any implication of a divine progression in or through them,[72] and nevertheless in a way similar to Dionysius' *logoi*, the particular *rationes aeternae* or *exemplares*—or any of the other terms Bonaventure would call them—express a multiplicity in God's unity and simplicity of essence that has a multiplication of effects. In the *Sentences Commentary*, both *I Sent* and *II Sent*, that multiplication without explicit egress, which might rather be called an *implicit* multiplication as a necessary condition for the *creation*'s egress, is embraced in several points about the *rationes* relevant to the present comparison:

1. The divine *ideae*, the exemplary *rationes* or similitudes (*similitudines*) are eternal and essentially distinct from those things of which they are exemplars.

1, 188.6–10); DN 7.2 869A-C (CD 1, 196.7-197.16); 7.3 869C-D (CD 1, 197.17-198.3); 7.4 872C (CD 1, 198.21-199.3).

[69] *DN* 4.13 712B (*CD* 1, 159.9–20).

[70] *DN* 11.6 (*CD* 1, 221.13ff) 953Bff.

[71] *DN* 4.10 (*CD* 1, 155.17–20) 708B; *DN* 4.13 712A (*CD* 1, 158.19); *DN* 4.13 712B (*CD* 1, 159.9–20); *DN* 5.8 824C (*CD* I, 188.6); *Ep.* 9.5 1112B–D (*CD* 2, 204.8–205.7). See also n. 22 above.

[72] See *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 2 (1, 812A).

2. The *rationes* are essentially identical to God, and so one *secundum rem*, but infinite in number *secundum rationem* by which they each infer a *res*.
3. By the *rationes*, God is an expressive similitude of creatures and creatures are expressed similitudes of God.
4. These *rationes* do not enter into the constitution of those things of which they are exemplars.
5. The exemplars are causal of that of which they are exemplars but not identical with the work of creation, *secundum rationem*, and are identified with Augustine's *primodiales causae*.
6. The exemplary *rationes* are an expression internal to the Trinity.
7. The exemplary *rationes* are expressed in the Word, though God, and function as a quasi-medium between God and creatures.

The *Sentences Commentary*, *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* (*DMT*), and the *Breviloquium* will all agree on these points even as they track Bonaventure's diverse purposes for appealing to the eternal exemplars. However, as Dionysius' teachings are increasingly absorbed by Bonaventure, a virtual procession appears that maintains continuity with the above points on the eternal intrinsic expression and distinction of the exemplary *rationes* from the exemplated *res* while approximating the image of the causal motion of God's departureless approach to creatures of Dionysius' divine *hyperbolē*. In both Dionysius and Bonaventure, divine goodness is the root of creation and creation's reduction to its source, the classic *exitus-reditus* cycle, but in the former the multiplication is God's presence beyond God as constitutive of things; in the latter, an internal multiplicity of ideas is the source of a multiplicity of effects outside, of which the *rationes* are in no way constitutive. In the former, the *logos* of each, also assuming in itself the necessary *proodoi*, is the constitution-without-mingling of each thing, while in the latter the eternity of the *ratio* of each, which in no way enters into the constitution of the creature, is the guarantee of its causal power. The former is creative approach, the latter a transcendent source in God's knowledge. Yet in both in both accounts, the shape and meaning of causality stands at the very center; in the case of Bonaventure, the consideration of causality will drive the development of a conceptual

apparatus adequate not only to his metaphysical principles, but the God revealed in Jesus Christ. And from this beginning we may turn to follow the course to the birth of the ideas.

Eternal Knowledge: Distinguishing the Exemplar aeternum, Rationes *and* Res *in* I Sent

In the first book of Bonaventure's *Sentences Commentary*, which is effectively a doctrine of God, Bonaventure affirms the real distinction between God as the eternal exemplar (note the singular) and that of which God is the exemplar in multiple ways (i.e., all possible and actual things), navigating the scriptural language that says that God is in things and things are in God as he does so. From the internal, intrinsic expression of ideas through the generation of the Son, to all things being in God, and to God being most intimately in creatures, the topics Bonaventure addresses in *I Sent*, especially, in d. 35 and d. 36, both affirm God's intimacy to creatures while avoiding any language of a creative procession or externalization. Yet, simultaneously, The Seraphic Doctor's manner of affirming God's exemplarity and creative power and presence according to God's own goodness through the eternal *rationes* or *similitudines* of creatures results in a doctrine that approaches the general shape of the Dionysian *proodoi* as a divine multiplication with its effects *ad extra* on account of divine goodness, albeit without positing an egress or motion of God even by image or analogy.

First, Bonaventure's treatment of God's knowledge of creatures develops the theoretical underpinnings for discussing God's relation to creatures from the standpoint of God's own eternity and essence. Bonaventure first opposes the opinion that God knows creatures as knowing himself as the cause of creatures (which he takes as a misunderstanding of *DN* 7.2, which states that God does not admit ideas of singular things, but knows according to his singular causal power[73]), by arguing that there are ideas or *rationes* in God by which God knows (*cognosere*) creatures apart from the notion of actually

[73] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, contra 1, conc. and ad. 1 (I, 600B–601B); cf. *DN* 7.2 869C (*CD* 1, 197.10–16). Bonaventure will return to use this passage in his response to *De Scientia Christi* q. 3.

creating, which ideas or *rationes* are reckoned as similitudes.[74] These ideas and *rationes* are what, according to Bonaventure, Augustine called *causae primordiales*.[75] He posits a distinction in God between the *ratio cognoscendi* and the *ratio producendi*, and further, explaines that God does not know distinct things by producing, but produces distinct things because God knows distinct things first (logically, not temporally speaking).[76] This is the distinction, to be discussed below, between divine wisdom and power, that secures the difference between the generation of the Son and the creation of the world. Furthermore, that distinction is a guard that prevents the *ex*-pressive character of divine knowledge from being identified as an immediate externalization in that act of the generation of the Son that would amount to an unacceptable eternal creation in Bonaventure's eyes.

Having made that distinction between knowledge and creation, Bonaventure focuses on the similitudes in God themselves. He explains that God, as the divine Wisdom, is the one similitude of infinite things, of both the infinite possible things and the finite created among them.[77] Yet, with regard to their distinction one from another, there are infinite similitudes of things at the same time that, *realiter*, so that God is this one similitude by which he knows them all in their individuation.[78] The similitude between God and things that God has in mind is not

[74] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. (1, 601A–B).

[75] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. (1, 601A). In Catapano's textual overview of the transcendent senses of the *rationes* in Augustine, he does not count the *causae primordiales* as indicative of the transcendent but rather immanent causes, see Catapano, 'Augustine's Doctrine of the Eternal Reasons', 2. In *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2 (2, 435B–436A) Bonaventure addresses Peter Lombard's discussion of Augustine's ambiguity, and notices the distinction between *rationes causales* and *incommunicablies* in *De Genesi ad litteram* 5 and 5, but does not directly address the use of *causae primordiales* as immanent causes per op. cit. 6.10.17, and likewise of *rationes primordiales* in 6.11.9. Nonetheless, he does recognize the ambiguity of the term *primordiales* in *II Sent*, a nuance not yet developed in *I Sent* that flatly identifies the divine similitudes with *causae primordiales*, indicative of Bonaventure's increasing precision regarding the language of *causes* later in the *Sentences Commentary*.

[76] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. (1, 601A).

[77] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. and ad 2. (1, 601B); *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 2, conc. (1, 605B-606A).

[78] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 2, conc. (1, 605B–606A); *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 3, conc. (I, 608A–B). *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 5, pro 1–2 and conc. (1, 611A and 612A). Bonaventure is more sure on this point than Augustine, who was somewhat reticent to grant *rationes* for each human, while nonetheless conceding that individuals are known in the multitude of humanity known by God in its *ratio*, as Catapano explains from an examination of the *rationes* in Augustine's *Epistula,* see 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier', 26–7, 29. See also, Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente*, 8.

univocal nor does it indicate a participation,[79] as when two (or more) things convene in a common third thing or quality (e.g. roundness shared in balls and organs), since between God and creatures nothing is held in common. Instead, it is a similitude in which one thing is a likeness of another in the manner of an image and its prototype.[80] Thus God is the similitude of creatures (and non-created possibilities), and it follows that all creatures are similitudes of God, not only according to universal forms, but individually.[81] God is the 'truth itself' (*veritas ipsa*) expressing its own perfect knowledge of all that may and will be, and so is the most highly expressive similitude, while creatures are similitudes as distinct truths and are limited imitations of God.[82] Or, to emphasize the difference, because God knows each and every thing, there is an expressive similitude in God, whereas creatures come to knowledge through the reception of an impressed similitude.[83] By way of comparison to the *proodoi*, Bonaventure rejects any extrinsicity in God's *actus purus* just as much as he rejects the admission of any act upon God from the outside, as in the creaturely manner of knowledge or elicited action from an external object.

Next, on account of God's expression *in se* of these infinite similitudes, Bonaventure also accepts that things, both those merely possible and those that do come to be are 'life in God', because, following Augustine, they are all found in the Son who is the *ars Patris*, the art of the Father, 'full of the all reasons of living things'.[84] For Bonaventure, this means that life refers to the presence of the infinity of *rationes* in God, regardless of the eventual coming into being of their referents, or even of their of their nature, so that even non-living things are incorruptible life in God.[85] In *I Sent*, Bonaventure intends this being in God not for things as they have their proper being, but for the *rationes* by which things may have their proper being according to which they are known and exist potentially in God—*two distinct modes*.[86] Thus, in a manner of

[79] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. and ad. 2 (1, 601A–B).
[80] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. (1, 601B).
[81] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. and ad. 2 (I, 601A–B); *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 4, conc. (1, 610A–B).
[82] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 4, conc. (1, 610A–B).
[83] *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, conc. (1, 601B).
[84] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 1, conc. (1, 623B).
[85] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 1, conc and ad. 4 (1, 623B-624B).
[86] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 1, q. 1 conc. (1, 620–621A)

speaking, the *rationes* are in God as cause, particularly according to the appropriations that are frequently mapped to divine causality as power, wisdom, goodness, or as efficient, exemplary, and final cause, and the like.[87] Bonaventure, however, presses further and clarifies that while all things are life in God *as a triple* cause, they cannot be present in simply the same way. God is the producing principle as the expressing exemplar, and as the conserving end, that is as efficient, exemplary, and final cause, or as power, knowledge (*notitia*), and will.[88] As producing, everything is in God *as nothing*, because God creates *from nothing*, and so not as life. Alternatively, as things are conserved by God according to the proper being they actually have, whether being, motion or life, not all things are life in God as a conversing cause.[89] It is only in God as exemplar that all things—whatever they are regardless of whether they come to be—are life, for they are in the exemplar who lives.[90] Thus, Bonaventure does not say that all things *live in God,* but are life itself insofar as they exist in God (*habent esse in deo*), for in God who lives there is the principle of all things without any corruption.[91]

However, Bonaventure clarifies that although one may say things (*res*) exist more truly (*verius*) in God as the eternal exemplar or in the created mind than in their own proper being, it is not strictly true.[92] Since they are in God the exemplar or the created mind by similitude but not in their proper being (*propria entitas*), a thing *more truly exists* in itself than in God because that is the only way it exists, although the mental and divine similitudes are *more noble*.[93] Thus, strictly speaking a thing does not exist in God, but rather a more perfect similitude of that thing and upon which that thing depends—yet this not in any way the creature.

On the other hand, Bonaventure affirms that God is in all creatures by an immediate presence inasmuch as God as immense has no limit, and as most simple is most powerful, so that God's power, which is identical with divine essence, effects everything.[94] Further, no creature

[87] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 1 q. 2, conc. (1, 622B).
[88] *I Sent* d. 36 a. 2, q. 1, conc and ad. 4. (I, 624A-B).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] *I Sent* d. 36 a. 2, q. 1, ad 4. (1, 624B).
[92] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 2, conc. (1, 625B).
[93] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 2, conc. (1, 625B–626A).
[94] *I Sent* d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, conc. (1, 638B–639A).

is the cause of its being, having been created from nothing has in itself only emptiness and possibility, and so must receive its being (*esse*) from another.[95] Thus, there is no creature, no effect, which does not depend entirely upon God who makes the being of the creature (*qui eam fecit esse*).[96] According to the law that the cause is present in the effect through causation, God is present in all things as Truth, that which makes things what they truly are.[97] It is for this reason, looking back to the question of whether all things are life in God, that in a manner of speaking the divine exemplar can be said to be *truer* than the exemplated, because it is the causative truth.[98]

Finally, in *I Sent*, the notion of similitudes in God is, quite naturally, connected with the Son as the Word, by whose generation all that the Father (and Spirit) knows is expressed.[99] For the Son as Word is an imitative similitude of the Father (a perfect imitation, unlike the creature's imitation of God) but an *exemplative similitude* and an *operative similitude* towards creatures. The latter two, however, are not so in the manner of an act, as if the generation of the Son were absolutely identical with the act of creation, but as the dispositive habit unto creation. Through this double similitude, towards the Father and creation—a doubling that embraces both modes of similitude seen in both sides of the world's relation to God, (i.e., exemplation and imitation)—the Son is not only to be named the 'Power and Wisdom of God'—Power as operative, but Wisdom as exemplative—but also a quasi-medium[100] between God and creatures.

From these elements alone that address divine exemplarity in *I Sent*, a broad similarity to the creative *proodos* of Dionysius can be affirmed in Bonaventure's early thought, lacking only the element of divine externalization or 'overflow' and the specific language of God going forth in common (and not, say, in the missions) and the element of the more intimate relation of knowledge and causality. For Dionysius explains that the attribution of motion to God (or three motions) and the divine *proodos* names God's bringing-to-being and sustaining

[95] *I Sent* d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, conc. (1, 639A).
[96] Ibid.
[97] *I Sent* d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, pro 2 (1, 638A).
[98] *I Sent* d. 36 a. 2, q. 1, conc. (1, 624A).
[99] *I Sent* d. 27, a. unic, q. 2, conc. (1, 485B).
[100] *I Sent* d. 27, a. unic, q. 2, conc. (1, 485B). The Son is a quasi–medium because creation is not necessitated but only disposed in the generation of the Son.

and gathering-into-one-in-God of all beings by the 'providential processions (*proodoi*) and energies',[101] in those words recalling God's procession not only according to the broadly encompassing names but also the 'more particular providence' of the paradigmatic *logoi*.[102] Put simply, God's *proodos* is creation in all genera and particulars. In Bonaventure's sharp differentiation between the *rationes* as similitudes and creatures, God's creative act *ad extra* must not to be confused with the intrinsic expression of the *rationes aeternae* while God's presence to and in creatures as cause may be understood as an approach towards creatures assuming yet distinguishable from the expression of the *rationes*. For as reading *I Sent* d. 35–37 with 45 highlights, the *rationes* are not appropriated to the will (d. 35–37), which alone is properly causal of creatures because the will joins efficacy to end. If that willing is God's causal approach to *res*, the expression of the *rationes* whereby all things exist in God must be carefully delineated, otherwise, it would seem that an impossible infinity of res would be positively willed.[103] And yet, Bonaventure recognizes that the divine intellection of *res* does not precede the willing in the order of time, nor are the two separated or without respect to each other.[104] Furthermore, although any notion

[101] *DN* 9.9 916C–D (*CD* 1, 213.7–20). The circularity of explanation is not lost on the author of this article. Dionysius describes the *proodos* as an act of creation through the providential *proodoi*. It might best be taken as simply the divine motion of procession being accomplished in every aspect of its particularity.

[102] See n. 22, above.

[103] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, conc. (1, 804B) where Bonaventure distinguishes the divine intellect whereunto the *rationes* are appropriated from the will whereby some are caused: '…ideo multis modis intelligimus Deum et diversis nominibus exprimimus; et secundum quod per illos modos intelligimus, plura enuntiamus, ita quod Deo aliquid attribuimus secuudum unum modum, quod uon secundum alium, et vere quidem, quia omnia in Deo habent veram existentiam Et ideo cum alio modo intelligamus Deum, cum dicimus Demn bonum, alio, cum dicimus Deum aeternum; concedimus, eum se diffundere, quia bonus est, non quia aeternus; haec enim est proprietas bonitatis, non durationis. Hinc est, quod cum intelligimus, vere voluutatem esse in Deo, et proprietas voluntatis sit producere ea quae exeunt per modum liberalitatis , quod dicimus, Deum, in quantum voluntas est, esse causam rerum'. Furthermore, in *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 8 (1, 813B), Bonaventure contrasts the plurality of the *ideata* with the singularity of the divine will, rejecting, at this point, and in noteworthy contrast to *DSC* q. 2's quotation of *DN* 5.8, predication *voluntates* to God

[104] *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, ad. 4. (1, 805B): 'Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod Deus non est agens praeconcipiens; dicendum, quod hoc verum est de praecogitatione, quae praecedit voluntalem, sed non est verum de preconceptione respectu operis. Et primo modo loquitur Dionysius: ipse vero opponit secundo modo'. Bonaventure had also explained earlier that in the order of causality, will follows power and knowledge and proceeds to making, which is the recapitulation of or reduction to power (*I Sent* d. 2, dub 2 [1, 614A–B]) and that divine knowledge, in its simultaneity with will, can be named not only science or wisdom in respect to God's self knowledge but in respect to creatures, so that God's knowledge of events is named *prescientia*, of effects *providentia*, and so on with other names naming God's knowledge of willed effects (*I Sent* d. 2,

of the participation of *res* in their similitudes or *rationes* as such is eschewed, a sense of divine multiplication in the generation of the Word, which is also the expression of an infinity of possibilities, and also in the multiplicity of effects, is not absent from *I Sent*.

Thus, what remains to distinguish Bonaventure from Dionysius' *proodoi*, ultimately is the notion of a divine externalization *through* the exemplars or even in the manner of the more general divine names, which are participable causes of creatures and, further, that divine knowledge is interior to this causal exteriorization. That Bonaventure drew a sharp notional line between the exemplars or similitudes as *representative of creatures* and God's creative act, although essentially one, marks the most definitive difference from the Dionysian *proodoi* and signals a wariness to introduce explicit language of a divine 'overflowing' and 'egress' that defines the continuity-in-transcendence presented in the *Divine Names*. Bonaventure's insistence continues through his career as a university theologian at Paris, but it also makes his ultimate relenting all the more noticeable.

Eternal Causes: *Distinguishing* Rationes *from* Causae *in* II Sent

Bonaventure's answers to *I Sent*'s questions can be marshalled into the lineaments of the Dionysian *proodos*. For Bonaventure's *rationes*-as-*causae primordiales* in their *paradigmatic particularity* as God's effective providential presence for creatures through the eternal ideas (or *rationes*) together with God's creating love (will) and power approximate the multiform efficacy of Dionysius' more general *proodoi* and God's specific intention in the more particular providences in the *logoi*. Yet that approximation in *I Sent* underscores all the more how Bonaventure keeps the *rationes* and God's actual will and its consequent act of creation neatly distinguished while avoiding any language of divine egress.

The strict delineation of the *rationes* from the divine will would not hold forever. In *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2 he analyses Augustine's *causae*

dub 2 [1, 614B–615A]). Finally, by their interrelation with will, Bonaventure recognizes power and will as habitually causal compared to the will's actual causality, see *1 Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, ad. 2 (1, 805A–B).

primordiales and *rationes causales* from *De genesi littera* 6,[105] not as methods of God's knowledge as in *I Sent* d. 35, but to explain the created and uncreated causes of and in creation without confusion. Where Augustine's own ambiguity could have supported a divine egress as is found in Dionysius, Bonaventure tidied the ambiguity in his scholastic workshop. As Bonaventure distinguished his teaching from his predecessor's, he states his resistance to any language of a divine externalization. Nevertheless, this question also marks an advance towards virtual procession, since where *I Sent* d. 35, a. q. 1–6 treated the *rationes*-as-*causae* principally under divine *cognitio* or knowledge,[106] *II Sent* d. 18, following Augustine, locates the *rationes causales* in the hiddenness of the divine will without any apparent plurification of the *rationes* beyond that *secundum rem*, and so anticipates Bonaventure's resolution of the divine knowing and willing in causing that would appear in *DSC*.

His chief purpose, as noted, in *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2 is to disambiguate Augustine's location of eternal causes both in God (*insertae Deo*) and in creatures (*insertae rebus*) by developing a schema for all the senses Augustine (should have!) had in mind.[107] Here, Bonaventure's discussion offers scholastic clarity between created and uncreated causes and *rationes*, resulting in a schema that designates the ideas' directive rather than effective causality, but attributes efficacy to God without a specification (at least in d. 18, a. 1, q. 2). Indeed, in its clarity, where Augustine's *ideas* and *causae* were identified with *rationes* in Albertus Magnus' own commentary on *I Sent* d. 18, Bonaventure differentiates them. Importantly, Bonaventure's question includes no explicit reference to *exemplaria* (a translation of Dionysius' *paradigmata*) nor any citation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, though he was obviously familiar with it on

[105] *De genesi littera* 6.10.17 and 6.14.15 show *causae primordiales* and *rationes causales* respectively. For comparison the logocentrism of the other references to *rationes* in *De genesi littera*, see Catapano, 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier', 19–21. Catapano's approach is to refer only to the transcendent sense of *rationes*, equivalent to the divine ideas, and so he elected to pass by the references in Book 6, treating them as immanent causes in a thing (Ibid., 2). Catapano faced just the same situation as Bonaventure nearly eight centuries earlier, namely the need to distinguish between transcendent and immanent causes in Augustine.

[106] *I Sent* d. 35 uses the language of *scientia* sparingly, except in the *dubia*, but *cognoscere* and its cognates frequently, however it is clear from the context and a salient usage that *cognitio* underlies divine *scientia* (*I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 5, pro 5 [1, 611B]).

[107] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, Ad. 6 (2, 437A–B).

account of its citation elsewhere in that tome and in *I Sent*. Thus, it does not appear at this point in his career that Dionysius openly impacts his teaching on the divine ideas and their causality.[108]

Bonaventure's clarification of his commitments regarding eternal exemplars tussles with Augustine's terminology in *De Genesi littera*: *causae* and *rationes primordiales* and *seminales*—and other distinctions—what do they mean and how to they differ? The question of whether Eve was formed from Adam's side according the *rationes seminales* (the answer is no, except in a broad sense) affords Bonaventure the opportunity to examine the meaning and difference of Augustine's terminology. He follows Albert the Great's own commentary on the same distinction, as he is wont to do. Both scholastics faced Augustine's lexical imprecision a with weary-but-dutiful tidying of terms.[109] But where Albert pitched the primordial causes as a broad tent for Augustine's *rationes* and *causae*,[110] terminologically speaking, Bonaventure insisted on stricter distinctions.

Bonaventure outlines a schema built upon three distinctions to explain Augustine's multiplication of names:

1. *Causae* and *rationes causales* are to be distinguished from each other as intending different meanings.
2. *Causa* names a productive principle, while a *ratio causalis* names a principle directive (*regula*) of that production.
3. Both may name an *extrinsic* or *intrinsic* principle.
4. Both may name an *uncreated* or *created principle* [111]

[108] See Manzon, 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 325–27.

[109] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436 A). *II Sent* d. 18; Albertus Magnus, *Super II Sententiarum*, II, d. 18, a. 7, conc. (Borgnet vol. 27, 322A). Bonaventure remarks that it is most necessary but not at all easy to distinguish the meaning of these ambiguous names, while Albert laments that because Augustine provided the names without any distinction, many writers have multiplied the meanings but not in any harmonious way, but that he will skip all those interpretations and give an explanation in accord with the names.

[110] Albertus Magnus, *Super II Sententiarum*, II, d. 18, a. 7, conc. (Borgnet vol. 27, 322A–323B). Albert treats the primordial causes as having several meanings. First and according to itself, it names the *idea* in the divine mind that relates to everything ideated, be they wonderful/miraculous (*mirabilia*) or natural, hidden in God from eternity. But there is also a second sense, itself subdivided to name all those causes in creation universally (*inditae primae conditioni rerum*) from the beginning necessary for all further generation (i.e. *causales rationes, causae naturales, causae seminales*), or particularly as the causes need for each thing to come to be from what preceded it.

[111] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436 A–B).

Bonaventure explains with comparison to these general distinctions and names, that the particular terms *semen* and *rationales seminales* name intrinsic, created principles, allowing the more general names, although technically descriptive of all causes and rationes, to be applied to the uncreated *causae* and *rationes*, resulting in the following schema:

1. *Causa* names an extrinsic, uncreated productive principle.
2. *Ratio causalis* names an extrinsic, uncreated principle directive of production.
3. *Semen* names a created and intrinsic productive principle.
4. *ratio seminalis* names a created and intrinsic principle directive of production.[112]

With his conceptual framework laid, Bonaventure supplies a further terminological identification along the created/uncreated divide, stepping aside entirely from the discussion of causes, but only *rationes* for the rest of his response. It is here that Bonaventure identifies the *rationes causales* with the ideas, the similitudes of *I Sent*, which are by way of a negative implication consistent with *I Sent* not as effective causes but as exclusively directive principles:

> Furthermore, the rule of the uncreated agent is the exemplary form (*forma exemplaris*) or ideal form (*forma idealis*), but the rule of the created agent is the natural form (*forma naturalis*). And so *rationes causales* are ideal or exemplary forms, but *rationes seminales* are natural forms.[113]

Lexicographically, that clarification's identification of *forma exemplaris* with *rationes* anticipates the term *rationes exemplares* before Bonaventure would employ it in his discussion of the *exemplaria* from Saracen's translation of *paragigmata* of *DN* 5.8 in *DSC* q. 2 and 3 (see below) and, further, provides it a baseline meaning for comparison inasmuch as *forma exemplaris* names an uncreated directive principle.

[112] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436A–B).

[113] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436B): 'Regula autem agentis increati est forma exemplaris sive idealis, regula vero agentis creati est forma naturalis: et ita rationes causales sunt formae ideales sive exemplares , rationes vero seminales sunt formae naturales'.

Metaphysically speaking, Bonaventure's analytical axe falls on any ambiguity spanning the created-uncreated divide that might occur in any historically closer treatment of the *rationes* drawn from Augustine's writings. As Bonaventure wrestles with Augustine's language, he devises a fourfold distinction within the uncreated and created *rationes* derived from his earlier division of *cause* and *rationes*, wherein he locates the *primordiales*, not causes (departing from Albert), but *rationes*. He explains that there are two sorts of uncreated *rationes*: *primordiales* and *causales*. Both are God's will to bring creatures into being, creatures that have an absolute dearth of capacity to do so themselves, but they are in no way intrinsic or interior to and so not constitutive of creatures nor even of those creatures' participation in God.[114] Furthermore, these uncreated *rationes* and *causae* are identical *secundum rem*, i.e. because they are God, but distinct *secundum rationem*. Their distinction lies in this: the *rationes primordiales* are said with respect to God as the source as first principle, *rationes causales* with respect to God as the end of all things as the cause of causes, effectively, as Alpha and Omega. Although Bonaventure would eventually leave the language of *rationes praemordiales* to the side,[115] the boundless inclusivity of the uncreated *rationes*, their function as Alpha and Omega would continue to be developed, as I will show in the second part with respect to the *De Reductione* and *Collationes in Hexaemeron*.

The created *rationes seminales* and *naturales* are likewise one *secundum rem*, but distinguished differently, not by direction, but by specificity. The *rationes seminales* are the potencies in matter (and all creatures so constituted) to be the source of any further product or effect (an *ex quo*)—as snakes from the rod of Pharaoh's magicians—but the *rationes naturales* are the power in creatures to produce effects in accord with their natures (an *a quo*) as in the production of offspring—as one tree from another.[116] They are not, therefore, identified with

[114] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436A)

[115] The term *rationes primordiales* would reappear once in the *Breviloquium* to explain the resurrection of the body as not resulting from any created principle (see *Breviloquium*, 7.6 [5, 287A–B]), but from God alone.

[116] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436 B–437A). First, *rationes primordiales* and *causales* are one and the same (*secundum rem*), kept (*servari*) in God's own eternal will, and refer to God as the first principle (thus, *primordial*) and as final end as the '*causa causarum*', that for which all else comes to be (thus *causales*). These *ideal* and *exemplary* reasons are thus naught but the dispositions of the divine will. Second, each *ratio seminalis* and *naturalis* is likewise one and the same (again, *secundum rem*) in each thing. As *seminal*, such a reason name inchoate and intrinsic power in a creature (*virtus*) to produce an effect (*ex quo*), but as *natural*, in that it names the capacity of an agent to produce an effect like or in accord with itself (*a quo*).

the perfective form or formal cause or nature, but directive principles looking to the unfolding of history, not only naturally, but in accord with divine providence. Ultimately, Bonaventure's completion of his classification of the *rationes* solidifies his strict objection that uncreated *rationes* in no way enter the constitution or capacities of creatures.

There is no expressed sense in *II Sent* d. 18, a. 2, q. 1 in which the *rationes* or *formae primordiales*, *exemplares,* and *ideales* constitute a progression towards creatures in the manner of a divine *ekbasis* or *hyperbolē*, nor a continuity-in-transcendent difference in the manner of *DN* 2.11's articulation of God's remaining-and-self-imparting to all things as Being and Being-beyond-Being. The divine will and the powers of creatures sit on either side of *ex nihilo*'s chasm. Nevertheless, every effect in creation depends upon *rationes causales*, which are guarded in the depth of God's own will and the 'exigency of the eternal disposition'. Every effect of natural power to generate operates through either the *ratio naturalis* insofar it makes something like unto its subject, or the *ratio seminalis* insofar at it has the potency in itself and in another to cause an effect at all, which both depend on the *rationes causales*. Other effects, such as the multiplication of loaves, depend upon obediential potency in matter in concert with the eternal divine disposition of the *rationes causales*. And other effects still, such as creation *ex nihilo* (and in the *Breviloquium*, the resurrection), depend on the divine disposition alone. Thus, there is no created effect that does not trace back to the *rationes causales*. But whereas the *rationes seminales* and *naturales* are accounted *virtutes*, directive powers in creatures, the *rationes causales* are not termed *virtutes* qua *rationes*, and certainly not in creatures. While Bonaventure understands Augustine to use *rationes causales* to name powers in creatures in some instances, that is not the sense that he himself intends.[117]

In sum, in *II Sent* d. 18, where Bonaventure could have used Augustine's ambiguous location of the *causae primordials* to justify some manner of divine egress, he swiftly cuts off that possibility. Moreover, having distinguished *causae* from *rationes*, Bonaventure avoids any discussion of *causae primordiales* at all, circumventing the ambiguity altogether with his new schema. The uncreated *rationes*

[117] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, Ad. 6 (2, 437 A–B).

primordiales and *causales* are directive principles, but the application of any language of cause or *virtus* to them is avoided by the Seraphic doctor. Yet, they accord with God's will and are directive of nature and salvation history, the pattern for every creature and miracle (creation, the making of Eve, etc.), and express God as source and end of all things. Such are the divine ideas by *II Sent*. Bonaventure's language and doctrinal approach to the uncreated *rationes*, the imitative similitudes that are *directive* of creation, however, would draw even nearer to the logic of Dionyius' *proodos*. For while Bonaventure's understanding of divine presence to creatures is a matter of God's effective power in the *Sentences Commentary*—a power not explicitly attributed to the *similitudes* or ideas as *rationes*—the later discussions of these uncreated *rationes* would treat them as causes, and not circumscribed to the will, but as in an integral causal knowing.

Enter Dionysius: Causal Knowledge and Virtual Procession in De Scientia Christi

Bonaventure returns to the topic of uncreated *rationes* in his *Questiones Disputatae De Scientia Christi* (*DSC*), the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, in 1254 only a few years after working out the meaning of *causae* and *rationes* with reference to Augustine's *De Genesi Littera* in the *Sentences Commentary*.[118] However, in this foray, he joins the Dionysian perspective, even preferentially,[119] to the Augustinian perspective, resulting in a more explicitly causal account of the *rationes* and divine knowledge, assuming the voluntariness of true causality into the *rationes* themselves.[120] His explanation of the *rationes* occurs primarily in two questions: whether God knows creatures through

[118] For the dating, see Hayes, 'Introduction', 41–2.

[119] Manzon argues that Bonaventure actually 'grafts Augustine onto Dionysius, and this not only with respect to what concerns contemplation and mystical theology' and provides the metaphysical context to understand Augustine, see Manzon 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 327, 331–32, 345–47.

[120] Vater points out that Bonaventure's account of the divine ideas or *rationes* was concerned with causality from its beginning in *I Sent* d. 35, see Vater, 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 61. Yet he himself notes that in the earlier account: 'we can see that truth is emphasized …. Ideas are defined completely in terms of their cognitive role for God. Exemplarity is present, but only as a motive for positing divine ideas. When it comes to the ideas themselves, we can explain them completely without reference to exemplarity'. (ibid., 65). That early account was one in which, compared to *DSC*, the full vision of the *rationes* as causal was circumscribed.

their essences or through similitudes in God (q. 2) and whether there are a plurality of real similitudes in God (q. 3), although they figure throughout the whole disputation.[121] These questions engage an underlying concern that God's knowledge cannot be dependent on creatures, and yet God must really know creatures in themselves while avoiding the pantheistic identity of the creature with God. Thus, as in *I Sent*, he continues to teach that God himself is the known similitude of each thing and does not draw knowledge from the essence of any created thing itself in its proper existence.[122] But to take seriously that it is indeed *creatures* themselves known, be they actual or possible, in God's knowing of himself as a similitude rather than in the manner of a separated blueprint, Bonaventure articulates the causal character of divine knowledge—so far is it may be called knowledge for Dionysius—from Dionysius' logic of the creative *proodos*.[123] For, as is patent by the end of *DSC*, God really loves us, not a likeness, more really than we could ever conceive.[124] So really, indeed, that eternal *rationes* or *similitudes* by which we know God even grasp and draw into ecstatic union the *res* they cause as God's knowing, and more intimately, as God's willing or, simply, loving.

The full admittance of Dionysius to the discussion of the *rationes,* now cast implicitly as a translation for his *logoi,*[125] is thus itself a development

[121] *Rationes exemplares* is not Augustine's language, nor *idealis*, though the *ideae* are discussed in relation to the '*formae aut rationes rerum*' in *De diversis questionibus octaginta tribus* 46.2, where Augustine understands *ratio* as a translation of *logos* yet treats it as concurring instead with the Platonic sense of *idea* as the causal truth of thing, see Catapano 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier', 3–5.

[122] See Hayes, 'Introduction', 50–53.

[123] Hayes' summary of *DSC* q. 2, the questions that introduces this novel account of causal knowledge (*notitia causans res*) glides over this point and instead says the discussion of divine knowledge is a compression of the fuller treatment of the divine ideas in *I Sent* d. 35 and 36. Although his commentary is helpful, it passes by a key development: that divine knowledge is causal through itself rather than only dispositive relative to divine power. It is that causal divine knowledge that makes human knowledge certain (*DSC* q. 4) and that grasps knowers ecstatically as they approach similitude to God by grace, God who is their similitude (*DSC* q. 7).

[124] Bonaventure's forthrightness on the individuality of the *res* contrasts Catapano's reading of Augustine that 'There is an eternal reason for each species of individuals and for each collective entity of which individuals are a constituent part, but not for each individual as such'. See 'Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier', 29.

[125] It is so because *rationes* stands for *logoi* in the Latin translations of Dionysius produced by Eriugena and Saracen, see Chevalier, *Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, 360. Manzon notes the happy coincidence of the Latin translations and Augustine's own 'Questio de ideis' from *De Diversis questionibus octagina tribus*, q. 46, and notes furthermore that Thomas Gallus discussed the relationship of the Greek *logos* to the Latin *ratio* and that Alexander of Hales exhibited an approach to *idea*, *ratio*, and *exemplar* in a way that suggested a similar understanding, see Manzon, 'According to Blessed Dionysus', 330–31.

in Bonaventure's advance towards externalizing language, and more, an embrace of Dionysius' logic of a causal *approach* to creatures in the *proodoi*—which is for Dionysius, at least analogically, God's knowledge. Yet Bonaventure still avoids the language of a divine, creative *processus* in *DSC* q. 2 and 3. Nevertheless, in *DSC,* Bonaventure's treatment of the *rationes* trends closer to Dionysius, signalled by modifications in his own language (*rationes ideales* and *aeternae*), but more importantly by the approximation the conceptual constellation of the *proodoi* as found in Dionsysius with their *exitus-reditus* structure. Bonaventure approximates the *rationes* to the *proodoi*'s *exitus* by his application of egressive images of light drawn from Dionysius to those *rationes* and by his direct consideration of the multiplication and causal efficacy of those *rationes.* He approximates the *rationes* to the *proodoi*'s *reditus* by assigning the *rationes* role in human (and angelic) cognition as the avenue of creatures reduction to God. On the other hand, Bonaventure also issues his strongest statements denying that the external divine causes enter creatures—not least because Dionysius' language makes this interpretation a possibility. Altogether, the pressure exerted by the *CD* is seen in *DSC*'s divergence from the *Sentences Commentary* and testifies to Bonaventure carefully considering the Areopagite's challenging ideas.

I will identify and elaborate the aspects of this conceptual development towards the logic of Dionysius' divine *proodos* below. Then I will identify the implications that follow from Bonaventure's attention to the Areopagite. First, I will outline how the expansion of Dionysius' voice contributes to the articulation of causal knowledge (*notitia causans res*) together with an explanation thereof. Second, I will explain how the account of causal knowledge undergirds the reality of those things preconceived in God's providence. Third, I will draw from that reality how that causal knowledge of things truly conceived is also causative of created knowledge (recognized in Bonaventure's famous illumination theory) and even of ecstasy in the created knowers. Fourth and finally, I will argue that Bonaventure's image of light that never departs from itself yokes all these aspects together and so approximates both Dionysius' presentation of God's multiplication and overflowing egress without motion, amounting to a virtual procession, an account of God's approach to real creatures distinct from the divine essence—

virtual because it describes God's potentiating and substantiating all things besides God without reference to any language of procession or exteriorization.

The full admission of Dionysius to the discussion of divine knowledge sees the fuller development of knowing as a cause, establishing that God's knowing proceeds to *res* themselves. Bonaventure's response to *DSC* q. 2., whether God knows through similitudes, retreads the central aspects of *Sent I*'s question whether God knows through ideas or *rationes* (*I Sent* d. 35 a. unic. q. 1) and *II Sent*'s distinction of created and uncreated causes (d. 18, a. 1, q. 2) but appeals to *DN* 5.8's definition of these *rationes* to do so:

> We say that the *exemplars* (*exemplaria*, translating *paradigmata*) are the substantifying *rationes* (translating *logoi*) of the things that exist, preexisting in God as one, which theology terms *pre-definitions*, and also the divine and good wills (*voluntates*) determinative and effective (*substantificae*) of things that exist, according to which the supersubstantial existence (i.e. God) has pre-defined and produced all things.[126]

Remarkably, where Bonaventure previously distinguished in *I Sent* habitual, causal, cognitive, and exemplary similitudes from the unique casual will of God—a will *not* composed of discrete *voluntates*[127]—the softening of *II Sent* to guard the *rationes* in the divine has collapsed further, so that not only does Bonaventure not mention any distinction between *causae* and *rationes causales*, he adopts Dionysius' definition to identify *rationes aeternae* as *voluntates* that are *substantificae*. By grace of adopting Dionysius' definition, Bonaventure shows that his notion of the *rationes* have assumed the voluntarity that yokes efficacy and end into their character, and therefore he, too, teaches that they are causes, unreservedly so, as will be explained below, of things caused, whether created or potential.

[126] *DSC* Q. 2, conc. (V, 8B): 'Exemplaria dicimus esse in Deo existentium rationes substantificatas et singulariter praeexistentes, quas theologia praedefinitiones vocat, et divinas et bonas voluntates existentium determinativas et effectivas, secundum quas supersubstantialis existentia omnia praedeflnivit et produxit'.

[127] *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 8 (1, 813B).

These *rationes*, however, are no less cognitive and that principally *causal* definition of *logoi* from Dionysius that sets the stage for the discussion of the nature of divine knowing throughout *DSC* q. 2 and q 3. Indeed, that definition even forms an *inclusio* with the concluding quotation from the latter question, *DN* 7.2's declaration that God knows from himself being the cause of all. Accompanying *DSC* q. 2's principal definition of the *rationes* from Dionysius are two citations from Augustine that refer to *rationes*, this time from *Confessions* and the *De Civitate Dei*, demonstrating Bonaventure's thoughtful examination of his authorities on the matter, where he had previously relied upon *De Genesi ad litteram*.[128] Nonetheless, pride of place in the response to the question is ceded to Dionysius's discussion of creative *logoi*, so that Augustine's words corroborate, are framed by, and are even structured by—but do not offer an alternative or expansion of—Dionysius' teaching on the *logoi* or *rationes*.[129] That citation of *DN* 5.8, from John Saracen's *nova translatio* of the *Dionysian Corpus*, places Bonaventure face to face with the heart of *DN*'s explanation of the divine *proodoi* to each and every being in their particularity. Indeed, had Bonaventure quoted but a few lines further he would have found himself discussing the causing of all things 'from the essence of the substantifying procession and goodness'.[130] Whether by deliberate avoidance or happenstance, such a direct citation of the Dionysian processions would not occur for a couple of years until he does so just once in *De Mysterio Trinitate*. But Bonaventure was reading that term and forced to consider it. His consideration is on display in the organization of *DSC* q. 2. Gone is *I Sent*'s objection from Dionysius that God does not know through admitting ideas from without but knows the caused as their cause, and gone with it is the response refuting those who want to say that God knows as a cause. On the contrary, that very citation from *I* Sent appears again positively in the concluding citation of *DN* 7.2 in *DSC* q. 3. It is not that Bonaventure suddenly embraces that God knows because he causes, as the earlier objection in *I Sent* proposed, but that in order to explain how God's knowing is the very causing of what is

[128] Catapano, 'Augustine's Doctrine of the Eternal Reasons', 8–10, 22–23.
[129] Manzon, 'According to Blessed Dionysius', 331–32.
[130] *DN* 5.9 825A (*CD* 1, 188.17–198.4). Compare the Latin translations in Chevalier, *Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, 362.

known he introduces the idea of causal knowing, *notitia causans res*.[131] That notion explains not only that God's knowing is intrinsic, i.e. not from without or receptive, but of what it is for God to know: that the simplicity of the similitudinous expression of all *res* is their origination in all the ways each *res* comes to be, whether *in Deo* solely or also in time. *Notia causans res* is the resolution of cognition with causality, so that what was off the conceptual table previously, namely the notional unity of knowing that joins expression, exemplarity, and creation, has been reconsidered, and cautiously embraced, as both *DSC* q. 2 and 3 readily demonstrate.

The cited passages from Dionysius and Augustine in *DSC* q. 2 are all taken as evidence that God cognizes real things by *rationes aeternae*, but no direct textual analysis follows, instead, a rehearsal of the aforementioned questions from the *Sentences Commentary*, albeit now reflecting the speculative pressure exerted by Dionysius in

[131] Furthermore, the order the response proceeds in *DSC* q. 2 reverses the order of *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1. In the older text, Bonaventure dealt with causality first and then moved to discuss knowledge through similitude. In *DSC* q. 2, after quickly clarifying that *rationes aeternae* are not the essences of things, he first discusses knowledge through similitude and proceeds to discuss causality or *causal knowing*. Vater's position warns against just such a reading, namely that Bonaventure has reversed his earlier position and now knows because he causes, and Vater is correct to say so because Bonaventure does not make knowledge follow *from* causality (Vater, 'Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 66). However, I depart from Vater's argument that the introduction of *causal knowledge* does little more than rehearse *I Sent* d. 35 q. 1 under the condition of creation having occurred, so that knowledge precedes causality just as in the earlier treatment and that exemplarity follows is inferred from the fact of creation (ibid. 66–67), for as the body of this article shows, by affirming Dionysius' text in *DSC* q. 3, which was under scrutiny and in *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic, q. 1, contra 1, and by recognizing the *rationes* as '*logoi ousiopoios*' and '*productivae rerum*' (*DSC* q. 3, contra 10 [5, 13A]), Bonaventure presents knowing the *notitia* of all *res*, possible and actual, as causal and so every similitude as an exemplary cause (*DSC* q. 3, contra 2 and 5 [5, 12B]) without restriction establishing the *res* as such even in their possibility and knowability according to providence (see the excursus on causal knowing below). In short, *pace* Vater's position that *rationes* are principally ideas only then become exemplars, and so properly metaphysical in the case of production of select *res* (Vater, 'Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 69–70, 79) upon production or at least the will to produce, *DSC* does not teach *notitia causantis res* but *notitia causans res*. Moreover, as *DSC* q. 2 asks how God knows the infinite *res* affirmed to be known by q. 1. The answer is resolutely by exemplary similitudes, whereby God is the expressive exemplar of infinite *res* (*DSC* q. 7, conc. [5, 39B–40A]). Granting, however, that *idea* and *exemplar* may connote different aspects of the *rationes aeternae* without a strict subordination inasmuch as expressing exemplating is God's mode of knowing, nevertheless, even the *De Reductione* identifies *rationes ideales* as causal and the subject of metaphysics, see *De Reductione* 6 (5, 321A). On the other hand, Vater's approach reflects the later language of the *Breviloquium* where exemplar denotes God's knowing of things foreseen and disposed, and yet there *idea* refers to the exemplar as the act of foreseeing (*actus praevidendi*) (*Breviloquium* 1.8, [5, 216B]), all with a healthy dose of recognizing the flexibility of the names according to reality that all modes of knowing predicated of God are one, simple, and intrinsic: 'Quia vero haec omnia unum sunt in Deo, ideo unum frequenter accipitur pro alio' (ibid.).

the development of the phrase *notitia causans res* to describe divine knowing. Returning to the question of the *rationes*' role in creation, Bonaventure, even beyond *II Sent*'s denial that the *rationes* are *insertas rebus*, forcefully clarifies that these *rationes* are neither the 'essences or quiddities of things because they are not other than the Creator' but *formae exemplares*.[132] The force of *substantificae* in *DN* 5.8 prompts Bonaventure to specify that the *rationes* are not essences twice (here and in q. 3)—not least because *DN* 5.9 speaks of essence of the 'substantifying procession and goodness' filling all things with itself.[133] That denial is the pivot point to the topic of divine knowledge, tracing the path from the identity of the *rationes* with God as *formae exemplares* to representative similitudes of the cognizable in the cognizer. Bonaventure retreads the topic of divine knowledge through ideas (although he does not use that term in this text[134]), i.e. similitudes or *rationes*, affirming what was said about the nature of the *similitudines* as the basis of cognition in *I Sent* (i.e. not as through the third, but as of one thing like another) and adding the distinction too between imitative (of God in Creature) and exemplative similitude (of creatures in God). Yet, both kinds of similitude are cast in DSC as expressive, and so communicative, God of creatures and creatures of God, whereas he previously distinguished similitudes in God and in creatures as expressing creatures and impressed by creatures, respectively.[135] As in the earlier treatment, Bonaventure's arguments in favour of God knowing by similitudes appeal to God's pre-existence and independence from creatures. However, compared to *I Sent*, with which *DSC* q. 2 shares arguments to the contrary that protest variously that a likeness of creatures in God is inapposite the divine essence,[136] and that knowledge of something besides an essence is defective,[137] *DSC* introduces the objection that God's immediacy to all things *outside* of God would be compromised by knowledge

[132] *DSC* q. 2, conc. (5, 8B).

[133] *DSC* q. 2, conc. (5, 8B); *DSC* q. 3, ad. 3 (5, 14B). *Cf. DN* 5.9 825A (*CD* 1, 188.17–189.6); see also *Dionysiaca* vol. 1, 362. Note, the Greek of the *Dionysiaca* volume here is missing the Greek term *proodou*, which is a simple typo.

[134] Hayes, 'Introduction', 50.

[135] *DSC* q. 2, conc. (5, 9A); *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic. q. 1, conc. (1, 601B). Gilson sees in these dual ends of creating and created expression a process, image, production, and generation in every instance, which is the fundamental truth of the Son as the medium in divinity and creation, see *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 146–47.

[136] *DSC* q. 2, contra 2–6 (5, 7A–8B). Cf. *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, contra 2 (600B).

[137] *DSC* q. 2, contra 1, 7–10, 12. (5, 7B–8A) Cf. *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, contra 3 (1, 600B).

through exemplars—an objection implicitly recognizing that the divine *proodoi* or *processus* in DN ought to be as a conceived as manner of immediacy.[138] Bonaventure's answer and his replies to the objections affirm the fittingness, nobility, and intimacy of divine knowledge through similitude in distinguishing it from creaturely similitude: not only is divine knowledge by similitude *most expressive* (as in *I Sent*) it is also *exemplarily expressive* similitude, even *causal similitude*[139] that intimates an effective or productive approach of the similitude to the exemplated *res*. That divine similitude is not only cognitive but effective will be shown in *DSC* q.3's description of the *rationes aeternae* as '*rerum productivae*', defining them as the similitudes by which things are produced or caused.[140] That very description underlines the advance in Bonaventure's position by articulating causal knowledge, since the *rationes* were previously differentiated in *II Sent* as *directive* rather than *productive*.[141]

To the first implication, thus, although it retreads old questions, *DSC* q. 2 nonetheless offers new answers by resolving knowing and causing into a single causal knowing, uniting previously divided categories of power and knowledge, and so introduces the new distinction between the causal knowledge of God (*notitia causans res*) and the caused knowledge (*notitia causata a rebus*), advancing upon *I Sent*'s distinction upon intrinsic (divine) and extrinsic (creaturely) knowledge[142] and its twofold distinction of the presence of *res* in God as cognitive substaces as known (*Deus cognoscens res*) and in God as a cause able to produce them (*Deus potens producere*).[143] *DSC* q. 2's novel positing of *notitia causans res* accounts for the first development resulting in and indicating a greater approximation to the logic of the *prodooi* and *logoi*, namely that

[138] *DSC* q. 2, contra 11, 13 (5, 8A).

[139] *DSC* q. 2, conc. (5, 8B): 'Ad notitiam autem causantem res requiritur similitudo exemplative…'. A more detailed consideration of what causal knowledge (***notitia causans res***) is and in what way it causes would distract from the body of the article, thus an excursus on causal knowing is provided in Appendix A. In brief, *DSC* exhibits a development in Bonaventure's understanding of the role of the divine ideas or similitudes so that whereas Bonaventure's earlier writing resolutely appropriated the efficient causality to the divine will in a cautious distinction from expressed divive similitudes, Bonaventure would recognize the divine will as expressed even in the similitudes, rendering them causal of things to be or not to be.

[140] *DSC* q. 3, contra 10 (5, 13A). This point belongs to the arguments which Bonaventure concedes.

[141] Cf. *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, conc. (2, 436 B).

[142] *I Sent* d. 35, a. 1, q. 1, conc. (1, 601A).

[143] *I Sent* d. 36, a. 1, q. 2, conc. d (1, 621A).

the causal dimension of knowledge is the guarantor of the genuineness of the *res* known. Bonaventure retains *I Sent*'s distinction between God's knowing as expressing similitudes and creaturely knowledge *through* expressed similitudes, but the earlier distinction articulated between the *ratio cognoscendi* and *producendi*, (the definitional distinction between cognizing and producing creatures), while not eliminated—as *DSC* q. 3 shows (see below)—, has been complicated so that everything is known in accord with how it is to be produced (or not!).[144] Bonaventure concedes, implicitly, that the expressive similitude by which God knows is also that which causes, it is that act whence the *res* obtains its *propria entitas* (or not!), although it must be cautioned that that act is not its propria *entitas*. Indeed, that the knowledge through an expressive similitude *is causal* serves Bonaventure in responding to the objection in a way that hits the very heart of the matter: that it would be better to know things through their own essences. The integration of knowing and causing supplies an answer: the immediacy of knower and known can occur two ways: by the immediacy of the causing and by knowledge by essence rather than an intermediate similitude. Both are true of God who is the cause of the essence through one and the same exemplary similitude that is God's own essence, and therefore it is a simple and so more perfect knowledge.[145] Moreover, per the argument of *DSC* q. 2, both modes of immediacy are reduced to each other, because God's knowing is a causing. Accordingly, a *res* as it is expressed in God is God's highest immediacy to the *res* itself.

Furthermore, the resolution of causing and knowing is also on display in the choice of evidence. Of the passages chosen to testify to divine knowledge through *similitudes* that are *rationes*, Dionysius' text addresses the *rationes*' causality and role in creation with no mention of divine knowledge. The passage from *Confessions* focuses on their role in creation more than divine knowledge. Only that from *De Civitate Dei* prioritizes divine knowledge—though it concludes by referencing creation. Bonaventure's response in *DSC* q. 2, binding knowledge and

[144] See the excursus on causal knowing in Appendix A.

[145] *DSC* q. 2, conc. (5, 9A) and ad 11 (5, 10b). By comparison, in *I Sent* d. 35, art. Unic, q. 1, ad 3 (1, 301A), the reply to the objection that it is better to know the essences of things than a similitude argued that because God's is *veritas* and the source of the *ratio* of the creature, it is known better in God as *veritas*. This is not the same argument as the simplicity of the *notitia causans res*.

creation more closely, counterbalances his earlier caution against the position that God does not know by the act of creating as a point knows the line it principates.[146] Instead, in accord with *DSC* q. 1 and *I Sent* d. 35, there is in God a simple *aspectus*, a single gaze intrinsic to God, so that that God does not therefore create by a second look in response to the similitudes with which he is identical, or look upon what has been created from a template, but simultaneously approves the goods to be created, sees the acts to be done, and understands every possibility according to the divine will that undergirds all causality.[147] Thereby, God creates in knowing according to willing and by God's self-intimacy, is understood to be maximally close the *res* caused. Causal knowledge is virtually processive insofar as knowledge is an intrinsic approach to the *res*, an approach that substantiates *res* in accord with the divine will.

The second noteworthy development toward the logic of the *proodoi* is Bonaventure's commitment to the reality (i.e. that it is a genuine *res* of its own) of everything precontained in God by God's own providence. *DSC* q. 3 follows through on the braiding together of knowledge and causation, signalled, but not fully explained, in Bonaventure's freedom to call the *rationes aeternae* that were formerly identified with the *ratio cognoscendi* rather than the *ratio producendi*, as *rationes* '*rerum productivae*'. Like *DSC* q. 2, the link between knowledge and creation remains at the center of the question, and casts the topic not as knowledge but, really, providence. For *DSC* q. 3's explanation of why many *rationes* are one in God does not so much examine the relationship between God and the multiplicity of what God can know as much as that between the creator and the many creatures known. Far from reneging on his commitment to the divine knowledge of infinite possibilities, which was argued for in *DSC* q. 1, Bonaventure leans into that infinite divine knowledge as causative.[148] As rendered causative by the divine will, the divine truth knows all things according to its own *power* and *actual disposing*, and so knows all exemplated effects in their creatureliness precisely as potential and even actualized according

[146] Cf. *I Sent*

[147] *DSC* q. 1, conc. (5, 5A); ibid. q. 2 conc. (5, 9A); *I Sent* d. 35, a. unic, q. 1 (1, 601A): 'Primum quidem, quia Deus cognoscit non per collocationem deveniendi a principio ad principiatum, sed simplici aspectu'. See Appendix A below on the difficult question of causal knowledge.

[148] *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5, 14A)

to the divine will.[149] For inasmuch as God is pure act, all other things are unto God as 'material and possibilities' unto their form—but it is truly them *outside* God according to their *reality* (hence genuinely distinct *res*) that are known by God, but *in God* (hence not differing from God *secundum res*), with God as the very expressive similitude of each insofar as God is the power to make each and every possible thing.[150] For although similitudes or *rationes* are themselves divine, they are the knowledge of the creature in potency as God has disposed it to be or not be in God's own goodness. It is unto them, these *res*, that the one truth in its unity has a plurification of expression, such that there are similitudes,[151] an inner motion in stability by which God is an infinitude of similitudes, not for the sake of the similitudes, but for the *res*, creatures-to-be-or-not-to-be that God truly knows.[152] And thus, although Bonaventure denied in *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 2 that creatures existed more really in God for a lack of their *propria entitas*, but only a more perfect similitude, here he grants that the plurality of *rationes* in God is the plurality of things (*res*) themselves existing in their cause, which is not only their lively possibility, but their even more intrinsic being-willed-as-they are-to-be, which is inseparable from the *res* themselves.[153] It is for this reason that the *rationes*, which although they

[149] *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5, 14A). *Cf. I Sent* d. 45, a. 2., q. 1, ad 2 and ad 4 (1, 805A–B). Bonaventure explains that causality properly belongs to the will, as goodness, and that the will renders divine knowledge dispositive and divine power executive, and so God disposes and makes because God wills, and so there is not precognition of things before willing them. Rather, it is divine will that, in a manner of speaking, precedes knowledge and power with respect to creatures. See excursus on causal knowing at Appendix A.

[150] *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5,)

[151] Cf. *Sent I* d. 35, conc. (1, 601B). In *I Sent*, Bonaventure explains that whereas creatures know because they have similitudes, in God it is the opposite. Because God knows *res*, there are similitudes, or rather, God is the similitude of each *res*. God's knowledge is not knowledge through a simulacrum nor received intrinsically. Rather God does not know through the essence but knows so that there is an essence. Because God's knowledge is causative of the essence and distinct from what it potentially and actually produces, God's knowledge is logically prior but also fully expressive of each *res*. Therefore, God's knowledge must be a perfect similitude on account of its precedence and independence with respect to the essence it causes.

[152] *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5, 14A): 'Unde expressio unius rei et alterius rei in divina, vel a divina ventate, secundum id quod est, non est aliud et aliud; sed secundum id ad quod est, plurificari dicitur'. The *ad quod* is not the similitude, but the *res* themselves.

[153] *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5, 14A–B); ibid. ad 18 and ad 20 (5, 16A–B). *Cf I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 2, conc. (1, 625B-626A). God knows the temporal things eternally, inclusive of creation and predestination. Although Bonaventure does not dwell on it here, the importance of predestination among the *rationes aeternae* will have greater prominence in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Manzon explains that the relation between the *rationes aeternae* and *res* is two sides of the same coin wherein without the confusion of the divine *ideae* and the real *ideata*, the former is the principle of outworking of the latter, a position that avoids both pantheism and the denigration

do not enter into things, can be said to be the existing of creatures in their cause and, thus, substantifying as expressing and effecting their substances.[154] The causal knowing expressed in the *rationes* is, thus, no less than God's intrinsic providence, and so the *rationes* are *productive* as God's gaze *ad intra* upon all things *ad extra*, and so are virtually processive, that is, in all but name.

A third further indication of Bonaventure's approximation of the logic of the *proodoi* is seen in Bonaventure's most famous concern from the *DSC*, that God is the cause of certain knowledge, otherwise known as the doctrine of divine illumination, which is also combined with excessive reduction. For the same providence causing things by the *rationes* as the principle of being and knowing also extends into the inner world of creatures too, the life of spirits, causing their knowing-being, and even draws them above themselves to a union beyond mind. For Bonaventure, God's interior gazing on creatures is the also the illumination in spiritual creatures endowing their knowledge with certainty, as *DSC* q. 4 explains, and so the *rationes* or divine similitudes are productive not only of infinite possibilities and finite created goods *exteriorly*, but even of certain knowledge within created intelligence.[155] For productive *rationes* are the way that creatures have existence (*habent esse*) not only in their proper nature (*proprio genere*), and in the mind, but even in the eternal art, and certain knowledge can only be had by attaining to things as they exist (*habent esse*) immutably in the eternal art on account of the defectability of things in themselves and of created minds.[156]

of the *res* as a 'bad copy of the eternal reasons', see 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 339. Compared to Bettoni's concern that an actual, created *res* must claw back its own autonomous *quid* lest it become all symbol-and-no-thing, Manzon's position lets the causal *ratio* substantiate its *res* by the exemplarity of both, since it is by God's similitude of the creature that it can be a creature at all, so that exemplarity stands at the creature's ground in the act of God's expression (cf. Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, 62.) Indeed, Bettoni himself recognizes that the final cause of all creatures is the glory of God for Bonaventure, and while Bettoni seeks to maintain that creatures can be known and not understood as exemplars, it goes against the general orientation of the creature to reserve its being from its manifesting purpose. What Manzon recognizes is an adoption of the Dionysian notion that in creating God stands outside himself by Bonaventure's making God's intrinsic expression of the creation present in the creature's expression of God.

[154] *DSC* q. 3, ad 3 (5, 12B).

[155] *DSC* q. 4, conc. (5, 23B–24B).

[156] *DSC* q. 4, conc. (5, 23B–24B); cf. *I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 2, conc. (I, 625B–626A). *I Sent* qualified that things exist most really in their proper being and can only be said to exist more really in God in virtue that their corresponding similitude in God *is* God. No qualification is made to differentiate the modes of having being in *DSC*, however as the similitudes are explicitly *produc-*

Therefore, that account of certain knowledge, too, is virtually processive because of the proximity of *rationes aeternae* by their certifying entrance into human knowledge but also by elevating that knowing subject beyond its nature. For Dionysius *proodoi* were also not only a procession to beings as being, but living things as living, and intelligent things as intelligent. As Dionysius teaches in *DN,* God's *proodoi* are the 'essentiating, life-giving, and wise-making cause of those who partake of essence, life, and mind, reason, and sense'.[157] And regarding excessive reduction, the presence of that 'super-wise and wise cause … of the whole and the hypostasis of each thing', draws created intellects above their intellect, as the *rationes aeternae* do in grasping the knower purified by grace in an ecstatic knowledge.[158] Thus, for Bonaventure, in the Dionysian *logoi*, the *rationes aeternae* are the principles of being and cognition and mystical ascent[159] as the causes of knowing beings, beings to be known, and of the certainty of knowing—perfecting the knowledge had through abstracted created forms—and so these *rationes* are even the causes of hemselves being contuited by created knowers as causes (or simply, God) in their effects and in proportional clarity (and even beyond clarity) unto the deiformity of those created knowers,[160] even to the point of ecstasy or *excessive* knowledge (modeled on Dionysius' union beyond knowledge, especially in *DN* 7.1)[161] wherein creatures attain to, but do not comprehend, their *rationes*' infinitude by graced beatitude.[162]

tive and the mode by which the effect exists in the cause (see *DSC* q.3, ad 20 [5, 16B] ; cf. *DMT* q. 5, a. 1, ad 17 [5, 91B]), there is a more robust sense of the *res*' pre-existence in God, which corresponds to the citation of *DN* 7.2 in *DSC* q. 3, conc. (5, 14A–B) stating that God 'pre-holds (*praehabet*) preconceives (*praeconcipit*) the cause, recognition (*notitiam*), knowledge (*scientia*), and substance of all things' .

[157] *DN* 5.2 816C (*CD* 1, 181.11–15).

[158] *DN* 7.1 865C–868A (*CD* 1, 194.7–195.2); *DSC* q. 7, (5, 40A–B).

[159] *DSC* q. 4, ad 14 (5, 25B).

[160] *DSC* q. 4, conc. (5, 24A–B). Deiformity here includes the differentiation between the knower as an *imago Dei*, whether in innocence or in darkness of the fallen state, and then the deiformity of the state of glory when the soul, by grace, comes into the fullness of its similitude as a temple or habitation for God by the hierarchization of the soul—hierarchically means, in this context,ing when the soul shares in the divine life (the divine hierarchy) through worshipful ministrations of the angels (the angelic hierarchies) and earthly church (the ecclesiastical hierarchy) according to the saving work of the Christ the hierarch.

[161] *DSC* q. 7, conc. (5, 40A); *DN* 7.1 865C–868A (*CD* 1, 194.10–15).

[162] *DSC* q. 7, conc. (5, 40A) and *DSC* q. 7, epilogue (5, 42B–4B). The knowledge of excess is explained in relation to Christ's knowledge of the *rationes aeternae*'s infinitude, but applies to all created spirit in principle, as the highest form of cognition, wherein one does not grasp but is grasped by the *rationes* as an unspeakable experience of Wisdom. It pertains to Christ's knowledge on earth (*in via*) and in heaven (*in patria*), perfectly in Christ, but is possible with other

Fourth and finally, Bonaventure's use of the image light of God as simultaneously light-source and rays folds together the previous three aspects of Bonaventure's virtual account of procession in *DSC*. Although these aspects rehearse the ontic, epistemic, and beatific lineaments of Dionysian procession, they are virtual because they do so in all but name, avoiding the mention of any explicit externalization of God with the added redoubt of Bonaventure's insistence that God's knowing and creative act is entirely intrinsic, i.e not elicited from without. Bonaventure's choice of light imagery, however, thins that sole deficit even further on account of the directional, processive character of light. Bonaventure employs light imagery—imagery not employed in the relevant questions of *I Sent* and *II Sent*—in *DSC* q. 2, 3, and 4 to express the modes and manners of God's self-diffusion, and so multiform causality, similar to descriptions of divine multiplication in *DN* 2.11, 5.6 and elsewhere.[163] In *DSC* q. 2, God's knowledge intrinsic to *actus purus* is likened to the highest light-source (*summa lux*), depicting God's expression in its perfection and clarity as simultaneously most distinct in its specificity and yet unbroken and undiminished in the similitudes expressed in divine causal cognition.[164] In sum, the shining of the light source is never impeded.[165] On the other side, the image

created spirits in accord with the extent of their cooperation with grace and God's own will. It is also similar to the gift of rapture through special revelation, but such rapture is not habitual, see *DSC* q. 4, conc. (5, 24B), cf. *II Sent* d. 23, a. 2, q. 3, conc. (2, 544A–B), where Bonaventure associated Dionysian *excessus* with Paul's rapture in contrast with the vision of God *in patria*, highlighting how *DSC* has made Christ's knowledge the model for all human knowledge, even all human experience, while simultaneously integrating Dionysius' doctrines.

[163] *DN* 2.5 641D–644A (*CD* 1, 128.16–17); *DN* 2.11 649B (*CD* 1, 135.14–136.1); *DN* 5.6 820C–821A (*CD* 1, 184.17ff).; *DN* 9.5 912D (*CD* 1, 210.6–11); *DN* 9.5 913B (*CD* 1, 211.10–13). Gilson regards the image of light as describing the unity *secundum rem* and infinite multiplicity *secundum rationem* being its own irradiation, an intrinsic irradiation as ultimately unfitting saying: 'but the comparison is crude, because no light is its own irradiation and we cannot imagine what an intrinsic irradiation would be'. (Gilson, *Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 153). But Gilson's critique seems to miss the point. Bonaventure's image is intentionally transgressive and attempts to capture of the spirit of Dionysian progression.

[164] That is to say, where the plurification of beings often adopts an imagery diminution of participation inversely proportionate to the extent of God's effect (as the distinction between creatures as similitudes, images, vestiges, and shadows indicates, as representative see *DSC* q. 4 [5, 24A]; see also Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, 63–68) that diminution of participation according to the distinction of the nobility of a thing known does not result in a relative pre-eminence or order of the divine similitudes since *secundum rem*, the *rationes* are God, *DSC* q. 2, ad. 6 (5, 9b); .*I Sent* d. 36, a. 2, q. 1, ad. 4 (1, 624B); *I Sent I* d. 35, a. unic., q. 5, conc. (1, 613AB). See also Hayes, 'Introduction', 55. This accords with Dionysius' multiplication of the *proodoi* and their effects, wherein even the least effects are effected without any diminution on the part of their cause, and, on the contrary, show the extent of God's goodness

[165] *DSC* q. 2 conc. (5, 9A).

of divine illumination in *DSC* q.4 depicts a corresponding certainty in created minds knowing created and creatable things on account of their presence to that same infallible light-source (*lux*)[166] and the light it casts (*lumen*) in its *rationes aeternae*.[167] Spanning them, *DSC* q. 3, encapsulates its teaching on the simultaneous identity (*secundum rem*) and multiplicity (*secundum rationem*) of the ideas/*rationes*/similitudes by an appeal to a purposefully imagination-stretching illustration that all but collapses the light-source and its light:

> Therefore, it ought to be said that *rationes ideales* in God are plurified not according to the thing itself, but according to their definition (*secundum rationem*), which definition arises not only from the side of the one understanding (i. e. God) but even from the side of the thing understood.
>
> A likeness of which [reality] cannot be found perfectly in creatures, but if it were to be understood by something impossible, it would be by this, as if the light-source (*lux*) were the same as its own illumination and irradiation, and so we would be able to say that there would be many (*plures*) irradiations of one and the same light-source and light, because 'irradiation' means the diametrical or right-angle direction of the light itself; according to which it would be said that there are many irradiations of the diverse things illuminated, but nevertheless in one light-source and one light-shining. Thus, in the proposed [image] it ought to be understood that the divine light is the light, and its expressions with respect to things are the luminous irradiations—but *as intrinsic*, which lead and direct into that which is expressed.[168]

'Pardon me,' one might ask, 'lead and direct whom?'. A clarification would be understandably sought from Bonaventure's coy reluctance to say explicitly; but the answer it simple: lead and direct God *from within* (i.e. intrinsically), as the willing and knowing cause of each, and potentializing all and actualizing each in accord with his own actuality.

[166] *DSC* q. 4 conc. (5, 23B).
[167] *DSC* q. 4 conc. (5, 24B).
[168] *DSC* q. 3 conc, (5, 14A).

But it is indeed God, and the thing that God proposes according to its true distinctiveness, that leads God not *out* and yet *towards* each and every infinite thing according to the divine disposition, the divine will.[169] The plurification of causal ideas or *rationes* in God is indeed this very—if one dares to say it—motionless motion, rendering each thing possible, some actual, and all actually knowable to God (*DSC* q. 2) and available to spiritual creatures (*DSC* q. 4). These particular providences and substantifying *rationes* are processive—*DMT* will even say so outright—moreover they show that what appears as *extrinsic causality* from the perspective of creatures, since we receive our being from without, is utterly intrinsic with respect to God, who contains all things. And therefore, Bonaventure supports his image of intrinsic irradiation of the light source by once again citing Dionysius *DN* 7.2, when he explains that:

> … this [image of the identity the light-source and its irradiation] is what Dionysius means in the seventh chapter of the *Divine Names* saying 'The divine intellect does not know beings (*entia*) from their being, but from himself and in himself as the cause of all things, pre-holding and pre-conceiving the perception, knowledge, and substance of them, not as individual things breaking in as [distinct] ideas [from without]' that is, not according really different ideas, 'but according to the unified excellence of the cause knowing and containing [them], just as light as a cause holds itself the notice of things dark and does not know them other than a defect from light. Therefore, the divine wisdom, not knowing itself knows all things materially immaterially, and divisible things divisibly, and the multitude of things singularly, as in one and the same [act] produces and knows all things.[170]

[169] Manzon counts this light imagery as yet another instance of the 'voluntaristic framework within which God's self-irradiation is to be understood', adding that 'Subsequently, while the deity is described in terms that resemble those of natural processes, there is nothing compulsory in his expressing forth himself; all is due to his intention', see 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 337. What Manzon describes is, of course, nothing less than what Dionsysius himself says of God's ecstatic *eros* in *DN* 4.12 through 4.14, especially 4.13 712A–B (*CD* 1, 159.9–20) with its desirous jealousy and purposeful providence that is also appropriated to divine wisdom.

[170] *DSC* q. 3 conc, (5, 14A–B).

That quotation does not only explain that the plurality *secundum rationem* of God's knowledge impugns neither God's simplicity nor perfection, but furthermore, although Bonaventure does not say outright at that this point in the text—but in accord with the various doctrines of *DSC*—that God's knowing towards things inwardly is, or, more cautiously, includes, the production of things outwardly, both possibly[171] and actually. Ultimately, the image of light's folding together of source and effluence speaks not only to the multiplicity of rationes but encapsulates the virtual procession that Bonaventure intends throughout *DSC* in the manner of the Dionysian procession that is everywhere without departing itself, that is, the divine multiplication without sundering God's simplicity.

In the *DSC*, turning to the indefatigable question of Word Incarnate's knowledge, with Dionysius foremost among his guides, Bonaventure walks to the precipice of admitting divine externalization as he integrates the Areopagite's guidance on the nature of divine production and providence unto divinization. He faces both the concern that God does not *really* know real things and the commitment that God does not receive the knowledge of things extrinsically and finds an answer in *causal knowledge* and its *causal reasons* that describe an *intrinsic exteriorization*, wherein God goes to all things without change or departing from himself. And *DSC*'s epilogue affirms that God's is the true knowledge of infinite things in themselves:

> For it ought the be declared (*fatendum*) that God knows infinite things as one (*ad unum*) not by a likeness, but by his very self; and not by receiving any likeness [from outside], but by the very truth exemplating and expressing the whole scope of things (*rerum universorum*) with respect to which [things] there are said to be many similitudes or expressions […]. These are the similitudes or eternal reasons whence emanates the certitude of created cognition [of things].[172]

God is the foundation of certainty, as has been demonstrated above, because God's knowledge is the source of truth as the causal knowledge

[171] That is, inasmuch as God's actuality is true potentializing and quasi-first actuality.
[172] *DSC* q. 7, epilogue (5, 42B).

expressed eternally in the uncreated Word, which by its very expression does not light upon infinite possible things as if hanging in the ether, but brings them forth from its fontal unity in such a simplicity of the divine will so that the expression of each thing is an approbation and providence according to the genuine capacity of each thing. The Word causally expressing each thing is the same Word who is also the guarantor of the inner world of the soul, wherein that Word must, in a manner of speaking, begin to be born in our creaturely knowing because its truest and final object is, in the end, the Word—even in the case of Christ:

> [For certain cognition] in the state of not only this life but of heaven, not only is the presence of the eternal light required, but its influence, too; not only the Uncreated Word, but a word conceived within. And since that word is finite, neither the soul of Christ nor any soul is able to comprehend the Word nor the infinity of knowable, but rather, is able to be borne into them [the Word and infinite knowables] by *an exceeding* [*excessus*].[173]

Thus, this departureless approach reaches its summit, the fullness of its effect, in the grasping of the creature by God, wherein God grasps and embraces the knowers he has made with the knowings (the *rationes*) by which he has made them. This grasping occurs, moreover, by the love by which God wills things to be as they are because it is rooted in charity, and so:

> This *excessus* is the ultimate and most noble mode of knowing, which Dionysius praises in all of his books, but especially he *Mystical Theology*. Almost the whole of scripture speaks mystically of this [mode of knowing], about which Apocalypse chapter two says: *I will give a tablet to him, on which is written a new name is written, which none knows unless they receive it*; it says so because

[173] *DSC* q. 7, epilogue (5, 42B). The ambiguity of the conceived word appears intentional. Indeed, it is finite, even in Christ, but the point of the passage is to say that inner word, by which what creature knows, its *cognitum*, might become, in a mystical mode of ecstasy—mystical because both the 'how' and the 'what' of the experience are initiatory and hidden—the infinite *cognitum* of God's knowledge *se ipso*, namely, the infinity of Word and the entirety the Word expresses.

> that mode of knowing hardly even ever comes except to one who experience it, nor does one experience it unless *they are rooted and grounded in charity, so that they might be able to comprehend with the saints what is the length, breadth, height, and depth, to know the love God that surpasses all understanding*.[174]

The hope of comprehending the infinitude expressed by and identical with the divine wisdom is, at the last, the creature's hope to be comprehended by the one containing all, so that the word known (*cognitum*) and conceived interiorly (*verbum conceptum interius*) in the creature may be the expressing Word, who in truth, grasps the creature.[175] To be so ecstatically grasped, however, only occurs thanks to the incarnation and mission of the Holy Spirit, whereby the creature becomes a dwelling for God, wherein the image of the creature as an image of the Trinity becomes a similitude—in the sense meant in Bonaventure's doctrine of grace, as therefore also in the manner that God has approved in the divine similitude. It is the fulfillment of the circuit of divine love, as Dionysius termed it, a divine ecstasy as *proodos* eliciting the creature's ecstasy in union above mind.

Having embraced the image of the departureless illumination or irradiation but not yet the image externalization, Bonaventure is remains a thinker on the move. For as Bonaventure approaches very nearly to the logic of Dionysius' divine *proodos* with its multiplicity of *proodoi*, at least in the mode of the more particular providences, he bends that doctrine around an interior conception of the Word in the created soul's own innerword, as in the mmodel of Christ's soul, so that what was first a question about God's knowledge as eternal and incarnate relaxes into the longing sigh to experience being infinitely

[174] *DSC* q. 7 (5, 43A–B).

[175] *DSC* q. 7 (5, 40A–B), conc.: 'Differt autem in Christo modus comprehensionis et excessus multipliciter : primo, quia in comprehensivo cognoscens capit cognitum, in excessivo vero cognitum capit cognoscentem.' The *cognitum* in in the latter case, in excessive knowing, is the divine wisdom not as making (*exemplar factivum*) but as expressing of the infinity of things (*expemplar expressivum*): 'Christi utroque modo per cognitionem fertur in divinam sapientiam, sed differenter. In ipsam enim, secundum quod est exemplar factivum, fertur comprehendendo, quia illa quae in exemplari ut factivo et dispositivo continentur et repraesentantur finita sunt, ac per hoc et comprehensibilia. In exemplar vero, secundum quod est exemplar expressivum seu repraesentativum , fertur non comprehendendo , sed excedendo; quia, cum in ipso repraesententur infnita, incomprehensibilia sunt, scilicet a substantia finita'. While Bonaventure argues thus of Christ, it is extended to all as the most noble kind of knowledge.

known. But this doctrine developed in a Dionysian manner around the Word uncreated and incarnate also marks an inflection point; for although Bonaventure could scarcely bring himself write '*processus*' in the Areopagite's sense, he would come to frame the exteriorization of God more boldly than ever came from that mystagogue's hidden pen.

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At last, we have arrived at this article's midpoint, amidst the middle period of Bonaventure's thought, his period of magistracy between his march through the *Sentences* and his writings as a mendicant minister general. We have seen Bonaventure examine and employ the *rationes aeternae* (or under similar names) on three successive occasions, incrementally developing his understanding of the *rationes* until they were merged explicitly with the Dionysian *logoi*, so that Bonaventure assumed therein a virtual account of procession in the implicit resolution of the account of divine knowledge and causality. That is, a resolution to the tension in the *rationes*' role and location in the doctrinal and philosophical explorations of his *Sentences Commentary*. For Bonaventure in *I Sent* identified the *rationes*, the similitudes by which, or more precisely, as which, God knows creatures, with Augustine's primordial causes and explained that they were *res* generally or creatures existing eternally in God's knowledge and power but not in will. Yet in *II Sent*'s explication of Augustine's language of *causae primordiales* he distinguished *causae* from the *rationes causales* (of course, *secundum rationem* not *rem*) that were directive of creation and located them both as guarded in the divine will, whereby the world was created *ex nihilo* not by any 'exigence on the part of the creature, but according to the exigence of the divine disposition'.[176] Bonaventure identified the divine will, according to its goodness, as the effective power in *I Sent*, and so it seems clear why at first the *rationes* or the eternal existence of creatures should not be located in the divine will, because the infinite *rationes* not all are effective of actual creatures nor are their effects from eternity, but in time. By implication, *II Sent*'s location of the eternal principles in the divine will represented

[176] *II Sent* d. 18, a. 1, q. 2 conc. (2, 435).

either a specification of the *causae primordiales* as causes and *rationes causales* to the subset of things to be actually created either taking up an additional notional residence alongside divine knowledge or power or the proliferation of yet another category of principles distinguished *secundum rationem* from the cognitive similitudes.

Granted that cognitive similitudes might be treated as exemplary causes in notional isolation from the will, Bonaventure was clear in *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, sourced from Dionysius, that causality is proper to willing-goodness because the will is the act wherein Goodness, as diffusive principle and as end, turns upon itself in the accomplishment of the act for the end, and no exemplar attains to sufficiency apart from the end of the exemplated. Bonaventure did not skirt the voluntary character of causality, nor did he utlimately bifurcate cognitive-exemplary and causal principles. Instead, he synthesized causal knowing, *notitia causans res*, embracing Dionysius' definition of *rationes* as at once *exemplaria* and *voluntates*. Here, the *rationes* have reabsorbed the character of a cause without distinction, and furthermore, have accepted willing as intrinsic to the knowing, so that all divine knowing is an approach to each thing as it is disposed to be for the glory of God, a virtual exteriorization in intrinsic multiplication of the divine causality in its potentializing effects and effective potencies in eternity. Moreover, the *rationes*' causality in *DSC* is most saliently displayed in their recapitulation of the Areopagite's cycle of divine love that Bonaventure takes as a definition of the Good's causality: the *rationes* are not only productive principles but also the final object of the creature produced, turning upon themselves as Good because they are God's exemplation of creatures, not only of those produced, but the infinity never produced. By being exemplary, the *rationes* have the shape of a general cause, efficient and final, calling forth, calling in, and recalling creatures to themselves by thier efficacy, certitude, and *excessus*.

A Turning Point: The Two Similitudes of Creation and Grace

Bonaventure's embrace of the logic of the Dionysian *proodoi* in *DSC* regarding creation through God's *rationes* and *exemplaria*, which are

voluntates and *praedefinitiones*, lights upon its complementary prong to which Dionysius was equally committed: divine procession as the means of return or consummation in God, that is, grace and deification, just as Dionysius compared the divine motion not only to the line-like creation and spiral-like sustenance of things, but even to the circular recollection of all things to God.[177] *DSC* q. 4 and 7 with its epilogue point to that return as an integral complement to creation and in particular when it addressed the need for grace to become a similitude of God in order to perceive God as a similitude of creature with any clarity. There are, accordingly, two senses of similitude corresponding to two different questions: how God knows and how the soul comes to its perfection. Both follow the logic of a similitude of one thing to another, rather than through a common third, but the former means likeness between God and the creature employed since *I Sent*. The latter is the famous completion of the scale of likeness to God as vestige, image, and similitude, where the latter names the highest likeness to God. The trajectory of Bonaventure's thought, however, even in *DSC*'s epilogue, is that these questions converge, so that the two senses of similitude are two sides of the same coin: to truly know God as the similitude of all creatures one must become as far as possible not only a similitude of God, but the similitude God has of oneself. That convergence of similitudes previews a necessary pivot in considering the role of the *rationes* in Bonaventure's thought. He does not only appeal to them to explain knowledge and creation, but the consummation of the creature in God, and when he does so he is much freer in using images of motion.

Perhaps that embrace was natural, as Bonaventure comfortably used images of motion to speak of perfecting grace, so that in expounding the consummative role of the *rationes*, his accustomed images of motion accompanied it. For in contrast to his avoidance of the language of procession or exteriorized motion for God's creative act (except virtually in the image of light), he readily uses the images of the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit and the soul as a temple or *habitaculum* for God, which are biblical images, but also the language of infusion and influence (litterally 'flowing in').[178] The similitude between God and

[177] *DN* 9.9 916C–D (*CD* 1, 213.7–20).

[178] On occasion, Bonaventure does speak of God's creative act as a 'general influence' or 'general grace', but it is not a frequent occurrence, see *DSC* q. 4, conc. (5, 23A) and *Breviloquium* 5.2 (5, 253B); *De septem donis Spiritus Sancti* 9.8 (5, 500B)

creatures that describes deiformity through grace or the hierarchization of the soul is framed as the result of a kind of motion that indicates not only God's presence but the extension of God's life to the creature.[179] For while Bonaventure regards all creatures as a similitude of God, and God as a similitude, *humanity* is not properly a similitude for Bonaventure unless God has gone forth to the creature as the saviour and as the uncreated gift, the communication of God to as a creature (Son) and in the creature (Spirit).[180] For that reason, the fullness and end of creation, that is the human love and praise of God, does not come to be until God has entered creation, not as a substantiating cause, but as a deifying cause that leads the creature to ecstatic union with God, the motion corollate to God's perfecting approach.[181]

Although the eventual adoption of the language of motion for the *rationes* reflects the convergences of the two senses of similitude and Bonaventure's embrace (at least in substance) of the two aspects of Dionysius' *proodoi*, the distinction between each sense should not be erased. For preserving the distinction of the two senses and uses of similitude and their associated arguments and images opens a window on Bonaventure's methods of integrating diverse doctrines and symbols. The ecstatic knowledge of *DSC* q. 7 with its epilogue is an exemplary integration that points to the inner unity of both senses of similitude without collapsing them, yet it is but a narrow and incipient sketch of more comprehensive integration that would occur in the *Hexaemeron*. Generally, Bonaventure's distinct framing of the doctrines of epistemology, creation, grace, and eschatology, all trade on one of these two senses of similitude within different patterns of images, even with

[179] *Breviloquium* 5.1 (5, 252A–253A), but especially this point, that with the infusion or influence of created grace, the habit of deiformity, is also the uncreated gift, whereby the soul both held by and holds God: 'Rursus, quoniam qui fruitur Deo Deum habet cum gratia, quae sua deiformitate disponit ad Dei fruitionem, datur donum increatum, quod est Spiritus sanctus, quod qui habet habet et Deum. Et quoniam nullus Deum habet, quin ab ipso specialius habeatur; nullus habet et habetur a Deo, quin ipsum praecipue et incomparabiliter diligat et diligatur ab ipso sicut sponsa a sponso; nullus sic diligitur, quin ad aeternam hereditatem adoptetur pro filio: hinc est, quod gratia gratum faciens facit animam templum Dei, sponsam Christi et filiam Patris aeterni'. This passage contributes to the dual presence of God and deiformation, which alongside other elements of Bonaventure's spirituality and mysticism, of course the conclusion of the *Itinerarium* and its transformation of the soul into God, amount to what Bettoni regards as the communication to the creature 'not merely analogous life and perfection, but His (God's) very life'. (Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, 67–68).

[180] *Breviloquium* 5.1 (5, 253A).

[181] *Breviloquium* 2.13 (5, 230A–B); 5.1 (5, 252B).

overlap between them, construct potent tensions that invite resolution and reduction, as Bonaventure is want to do in the *Hexaemeron*—not least because creation, knowledge, grace (and union), and the cosmic renewal of the eschaton, all hinge on one and the same Word, the center of all things. And therein the contrast of logic and symbolism between doctrinal centers of gravity lend themselves to producing a superior presentation of God and creatures for Bonaventure when he folds them together—and for us readers—and also allows us to detect the crossover and resolution between doctrinal centers with greater clarity.

Although Bonaventure (largely) avoided the language of a common divine procession *ad extra* in creation—however much of its substance like unto Dionysius' was there, especially when Bonaventure appeals to the language of light—the language of motion, especially motion *into*, finds its way back to address what creation was always meant to be in the perfection of humanity (and the angels). Thereby do the two senses of similitude come together in the realization of God's will for the creature, although it underlines the difference of images. As much for Bonaventure as for Dionysius, it is a fundamental element of creation that what comes forth from God returns to God, and it is that return, inclusive of human deification, that makes creation an intelligible circle and so a full similitude of the eternity and integrity of the Triune God. Through his threading together the perfection of creation with the knowledge and even greater union with *rationes*, Bonaventure will embrace motion and a portrayal of the divine *proodoi* that is indebted to Dionysius. Yet it will be distinctively his own not only through his logocentrism, indebted to Augustine, that has marked his treatment of the *rationes* from the beginning but especially in the image of the birth of those *rationes* from Wisdom, even the birth of the Word from Wisdom. That birth of the *rationes* will manifest the resolution of both senses of similitude, when the fulfillment of what the creature has received in the incarnation and in the gift of the Holy Spirit by the influence of grace, so that the creature having become a spouse and temple of God is nothing less than the farthest extent of the divine intention expressed from eternity. Indeed, the eternal fulfillment of divinity will dwell in that spouse-temple, outside God by its dwelling in the eternal temple of God's eternal expression.

This mystic reading of *rationes*, if in a virtual mode without yet an explicit imagery of exteriorization, was present in the *DSC as* succinctly stated by Manzon:

> Arguably, we could say that just like the eternal reasons can be seen as the forms of God's creative excess outside of himself, they also stand for the forms through which the creatures exceed themselves and move into God.[182]

And yet even more can be said when we turn to the *Hexameron*'s birth of the ideas. In this double crossing over, this double transitus, by the *rationes*, even God's eternal, intrinsic, necessary fruition will be understood to be freely externalized in accord with itself. Indeed, the shape of that fruit of divinity indwelled by creatures and indwelling in creatures will have the shape of the cross.

Appendix:
The meaning of Causal Knowing Notitia causans res

A more detailed consideration of what causal knowledge (*notitia causans res*) is and in what way it causes would have distracted from the body of the article. Thus, in this excursus, I will address why the category is important, what it means for knowledge to be 'causal', and how that causality relates to God's knowledge such that it is simultaneously causal knowledge for all *res* yet differentiates what is or is not actualized. The answer hinges on the interiority of the divine will to every *res* expressed through the Word, whether it is ultimately made in creation or not, or, stated otherwise, it hinges on the mutual interiority or *circumincession* of power, knowledge, and will. Accordingly, I propose in the following excursus to show that Bonaventure's account of causal knowledge shifts away from Bonaventure's earlier logically linear account of the divine attributes' relationship in causation (see *I Sent* d. 35, dub. 2 [1, 614A-B]), i.e. from power, to knowledge, to will (cf. Vater, 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 79, 97), to the perspective that recognizes the coinherence of these attributes in each other even as they effect their finite objects.

[182] Mazon, 'According to Blessed Dionysius', 348.

It is not that Bonaventure rejects the order of divine appropriation, for he will continue to follow it after *DSC* (e.g. *Breviloquium* 1.6 [5, 215A]), but that the case of causal knowledge anticipates his conceptualisation of Trinitarian order in the full account of circumincession that will follow in his later writings, especially in *Hexaemeron* 21.

The genuine distinctiveness and the true possibility of the *res* as the referent in divine knowledge is central to this causal knowledge and is emphasized in *DSC* compared to the earlier writings. *II Sent* d. 18, already saw the association of *rationes causales* with *formae exemplares* in relation to the topic of creation and located them in the divine will, but *DSC* integrates divine knowing and willing more explicitly by citing *DN* 5.8 to identify the *rationes aeternae* with *exemplaria* and *voluntates*, which he will also call *similitudines exemplares*. While the distinction between God as *exemplar* by expressing similitudes of exemplated *res* as set apart from production in the question of knowledge (*I Sent* d. 35, a. unic., q. 1, pro 4 [1, 600B]) and the *rationes* themselves being the many exemplars of willing (as *voluntates*) may seem negligible, Bonaventure's change in expression exhibits, again, the strength of the Dionysian notion of causal, substantifying *rationes* with which Bonaventure must contend, so that an emphasis is laid on the *res* themselves exemplated and known as they turn out according to providence (cf. Vater, 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 65–66). For if the infinite *rationes aeternae* stood neutrally towards the true possibility and actual existence of that which they are the similitudes, one would hardly recognize those *rationes* as *voluntates* and *praedefinitiones* of the created order. Furthermore, the kind of similitude proper to God's knowledge, as explained above, is of one thing's likeness to another, and so there must be some knowable thing in some mode besides God, otherwise the similitude would be self-referential and simply the divine essence and so not a similitude at all. Bonaventure recognized this in *DSC* q. 3, where he differentiates *veritas* (simple divine truth), *expressio ipsa*, and *res ipsa*. *Veritas* is the single expresser, while expression is *ad rem*, whether a *res* of actualized potency or of potency alone (*DSC* q. 3, conc. [5, 14A]). The *res* of (or even *that is*) each causable thing, even if never existent properly speaking, is always in God, as an effect in its cause, and is also distinct from God as causable or possible and so is not the divine essence, *secundum rationem* (ibid., ad 20 [5, 16B]; Gilson makes

just this point, too, in *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (154–45). Thus, the *rationes*, as expressions, at least as understood in the *DSC*, do not stand neutrally towards their exemplated *res* as sheerly exemplary or informational form, but as *possible*, and thence to some as even actual (*DSC* q. 1, conc. [5, 5A–B]). In other words, in God's knowledge, all *res* are known as *causable by the cause potentiating them even as, and not posterior to, expressing them* according to its simple causality per *DSC* q. 1, conc. (5, 5B]): 'quia divinum scire non solum abstrahit a ratione causae actualis, sed etiam causae simpliciter. Scit enim mala, quorum non est causa; scit etiam futura, quae nondum facit; scit etiam possibilia, quae nunquam faciet'. There, in the simple *ratio* or definition of a cause, all genuine dependencies follow as knowable. This is not far afield from Dionysius, who recognizes even non-beings as partaking in the Good (*DN* 4.3 697A [*CD* 1, 146.6–12]; 4.8 708D [*CD* 1, 153.4–9]), but even he seems to speak specifically of what may yet be rather than what may or may never be simply. In short, God approaches the infinity of *res* in a causal knowing, not *res* as always-already and self-subsistent possibilities, but as originating and establishing those very *res* in their identity and possibility as the cause of their identity and possibility on account of the infinity of divine power. As both Gilson and Quinn recognize, the plurality of *rationes* is not a function of prism of discursive creaturely knowing, but God's own expression (Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 144–47, 153; Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy*, 495). Therefore, there is indeed an inherent externalization in God of that which is not God, since the *res* as possible are necessitated from the divine power and expressed necessarily in the divine wisdom as possible. As the *res* in the *rationes* are identical with divinity yet their implied possible-essence is distinct, that externalization may even be viewed as a *hyperbole* or overflowing, God's standing outside himself, as Dionysius expressed the matter, and as in the identities-as-distinct from God are identical with God, by the inverse in virtue of that exemplary likeness in their potentiality and even actuality, the likeness which is God is in a manner externalized so as to express God. Indeed, Bonaventure's adoption of both created and divine similitude as expressive (*DSC* q. 2, conc. [5, 9A]) suggests as much.

The chief question that arises from his development is how *causal knowledge,* if simple and consisting of a single look (*aspectus*), is causal of things both merely possible and the actual while remaining one and the same knowing, *secundum rationem.* Bonaventure does not address that problem directly in *DSC* but the answer is available through both the *DSC* and other works, including the earlier *Sentences Commentary* and later *Breviloquium*. Causal knowledge is causal of both merely possible and actualized *res* because the providential creation or non-creation of any thing figures into its exemplation. It is not that the *ratio* of any *res* carries a necessity within it from the side of the thing itself, but that God's will—including *not* willing, disposing, or making—for each *res* is interior to its *ratio* and thereby supports the modal differentiation in God's simple knowledge between approbation of the goods to be created, vision of the good and evils to occur, and the understanding of all possibilities (*DSC* q. 1, conc., [1, 5A–B]). For, as *I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1 conc. (1, 804A–805A) explains, the will, to which goodness is appropriated, is properly causative and it renders knowledge dispositive of effects rather than treating divine willing as a response to precognition. Thus, the divine knowledge expressing similitudes knows all things as they are willed to be *or not be*, and so is causal for that reason, while even granting space for the similitude of a *res*-never-to-exist to be as such because it is known as such. While Bonaventure treats only goods as properly willed in *I Sent* d. 45, a. 1, q. 2 conc. [1, 801A–B]) when he denies the fittingness of the title 'omnivolent', yet the Quarrachi editors' scholium there explains that Bonaventure does teach both in the second dubium of *I Sent* d. 45 (1, 812A) and in *III Sent* d. 31 q. 1, ad. 1 (3, 698B), that God wills or loves all those *rationes* that *habent esse in deo* with the love of *complacency*, but not all with actual causality. Whence it may be inferred from *I* and *III Sent* that it is pleasing to God that *not-all are willed*, while simultaneously recognizing in the *DSC* that like distinction is borne out from God's simple causality (per *DSC* q. 1) that follows in the *rationes aeternae*, wherein each *res* is known according to God's good pleasure as caused or not. And yet, in *DSC*, there remains a providential place for the infinite uncaused *res* inasmuch as by this infinity, creaturely knowing is grasped by ecstatic knowing (*DSC* q. 7, conc. and epilogue [5, 39A–40B and 42B–43B]).

Indeed, that Bonaventure recognizes an inherent finality in all *rationes aeternae*, at least according to the full shape of God's plan wherein all *rationes* are one in God, is suggested by *Breviloquium* 1.8 (5, 216B), where he explains that an idea in God is called a *ratio* 'secundum actum perficiendi, quia superaddit intentionem finis', which finality (*intentionem finis*) and efficacy and goodness is appropriated to the divine will, with which divine power and wisdom are not only essentially identical (ibid, 1.9 [5, 218A]) but circumincessive (cf. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy*, 507–9). For one never lacks the other, so that power is ordered by wisdom's *rationes*, which include the will's finality (ibid. 1.7 [5, 216A]; see also *I Sent* d. 45, dub. 3 [1, 812A-B]), while power and wisdom render the will efficacious and regulating (ibid. 1.9 [5, 218A]), and power and will render wisdom a dispositive exemplar (ibid. 1.8 [5, 216B]). The fully trinitarian form of the circumincession of these powers would be implied by the intratriniarian structures of *Hexaemeron* 21.5 (5, 432A), of the trinitarian location of the *rationes causales* in *Hexaemeron* 16.9 (5, 404B), and of the expression of what God can and will do in the Word of the Son in *Hexaemeron* 1.13 (5, 331B). *DSC*'s causal knowledge, therefore, anticipates his clear statement that will and power are intimately present in wisdom, wherefore divine knowledge inasmuch as it is wisdom can be construed as causal. That later circumincessive trinitarian approach was even anticipated in *I Sent* d. 36, a. 1, q. 2 (1, 622B), which explains that the *rationes* are in God as a cause, not according to God's essence or persons, but to the appropriations, whereby the *essentialia* are considered according to the persons. It was, furthermore, anticipated in the integrity of the divine will as intrinsically rational (*I Sent* d. 45, dub. 3 [1, 812A-B]) and not preceded by divine knowledge (*I Sent* d. 45, a. 2, q. 1 [1, 805B]). Thus the location of causal knowing in the circumincession of the divine attributes a too-straightforward process through the divine attributes that would sunder the simple *aspectus* by making the approbation through will posterior or responsive to infinite divine knowledge by either superadding a set of willed *res* over and above the possible or introducing a change in knowing without eliding the distinction between those attributes. (Cf. Bettoni who does not address causal knowledge, but the manner of the *Sentences Commentary* holds to the sharper distinction between knowing and

power, see Bettoni, *Saint Bonaventure*, 51–52; Vater also describes the divine will as choosing *similitudines* to become actualized, and while that would offer a route to explain how the *rationes* are causal as 'giving existence' to things, it still begs a second *aspectus* see Vater, 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 69, 71.)

Accordingly, it stands to reason that Bonaventure has indeed adopted Dionysius' definition of *logoi* or *rationes* as his own, with the *volitional* and *providential* aspects intact (what Manzon calls the *voluntaristic* aspect, see 'According to the Blessed Dionysius', 332), the adoption of which suggests that the *rationes aeternae* or *similitudines exemplares*' role in causal knowledge is not only *formal* (what a thing would be) but even existential and perfective (whether and how a thing should be)—as if substantifying could be taken as inclusive of *not-substantifying-as-actual-but-only-potential*. Furthermore, it agrees that the good or love interior to every expression of divine providence, God's purpose, is interior to divine knowledge as similitude, and even subtly agrees with Dionysius' prioritization, *quoad nos*, of goodness over being. Although Bonaventure's deployment of the category of *causal knowledge* might seem to reverse his answer in *I Sent* d. 35, that God does not know as a cause, God's causal knowledge does not follow from causing, but rather causes as knowing (see Vater, 'The Divine Ideas: 1250–1325', 66–67). For God knows that which is not made but possible as causable and yet not caused-to-be, and so knows them according to causality and as cause.

Bonaventure's appeal to causal knowledge, therefore, posits not only a more intimate relationship between divine willing and knowing, as noted above in the body of the article and as worked out in *Breviloquium* 1.6–8, but even an eschatological orientation from the side of that willing (or *loving*) all creatures to their fruition as willed by God (see Manzon, 'According to Blessed Dionysius', 332–33, who suggests that assimilation Bonaventure speaks of between the knower and known in *DSC* q. 2, conc. [5, 8B] might be read and the creature's assimilation to God, too), and even includes the eschatological role of incarnation of the very Word as the wisdom expressing all things. That eschatological and logocentric cast of Bonaventure's will or love-oriented vision of *rationes* is patent in the *De Reductione* and especially in his more mature treatment of *rationes aeternae* in the *Hexaemeron*, which regards *predestinationes* as

preeminent among the *rationes* (*Hexaemeron* 20.5 [5, 426A]). However the role of the *rationes* in creation's fulfillment was even anticipated in *I Sent*, especially, in the presentation of the fittingness of the name 'Word' for the Son because it simultaneously denoted emanation in God, the eternal expression of the divine disposition of the world as the *mundus archetypus* through that expression, and the union of God with a human nature in that actual world of which the Word is the archetype (*I Sent* d. 27, a. unic, q. 4, conc [1, 490A]). For though the Son is generated according to the divine nature principally, it is also an act of love as pleasing to the Father who is properly understood as charity and as loving source (as distinguished to the Holy Spirit who is charity as bond) (see *I Sent* d. 10, dub 2 [1, 205B–206A]), and so in expressing all through the generation of the Word, loves all according to God's eternal will in so expressing through the Son, per *I Sent* d. 27, a. unic, q. 2, conc. (1, 485B). Whereas in *I Sent*, where Bonaventure cautiously distinguished the Word's expression as a dispositive habit that does not connote an effect in act, the causal knowledge, in the simple *aspectus* of *DSC* (*DSC* q. 1, conc. [5, 5A]) includes the approbative mode as knowing positively willed actualities and makes the *rationes* or similitudes that are one *as the Word*—but multiplied unto the many known—*substantificae*, substantifying. It follows that as approbative, the divine wisdom is an exemplar for making (*exemplar factivum*), but as understanding of all is the expressive exemplar of all (*expemplar expressivum*) (*DSC* q. 7, conc. [5, 39B–40A]). Yet in this double aspect of the Word as example, the *rationes* themselves are not doubled. For *DSC* q. 2's question, whether God knows the *infinity* of *res*, both to be and never to be created, by essence or similitudes is answered by one and the same *causal* knowledge (*DSC* q. 2, 6A).

There is thus in *DSC* a measured reproachment between the formerly distinguished knowing and creating through the interiorization power and will to knowing. That reproachment is even on display here in *DSC* q. 2. For although Bonaventure introduces the question as about the mode divine knowledge of *res* and begins his answer with respect to *res*, his analysis of the two modes of knowing through similitudes, or *notitia rerum*, pivots to the distinction between *notitia causans res* and *causata rebus*, thereby identifying God's knowledge of *res* as a *causal knowledge*, implicitly, even of the things uncaused-qua-possible-and-

causable. Hence, the sphere of knowledge is indeed intimately related to the causing to be and *not to be* (ergo, standing not neutrally to the *ideas*), to creatures that are and *are not*. Every *res* that is known is known according to causality and thus as creatures-created and creatures-not-created.

This turn to *res*-qua-creature is borne out in the frequency of the discussion of creatures, rather than *res*, in his responses to the objections in *DSC* q. 2. Generally, the response looks to the creator/creature relationship rather than God/res, and when they do refer to *res* (ad. 9 and ad. 12) it is referring to the difference in knowing through *exemplary similitudes* rather than the created (or never-to-be created, as I have proposed above) *essentia rei*. In particular, ad. 5, sourced from *I Sent* d, 35, a. unic., q. 1, contra 2 and ad. 2's objection that there is no similitude between God and the creature specifies that there is similitude between God and creature (which the earlier reply has dropped) by imitation, adding by degrees through the approach to divine goodness, and in God's expression, adding that this expression is exemplary. Indeed, were it not for *DSC* q. 1, and the clear question about how God knows the infinity known, and how that infinity is plurified, one might easily read *DSC* q. 2 and 3 as simply under the condition of creation.

In conclusion, the exemplary character of divine knowledge that underlies God's act as creator is causal because it expresses the creatures-to-be or not-to-be according to God's will. It is brought to the forefront of Bonaventure's thought by his attention to the effective power of the Dionysian *logoi*. The topic of divine causal knowledge is not without tensions or questions to be answered, but it is no less emphasized for those wants.

Ontological Prayer in Part 3 of *On the Divine Names* and the early Syriac tradition, with especial respect to ʾAphrahaṭ, the *Book of Steps*, and St Ephrem's *Hymns on Prayer*

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In this paper, I depart from a philosophical analysis of the opening chapter of part 3 of *On the Divine Names*, which encapsulates a theory of prayer that has been pegged as 'ontological'. On account of this chapter I first look into how it specifies the relationship between the divine facet designated as the Good and the other processions or energies. Then I proceed to search for potential prefigurations of an ontological theory of prayer among relevant early Syriac source texts, in search of further evidence for the thesis that Denys' cultural and ecclesiastic background is a bilingual Greek and Syriac Christian community. In so doing, I look over some of ʾAphrahaṭ's discourses, then the so-called *Book of Steps*, and, finally, St Ephrem's *Hymns on Faith*. I conclude that although several significant momenta of what has been labelled as the ontological prayer are found in these sources—thus certainly foreshadowing Denys' idea of prayer—they are nevertheless probably only second to the influence of the Desert Father Evagrius Ponticus, a grand theoretician of prayer.

Chapter 1 of Part 3 of *On the Divine Names* opens with the compound imperative that 1. research into the divine names must start with the 'Good' because as a kind of universal revelatory term it best uncovers all the rest of the divine outpourings; and that 2. before embarking upon that investigation, a prayer must be addressed to the Trinity because it is *the* highest ranking source of revelation of all the processions, including even the Good. Hence it seems a strict Dionysian postulate that before putting our hands to systematic theology, an anagogical *prayer* must somehow carry us 'up' to the very source from where even the Good has stemmed, and initiate us into the bountiful things

sourrounding the Trinity as its first unmediated outpourings.[1] For in a first instance, suggests Denys, discussing the Good is not a matter of simple discursive reasoning but prayer (*εὐχαῖς*), elevation of the mind (*ἀνάγεσθαι*), and initiation (*μυεῖσθαι*). In order to reach out to the providential, philanthropic facet of God, the supereminent Good, a supernatural journey is necessary via an elevating, ecstatic prayer, in the vein of both the Christian and the Neoplatonic traditions. In these legacies, the formal momenta of such prayer are a real upward mobility of the mind, its initiation into the divine mysteries, and finally, a union with some form of the divine.

In historical terms, a similar scenario occurs in at least three potential Christian sources for Denys' idea: Origen's *On Prayer* (*Περὶ εὐχῆς*, especially 8, 2 and 9, 2), St Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Our Father* (*Εἰς τὴν προσευχήν*, Part 1), and Evagrius Ponticus' *On Prayer* (*Περὶ προσευχῆς*, especially 3, 35, 61, 65 etc.); while a little more distant Neoplatonic parallels are found in Plotinus' theory of the soul's return into the One, expounded in several treatises of the *Enneads* (e.g. 9,7–9; 10,1–3 and 11–12; 11,1; 12,5; 39,7 etc.), Iamblichus' explanation of the three stages of prayer as parts of the theurgical process in *Abammon's Epistle to Porphyry* (*Ἀβάμμωνος διδασκάλου πρὸς τὴν Πορφυρίου πρὸς τὸν Ἀνεβὼ ἐπιστολὴν ἀπόκρισις*—more commonly known as *Περὶ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων μυστηρίων* or *De mysteriis*—Part 5, Chapter 26 etc.), and Proclus' splendid analysis of the soul's ascension to and union with the gods via prayer (*Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, *Εἰς τὸν Πλάτωνος Τίμαιον*, Book 2, prooemium).[2] Whilst all these sources have been commented on extensively, surprisingly little attention has been dedicated to relevant early Syriac sources on the practical theology of prayer, even though, as is known, several different kinds of evidence have pointed modern research to the Syrian Church of the East as Denys' more immediate historical context.[3] Hence guided by Hieromonk

[1] Denys' mode of expression here recalls his accounts of initiation in the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, including the role of prayer during the synaxis and the ordinations (Parts 3 and 5) etc.

[2] Ernestvs Diehl, ed.: *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*. Lipsiae: In aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1907, vol. 1, 207–214. Proclus sums up by affirming that οὐσία μὲν αὐτῆς <τῆς εὐχῆς> ἡ συναγωγὸς καὶ συνδετικὴ τῶν ψυχῶν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, μᾶλλον δὲ ἡ πάντων τῶν δευτέρων ἑνοποιὸς πρὸς τὰ πρότερα (ibid. 212–213). In other words, the essence of prayer is that the ontological cycle of exitus from the One and reditus to the One may come full circle.

[3] The following is no exhaustive list, only a hint at some of the more important references to Denys' Syriac background: Joseph Stiglmayr: "Das Aufkommen der Pseudo-Dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindringen in die Christliche Literatur bis zum Lateranconcil 649" = *IV.*

Alexander Golitzin's[4] and Father Andrew Louth's[5] respective analyses, I would like to look into such fourth-century texts as the Persian sage ʾAphrahaṭ's (4th century) *Demonstrations* (Taḫwiteʾ), the anonymous *Book of Steps* (*Liber graduum*, *cca* 400), and St Ephrem's (*cca* 306–373) *Hymns on Faith*, searching for Syriac antecedents or parallels to Denys' conception of the ontological prayer.[6] This particular point of Dionysian philosophical theology is, as I shall try to point out, also clearly related to the query concerning the divine *πρόοδοι* or outpourings.

A philosophical analysis of Part 3, Chapter 1, of On the Divine Names, on '*ontological prayer*'

Part 3 of *On the Divine Names* is, virtually, already part and parcel of Part 4 in that it introduces and to some little extent adumbrates the main subject matter of Part 4, which is the analysis of the divine name 'Good' (*ἀγαθωνυμία*). But although Denys does start a discussion of the

Jahresbericht des öffentlichen Privatgymnasiums an der Stella matutina zu Feldkirch. Feldkirch: Im Selbstverlage der Anstalt, 1895, 1–96, especially 34–35, where reference is made to Petrus Fullo, patriarch of Antioch's liturgical reform; *Vetusta documenta liturgica primo edidit Latine vertit notisque illustravit Igantius Ephraem II Rahmani patriarcha Antiochenus Syrorum*. Typis patriarchalibus in Seminario Scharfensi de Monte Libano anno MCMVIII, document № 3 „De ordinationibus," 54–66: Latin translation; 22–32: Syriac original (Studia Syriaca, Fasciculus III), very nearly resembling part 5 of the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*; Carlo-Maria Mazzucchi: "Damascio, autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum* e il dialogo *Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστημῆς*" = *Aevum*, Maggio–Agosto 2006, Anno 80, Fasc. 2, 299–334, more specifically 311–313, calling attention to the *Contra additiones Iuliani* and the *Adversus apologiam Iuliani* of Severus of Antiochia; Raymond Tonneau – Robert Devreesse, eds.: *Théodore de Mopsueste: Les homélies catéchétiques*. Reproduction phototypique du ms. Mingana Syrr. 561 (Selly Oak Colleges' Library, Birmingham). Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1949, 363–365, resembling Denys' account of the Eucharist in part 3 of the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*; István Perczel: "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius" = *Modern Theology*, 24/4 (October 2008), 556–571; and idem: "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin" = *Le Muséon* 125 (2012/1–2), 55–97; Emiliano Fiori, ed.: *Dionigi Areopagita: Nomi divini, Teologia mistica, Epistole*. La versione siriaca di Sergio di Rēshʿaynā (VI secolo). Lovanii: in aedibus Peeters, 2014, lxvii, footnote 93. (Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium, Volumen 656, Scriptores Syri, Tomus 252), concerning a parallelism between Philoxenus of Mabbug's *Contra Ḥabib* and part 2, chapter 10 of Denys' *On the Divine Names* etc.

[4] *Et introibo ad altare Dei. The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*. Thessalonikē: Patriarkhikon Hidryma Paterikōn Meletōn, 1994. (Analecta Vlatadon № 59)

[5] *Denys the Areopagite*. London – New York: Continuum, 1989. (Outstanding Christian Thinkers)

[6] Defying age, Anton Baumstark's classical monograph is still an indispensable research tool in early Christian Syriac studies: *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur: mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*. Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers Verlag, 1922. – Some of the here discussed texts are found in manuscript at the Virtual Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, an online repository of Syriac manuscripts: https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom.

Trinity understood as the source of whatever is good in Part 3, really entering the thick of the matter by putting forward a well-articulated, complex proposition already in the first sentence, two obstacles as it were immediately pop up and hold off a detailed analysis of the divine bounty. The first obstacle is that before embarking on such an ambitious dialectic project, a prayer to the Trinity seems an absolute must to Denys. The other is the necessity of an apology for embarking on it at all, when apparently, all has been said and done by Denys's master Hierotheos. The divine aspect of the Good may be duly investigated only after these duties have been fulfilled. At this point, the duty of a preliminary prayer at least may seem like a nonessential detour, but finally it will turn out to be just the opposite: a precondition of, and a full-fledged alternative to, the systematic philosophical theology of the divine names.

I have said above that Denys puts forward a carefully honed formula early on in Chapter 1 of Part 3. In a first instance, this formula already suggests at least two important philosophical points: 1. That the divine name 'Good' is totally perfect (*παντελής*)—probably precisely because it illuminates every procession or emanation of God (*ἐκφαντορικὴ τῶν ὅλων τοῦ θεοῦ προόδων*); and 2. that it is precisely *on account of* the all-inclusiveness of that name that it should be investigated first. This would imply that the 'Good' as a divine attribute is the productive aspect of God, so it is the natural starting point for the outpourings to come out. In a second instance, then, still in the same opening sentence, Denys also implies that 3. the Trinity is the steward and source of that goodness and hence it is also beyond goodness (*ἀγαθαρχικὴ καὶ ὑπεράγαθος*); and that 4. the Trinity does take good care to reveal all its providential cares. The name 'Good' is 5. therefore something that is analogous with the operation of the Trinity because both are revelatory (*ἐκφαντορική*) of the salvific divine agency toward the world: they reveal a Creator condescending towards creation. This analogy is hardly surprising if the Trinity is as it were the understructure of the divine aspect of the Good. In fact, the Trinity itself has just been described in Part 2, Chapter 4 as the aspect of the godhead that is primarily characterized by difference (*διάκρισις*) as compared to the more transcendent divine core that displays unity or identity (*ἕνωσις*). Since the identities are the ultra-concealed infinite kernel in God, the metaphysical *Ungrund*,

the divine persons will emerge as a more manifestative *Grund*—so it is tempting to say that for Denys, author of Part 2 of *On the Divine Names*, the Trinity represents the more outward, creation-oriented facet of the infinite divinity:

> <1.> Καὶ πρώτην, εἰ δοκεῖ, τὴν παντελῆ καὶ τῶν ὅλων τοῦ θεοῦ προόδων ἐκφαντορικὴν ἀγαθωνυμίαν ἐπισκεψώμεθα τὴν ἀγαθαρχικὴν καὶ ὑπεράγαθον ἐπικαλεσάμενοι τριάδα τὴν ἐκφαντορικὴν τῶν ὅλων ἑαυτῆς ἀγαθωτάτων προνοιῶν.

But this is only an anticipation of what is to come in Part 4—because the aorist participle *ἐπικαλεσάμενοι* at once announces that, first, a call must go out to the Trinity. As we have anticipated above, this is not a common cry for help but a reference to a being conducted 'upwards' (*ἀνάγεσθαι*) by virtue of prayers, unto the Trinity as a source of goodness (that is, the providential and so more accessible aspect of God); to the end that arriving into the Trinity's more immediate vicinity, one may be initiated into the 'perfectly good gifts'—probably, insights or intuitions—surrounding the Trinity. This 'ontological' exaltation is, theoretically, far from obvious for although the Trinity attends to everything in the place where a particular thing is, not everything is capable of leaving their respective, metaphysically designated places in the hierarchy of being in order to rise up to the Trinity. On the one hand, that requires individual capacity, willpower, and effort; while on the other, initiation—that is, baptism—and the supervision of ordained ecclesiastic authority and angelic hierarchy, as the two *Hierarchies* stipulate. However, we hear of no such intervention here; instead, Denys specifies that when our prayers are totally saintly and our mind untroubled and ready for a merger, then we have been elevated. This sounds more like a residue or reminiscence of the spiritual doctrine of the Desert Fathers and early Syrian monastic sources like the *Acts of Judas Thomas* or, better, the *Book of Steps*:

> Χρὴ γὰρ ἡμᾶς ταῖς εὐχαῖς πρῶτον ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν ὡς ἀγαθαρχίαν ἀνάγεσθαι καὶ μᾶλλον αὐτῇ πλησιάζοντας ἐν τούτῳ μυεῖσθαι τὰ πανάγαθα δῶρα τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν ἱδρυμένα. Καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ μὲν ἅπασι πάρεστιν, οὐ πάντα δὲ αὐτῇ πάρεστι. Τότε δέ, ὅταν αὐτὴν

> ἐπικαλούμεθα πανάγνοις μὲν εὐχαῖς, ἀνεπιθολώτῳ δὲ νῷ καὶ τῇ πρὸς θείαν ἕνωσιν ἐπιτηδειότητι, τότε καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτῇ πάρεσμεν. Αὐτὴ γὰρ οὔτε ἐν τόπῳ ἔστιν, ἵνα καὶ ἀπῇ τινος ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρων εἰς ἕτερα μεταβῇ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν αὐτὴν εἶναι λέγειν ἀπολείπεται τῆς ὑπὲρ πάντα καὶ πάντων περιληπτικῆς ἀπειρίας.

I have pointed out above that the operation of mediating hierarchical powers during the ἀναγωγὴ is remarkably absent from Denys' narrative of this elevation of the mind to the Trinity. This is so even in the two more concrete examples the Dionysian corpus gives us of the 'ontological prayer' at the head of the *Mystical Theology* where the Areopagite first prays to the Trinity, then exhorts Timothy to exert himself and ecstatically rise up (literally, 'be carried up,' *ἀναχθήσῃ*) beyond all sensible and intelligible reality, without the operation of the understanding, with a view to be unified with the supereminent one. From a Neoplatonic point of view, then, it is not the ecclesiastic or angelic hierarchies that are missing from this description of an unmediated contact with the highest one, but the Proclean henads, which, in principle, should be obligatory stages or checkpoints, places of transition, in the journey a lower-ranking being leaves behind as it ascends to return to its origin by way of a Neoplatonic *ἐπιστροφή*. For Denys in these passages, there is a vacuum in this region between the mind and God that used to be filled up, in Neoplatonic metaphysics, with the σειραί, the seamless cords or strings of causal derivation that secure a supervised and inevitable passage bottom-up (but also top-down), through the henads, the participable divine units, toward the One. But as a matter of historical fact, Denys, on the one hand, has revoked the henads into God so they essentially become divine aspects, powers, or outpourings by being 'eliminated upwards' and absorbed into God so no separate intermediary of a divine stature should remain between the highest angelic orders and God. This is so even when Denys utilizes the exact same term σειρὰ in the same Chapter 1 of Part 3 of our source text with reference to the intellectual rays, ἀκτίνες beaming forth from God, because probably, these are also to be seen as divine outpourings. On the other hand, as far as Proclus's hypercosmic and encosmic gods, the subject matter of Book 6 of the *Platonic Theology*, are concerned, Denys has dragged them down, degrading them into the angelic orders

who have lost all divine attributes and whose only responsibility will be the smooth transfer of divine illumination and saving grace. So I think that at this point at least, the theory of the 'ontological prayer' borders on the query concerning the *πρόοδος*:

> Ἡμᾶς οὖν αὐτοὺς ταῖς εὐχαῖς ἀνατείνωμεν ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν θείων καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἀκτίνων ὑψηλοτέραν ἀνάνευσιν, ὥσπερ εἰ πολυφώτου σειρᾶς ἐκ τῆς οὐρανίας ἀκρότητος ἠρτημένης, εἰς δεῦρο δὲ καθηκούσης καὶ ἀεὶ αὐτῆς ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσω χερσὶν ἀμοιβαίαις δραττόμενοι καθέλκειν μὲν αὐτὴν ἐδοκοῦμεν, τῷ ὄντι δὲ οὐ κατήγομεν ἐκείνην ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω παροῦσαν, ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνηγόμεθα πρὸς τὰς ὑψηλοτέρας τῶν πολυφώτων ἀκτίνων μαρμαρυγάς.

Further on in Chapter 1 of Part 3 of *On the Divine Names*, as Denys explains that in the course of a (Christian) prayer the Trinity is not made to descend to our level but, instead, we are exalted to its ontological altitude, he may be again taking a stance vis-à-vis a Neoplatonic idea, tacitly referring to the Iamblichean theory (and practice) of theurgy as it is abundantly described in several passages of *Abammon's Epistle to Porphyry*. For just like Iamblichus insists that while the *θεουργὸς* ascends—by way of purification, prayer, and sacrifice (1,15; 4,3; 5,26; 10,8)—to the universal demiurge in order to be unified with the Highest Good (10,6–7), the involved gods do not undergo any effect or influence (1,11), so Denys also emphasizes that the Trinity is not influenced in any way by our elevation. Then again, in Section 2,9 of the *Epistle*, Iamblichus uses the same verb (*καλεῖν*) to designate the act of praying as Denys does (who has *ἐπικαλεῖν*). And still there is a tacit but clear opposition on the side of the Areopagite as against Iamblichus because the latter also teaches (4,1–2) that by being unified with a specific god, it is possible to utilize their power to instruct the lower natural forces to execute what the theurge wants. This is certainly not something Denys would admit:

> Ἢ ὥσπερ εἰς ναῦν ἐμβεβηκότες καὶ ἀντεχόμενοι τῶν ἔκ τινος πέτρας εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐκτεινομένων πεισμάτων καὶ οἷον ἡμῖν εἰς ἀντίληψιν ἐκδιδομένων οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς τὴν πέτραν, ἀλλ' ἡμᾶς

> αὐτοὺς τῷ ἀληθεῖ καὶ τὴν ναῦν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν προσήγομεν. Ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ἔμπαλιν, εἴ τις τὴν παραλίαν πέτραν ἑστὼς ἐπὶ τῆς νηὸς ἀπώσεται, δράσει μὲν οὐδὲν εἰς τὴν ἑστῶσαν καὶ ἀκίνητον πέτραν, ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐκείνης ἀποχωρίσει, καὶ ὅσῳ μᾶλλον αὐτὴν ἀπώσεται, μᾶλλον αὐτῆς ἀκοντισθήσεται. Διὸ καὶ πρὸ παντὸς καὶ μᾶλλον θεολογίας εὐχῆς ἀπάρχεσθαι χρεὼν οὐχ ὡς ἐφελκομένους τὴν ἁπανταχῆ παροῦσαν καὶ οὐδαμῆ δύναμιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ταῖς θείαις μνήμαις καὶ ἐπικλήσεσιν ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἐγχειρίζοντας αὐτῇ καὶ ἑνοῦντας.

To sum it all up so far, we see Denys relate to Neoplatonism in the same antagonistic manner on account of the 'ontological prayer' here as he usually does in the rest of the Dionysian corpus: Neoplatonic terms and ideas are resusscitated and baptized by him, gaining new life in an emphatically monotheistic Christian framework while at the same time core intuitions of the Plotinian and Proclean exitus-reditus scheme and the metaphysics of the One reinterpret and reorient Dionysian fundamental theology. The theory of the 'ontological prayer' is hence a good yardstick of Denys' dependence on, and also, independence from, a Neoplatonic understanding of reality, of his rejection of Proclus' henadology, and aligning with a Christian monotheism. However, Chapter 1 of Part 3 is also a token of the precedence prayer takes over systematic theology for the Areopagite: Prayer is not only a full-scale alternative to theology but it also perfects theology (as we can see on the concrete example of the opening paragraphs of the *Mystical Theology* where it is emphasized that conceptual knowledge and even intuition just break off in the eventual union with God—which is produced by prayer). This over-appreciation of prayer is also peculiar to the practical theology of the early Syriac Fathers, so it directs our Dionysian research towards Oriental Christianity—whilst Proclus in the *Platonic Theology* (Book 2, Chapter 1) as well as in the *Elements of Theology* (Thesis 1) reaches out for ultimate reality departing from a fundamentally different, logical ground: the Platonic theory of the One and the Many, and does not point us to prayer as a serious alternative. This is most certainly not to say that for Proclus prayer is a negligible means of religious praxis; Marinus' *Life of Proclus* (Chapters 17–19 and 28) or, indeed, the Proclean *Hymns* abundantly disprove that. But,

unlike a frustrated Denys (think of Chapter 3 of Part 13 of *On the Divine Names* where Denys abandons the entire project of naming the divine as essentially unfruitful and unsuccessful), Proclus is somehow satisfied with his doctrine concerning the divine names in Book 1, Chapter 29 of the *Platonic Theology* (even if he, in the wake of Plato's *Cratylus*, maintains the inscrutability of the primary names of the gods); and he dedicates the best of his anagogic effort to syllogistic reasoning about the *πρόοδος* and the *ἐπιστροφή*. Since, then, Greek Christian sources on prayer necessitate a separate inquiry,[7] it seems a logical move, after our initial analysis of the Dionysian idea of the 'ontological prayer', to try to identify potential sources of inspiration for that idea in earlier Syriac authors, in the context of the proposition that the Areopagite belongs to a (bilingual) Syrian historical and cultural context.

A potential Syriac context for the theory of the 'ontological prayer': 'Aphrahaṭ's Taḥwite', especially Demonstration 4: On Prayer

Author of a collection of 22 epistles designated in Syriac as 'demonstrations' (*Taḥwite*'), the fourth-century Persian Sage 'Aphrahaṭ is the first major non-Gnostic Christian spiritual writer in the classical Syriac tradition, and also arguably the first Christian author to write theoretically about prayer without relying exclusively on the *Lord's Prayer.*[8] His fourth demonstration—really a discourse in epistolary form—concerns prayer, ṣluto'; besides this, one may want to draw on *Demonstration* 1 as well, a discourse on faith because there is considerable overlap in the discussion; and on *Demonstration* 6 (*On Monks*) as it expands on how prayer works. In these discourses, 'Aphrahaṭ stands up for secret prayer recited in the purity of the heart (*dakyut lebo*');

[7] It may be a good idea to start with Alexander Golitzin's systematic overview of Denys' Greek sources in *Et introibo ad altare Dei* (see bibliographical references above, in footnote), 233–348.

[8] As Sebastian Brock points out in his state-of-the-art volume on the early Syriac tradition of prayer, "Aphrahat's *Demonstration* 4 has the distinction of being the earliest extant Christian treatise on prayer which is not primarily concerned with the Lord's Prayer, as is the case with the well-known works on prayer by Tertullian [*De oratione*], Origen [*Περὶ εὐχῆς*], and Cyprian [*De dominica oratione*]'. (S. Brock: *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*. Cistercian Studies, Volume 101, 1987, 2 [references added]; translation of *Demonstration* 4, with notes: 5–28.) Find 'Aphrahaṭ's Syriac original in Ioannes D. Parisot, ed.: *Aphraatis demonstrationes* = Patrologia Syriaca - Malponuto' d'abohoto' suryoye', vol. 1. Parisiis: Ediderunt Firmin-Didot et socii, 1926; *Demonstration* 4: coll. 137–181.

such prayer, if it is carried out in silence (*šetko*') and with a quiet mind (*bre'yono*' *šapyo*') is called 'pure prayer' (*ṣluto*' *dkito*').

At this point, then, we may already want to refer to Denys, who also considers a quiet mind (*ἀνεπιθόλωτος νοῦς*) to be a prerequisite of prayer—but the postulation of this condition is a commonplace in several Evagrian aphorisms too, for instance, in the *On Prayer* (2; 11; 21; 34b; 82, etc.). Further, 'Aphrahaṭ is convinced that pure prayer has literally supernatural power (*ḥaylo*; see especially Section 4 of *Demonstration* 4 and Sections 17–18 of *Demonstration* 1), which equals the power of a pure fast (*ṣawmo*' *dakyo*'). Pure prayer can even have endless power, like indeed the prayer of Moses did (*ḥaylo*' *daṣluteh dMuše*' *dlait loh soko*', Section 7, *Demonstration* 4), and can be accepted by God as a pure sacrificial present (*qurbono*' *dakyo*'), so prayer is also a kind of sacrifice. Conversely, pure prayer conveys divine gifts to man (*baṣluto*' *'etqabalu qurbone*') in a manner similar to how Denys conceives of the ending of the mind's itinerary with an initiation into the divine mysteries by receiving the supernatural gifts of the Trinity. For 'Aphrahaṭ, too, prayer is an 'upward' journey, though this is more metaphorically stated in *Demonstration* 4 than by Denys as 'Aphrahaṭ utilizes the image of Jacob's ladder leading up from this world to the heavens (Section 5).

'Aphrahaṭ's imagery is even more Biblical than that of Denys when he in Section 9 enlarges upon Daniel's prayer in the lions' pit as he says that as a result of the lions' prayer (*pšaṭu 'idayhun lašmayo*' *w'op henun badmut Donieyl*) a receiver (*mqabel ṣlawoto*'), that is, a herald of God (*mal'akeh*, cognate with the Hebrew term for 'angel', מלאך) was sent down from heaven to receive the prayer. Finally, the closing sections of *Demonstration* 4 reiterate the initial demand that prayer should be executed inside the mind, in secret (Section 10: *dahwaytun msaleyn bkesyo*' *lkasyo*'), in a kind of inner chamber (tawono'), which is the 'church' of the closed mouth (*'aḥid pumo*'; see also *Demonstration* 6, Section 1 and *Demonstration* 1, Section 3). The secrecy of prayer recited in a church that is the interior of the human mind (and even the human body) is a motif found in the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas* (Act 8, the tragic story of Migdonya' and Kariš) as well; then, in a more elaborate and systematic form, in the *Book of Steps* (*Homily* 12); and again, in a more poetical form, in St Ephrem's *Hymns on Faith* (Hymn

20); so it can be called a common fourth-century Syriac metaphor of the theory of prayer. But as far as Denys is concerned, the common theroetical ground he shares with ʾAphrahaṭ is reduced, after all, to a perhaps too general conception of prayer that requires a quiet mind, that is an elevation to heaven, and that is a conveyor of divine gifts.

A potential Syriac context for the theory of the 'ontological prayer:' The Book of Steps, especially Homily 12

Named the *Book of Steps—Liber graduum, Ktobo' dmasqoto'*—by its first publisher, Michael Kmosko (1876–1931),[9] this familiar late fourth-century collection of 30 *mimrē'* ('discourses') is the work of a preacher who lived in the region of the Lesser Zab River (today north-eastern Iraq) and who for some reason took great care to conserve his anonymity.[10] His discourses were addressed to a community of clear-eyed and determined ascetes who strove after religious perfection: the 'perfect' (*gmirē'*), whom the collection carefully differentiates from the 'just' (*zadiqē'*), that is, the 'ordinary' believers who only live up to the small commandments (on this very straightforward distinction, see especially *Homilies 2* and *11*).

For *Mimrō' 12*, then, of church there is not one but three: the visible church (*'idto' dmeṭḥazyo'*) with its authoritative ecclesiastic hierarchy, the church of the heart (*'idto' dlebo'*), and the invisible celestial church (*'idto' drawmo'*), in which the Anointed One himself, the *Mšiḥo'*, celebrates the divine service. Before the 'pure prayer of the heart' (*ṣluto' ksito' dlebo'*) could be born in the church of the heart, it must be preceded by the external, bodily tokens of baptism (*ma'mudito'*), evangelical

[9] A still sound philological basis for an investigation into the *Book of Steps* is Hungarian orientalist and professor of Semitic languages Michael Kmosko's critical edition of the original text: *Ktobo' dmasqoto'—Liber graduum* = Patrologia Syriaca - Malponuto' d'abohoto' suryoye', vol. 3. Parisiis: Ediderunt Firmin-Didot et socii, 1926. E codicibus […] edidit, praefatus est dr. Michael Kmosko in Universitate Budapestensi professor.

[10] A full English translation of the Book of Steps is available from the pen of Robert A. Kitchen, Maartien F. G. Parmentier: *The Book Of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004. (Cistercian Studies Series, Volume 196.) Kristian S. Heal and Robert A. Kitchen edited the impressive collection of studies titled *Breaking the Mind: New Studies in the Syriac "Book of Steps,"* Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2014; while Matthias Westerhoff delved into the topic of Pauline reception in the *Book of Steps: Das Paulusverständnis im Liber Graduum*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. Further bibliographical tools are found in the online edition of the *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*: https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/entry/Book-of-Steps.

poverty (*msarquto*ʾ), and virginity (*btoluto*ʾ). It is complemented by crying (*demʿe*ʾ, lit. 'tears'), fasting (*ṣawmo*ʾ), and vigil (*šaḥro*ʾ). These are all executed in the course of a monastic life consisting of work, reading of Scripture, and prayer—just like for the late fourth-century Pseudo-Makarian homilies, probably also written in Mesopotamia (see, for instance, *Homily 3*).[11] So the heart as the seat of an emotional religiosity has to rely on, and cooperate with, the body (*pagro*ʾ) in order that the monk may reach the stage of perfection, which implies that even the body must be wholly sanctified and function as a 'hidden church' (*hayklo*ʾ *kasyo*ʾ). All that, however, can only happen by virtue of the salvific, mediating intervention of the visible church, which delivers the redeeming sacraments even to the most perfect of monks.[12] Hence an anagogic prayer is enabled to ascend to the heavenly church only on the ground provided by the earthly institution.

This is, as has been pointed out by Alexander Golitzin,[13] by and large the same ecclesiology as the one proposed by Denys in Parts 1, 5, and 6 of the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*: While the final objective of the sacerdotal orders, the indispensable mediators of the sacraments, is to facilitate, guide and control the elevation of the soul into the unmediated vicinity of God, it is also certain that there is no other way whatsoever to unite with the divine even via absolute personal moral sanctity or monastic perfection. In one passage (Part 1, Chapter 4), the Areopagite seems to suggest even that God has given first and foremost the ecclesiastic hierarchy to mankind so redemption may be channeled through it to us.[14] Just like in the *Book of Steps*, then, Denys' apologetic interpretation

[11] H. Döries, E. Klostermann, M. Kroeger, eds.: *Die 50 geistigen Homilien des Makarios*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964, 20. On the Mesopotamian background of the corpus, see Brock: *The Syriac Fathers*, 42.

[12] <2.> *Law geyr ʾiqiʾ ʾaqim Moran ukoruzawhi qadmoyeʾ waḥroyeʾ ʿidtoʾ umadbḥoʾ umaʿamudit holeyn dmeṯḥzeyn lʿayneʾ dpagroʾ, ʾeloʾ dmen holeyn dmeṯḥazyon nehweʾ bholeyn dlo*ʾ *meṯḥazyon dbašmayoʾ lʿayneʾ dbesroʾ, kad nehwun pagrayn haykleʾ ulebayn madbḥeʾ unegleʾ uneʿlul kad ʾitayn bhodeʾ ʿidtoʾ dmeṯḥazyo ʿam kohnutoh wʿam tešmeštoh dnehwun ḥawreʾ ṭobeʾ lkulhun bnaynošoʾ dmetdameyn boh bšaḥroʾ wabṣawmoʾ ubamsaybronutoʾ dMoran ukoruzawhi uneʿbed unalep*. ('It was not without purpose that our Lord and his preachers, of old and in more recent times, established this church, altar and baptism which can be seen by the body's eyes. The reason was this: by starting from these visible things, and provided our bodies become temples and our hearts altars, we might find ourselves in their heavenly counterparts which cannot be seen by the eyes of flesh, migrating there and entering in while se are still in this visible church with its priesthood and its ministry acting as fair examples for all those who initiate there the vigils, fasting and endurance of our Lord and of those who have preached Him.' 45–47)

[13] *Et introibo ad altare Dei*, 371–373.

[14] <4> Λέγωμεν τοίνυν ὡς ἡ θεαρχικὴ μακαριότης ἡ φύσει θεότης ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς θεώσεως, ἐξ

of the role of the clergy makes it more than likely that there had been a group within his church too that denied the priesthood this unexpendable function.

Thus in its ecclesiology, *Homily 12* of the *Book of Steps* displays the same defensive strategy regarding the visible church as the *Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, and they also assert in unison that through an elevating prayer, the (purified) heart is able to go on an ecstatic journey (secretly), leave this world behind, and rise up to heaven.[15] So something very much like 'ontological prayer' was not unknown to the practical theology of the *Book of Steps* either.

A potential Syriac context for the theory of 'ontological prayer': Ephrem's Hymns on Faith, especially Hymn 20

For Mar Ephrem (ca 306–373), the 'Harp of the Holy Spirit'—a part of whose prolific writings include 87 mainly anti-Arian *Hymns on Faith*—the perfect prayer is accompanied by weeping (*'woto'*) and is born only in the heart, never leaving that place unless in the form of a confession of faith (*haymonuto'*, in *Hymn 20*).[16] The heart, much like for 'Aphrahaṭ and the *Book of Steps*, is a spiritual organ that functions like a womb (*karso'*) as it brings forth the prayer internally, which in turn brings forth faith externally. Again, just like for 'Aphrahaṭ, the *Book of Steps*, and partially also Denys, the heart as a place of prayer

ἧς τὸ θεοῦσθαι τοῖς θεουμένοις, ἀγαθότητι θείᾳ τὴν ἱεραρχίαν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ θεώσει πάντων τῶν λογικῶν τε καὶ νοερῶν οὐσιῶν ἐδωρήσατο, καὶ ταῖς μὲν ὑπερκοσμίοις καὶ μακαρίαις λήξεσιν ἀϋλότερόν τε καὶ νοερώτερον (οὐ γὰρ ἔξωθεν αὐτὰς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τὰ θεῖα κινεῖ, νοητῶς δὲ καὶ ἔνδοθεν ἐλλαμπομένων αὐτῶν ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ καὶ ἀΰλῳ τὴν θειοτάτην βούλησιν), ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ ἐκείναις ἑνιαίως τε καὶ συνεπτυγμένως δωρηθὲν ἐκ τῶν θεοπαραδότων λογίων ὡς ἡμῖν ἐφικτὸν ἐν ποικιλίᾳ καὶ πλήθει διαιρετῶν συμβόλων δεδώρηται.

[15] *Homily* 12 actually opens with this doctrine: <1.> *'Aḥay, zodeq lan dkad mhaymninan d'it msarquto' ksito' dlebo' dšobeq loh l'ar'o' wmet'ale' lašmayo'; nestaraq bapgar 'op men qenyonan wyortutan whoydeyn noṭrin ḥnan puqdonawhi dmaḥe' kul wyod'inan d'it ṣluto' ksito' dlebo' lhaw man d'et'esar bMoran wrone' beh 'amino'it. Nṣale' 'oph bapgar 'am leban; 'aykano' dbarek Yešu' wṣali bapgar wabruḥ; waśliḥe' wanbiye' hokan ṣaliw*. ('Brethren, since we believe that there is a hidden self-emptying of the heart when it leaves the earth and is raised up to heaven, it is right that we should empty ourselves in the body too of our possessions and inheritance. Then we shall be keeping the commandments of Him who gives life to all, and we shall realize that the person who is bound up in our Lord and ponders on Him continuously possesses hidden prayer of the heart. Let us pray with our body as well as with our heart, just as Jesus blessed and prayed in body and in spirit; and so too did the apostles and prophets pray.' Transl. by Sebastian Brock: *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*…, 45.)

[16] The original text has been published by Edmund Beck: *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers* Hymnen de fide. Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq, 1955. (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 154 = Scriptores Syri, vol. 73)

is like an internal chamber (*gnuno'*) where there is complete quiet and silence (*šli' ušetqo'*). Prayer should remain behind the bar of a closed mouth (which reminds us of Aphrahaṭ's 'church' of the closed mouth, *'aḥid pumo'*). Such 'dumb prayer'—*ṣluto' dadlo' qolo' or ḥaršo' ṣluto'*—is also called a 'pure rogation' (*bo'uto' mṣalalto'*). However, when in the closing lines of *Hymn 20*, Ephrem wishes that such a prayer should 'unify' the praying person, he hardly alludes to a Proclean unification (ἕνωσις) which is also chronologically impossible, but rather to what he describes in the middle stanzas as the moral split of the soul caught between good and evil—a fundamentally different concept. (It is thus no wonder that in *Hymn 2*, Ephrem very consciously rejects 'the poison of Greek wisdom', *lme'rto' dḥekmat yawnoyo'*.) But at the same time, the agnostic leitmotiv of the entire collection of the *Hymns on Faith* is an affirmation of the unknowability of the divine essence together with the knowability of divine bounty and an acknowledgement that God's infinity is his main difference vis-à-vis creation, by virtue of which he is never entirely grasped or understood but remains always elusive for the finite human mind (see *Hymns* 1, 2, 5, 72, 81—actually, passim). And that is also Denys's upshot, although metaphysically argued, in Part 13 of *On the Divine Names*. Now Ephrem's *Hymn 81* adds to the list of theological parallels that prayer is not a means of rational inquiry into the divine nature (for Ephrem, that is an Arian misunderstanding), while we see Denys affirm something similar as he points us to prayer as overriding systematic theology. Yet the principal point that prayer should effectively carry us to where the Trinity is and unite us with it is poignantly missing from the *Hymns on Faith*.

Conclusion

In guise of a conclusion, it may be pointed out that there are indeed several common motifs or themes between Denys and the above-mentioned early Syriac fathers in respect to the theory of prayer—such as the prerequisite of a quiet of mind, the metaphor that the human soul is a secret internal altar and church, the real upward motion or ecstatic elevation of the soul to God (not in Ephrem), the reception of divine gifts when the soul has risen up. Hence this short inquiry into potential Syriac sources of Denys' idea of the 'ontological prayer' may reinforce

the general thesis concerning his Syrian ecclesiastic and theological background. Yet it is justified to say that at least for the conception of the 'ontological prayer' as an elevating spiritual tool with which God may be approached is more in the centre of the thought of an influential Greek Desert Father, Evagrius Ponticus. Ponticus, well known in Syria and abundantly translated into Syriac, is the true theoretician of 'ontological prayer' and may be regarded as coming nearest to Denys's idea of that kind of prayer. That said, it is also a fact that the *Book of Steps* and St Ephrem in particular develop some other core themes of Dionysian ecclesiology and theology, like the interpretation of the function of ecclesiastic hierarchy, the role of monks in the church, or the positioning of divine infinity—and hence, divine elusiveness and unknowability. Therefore, further inquiry into the Syrian theological heritage on account of Denys remains a promising perspective.

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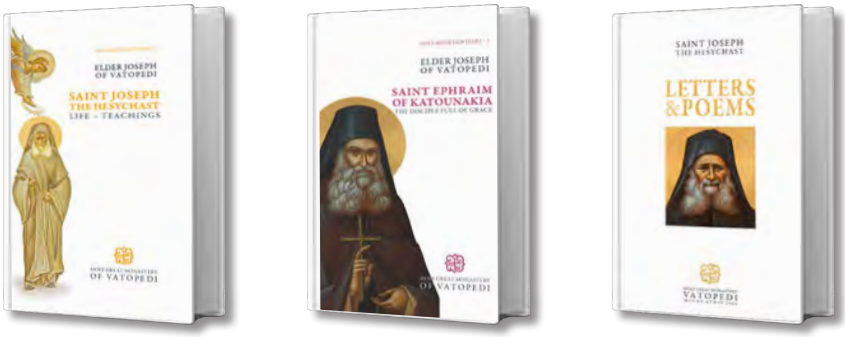

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