

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 Stoker, 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 Williams'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 apophysis 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-’ (ὕπερ-) 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 supply', 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 ordered. 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 it 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 deed to the single Knowledge of the Truth which Christians 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 transcendently 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 thought, 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* (ἀναλογία) 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-Arabs de la theorie medieval de l’analogie de l’être”, *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, transcendently 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 hyperbolic 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 dialectic²³², 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-positing 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 its 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’ (*αναλογία* / *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.